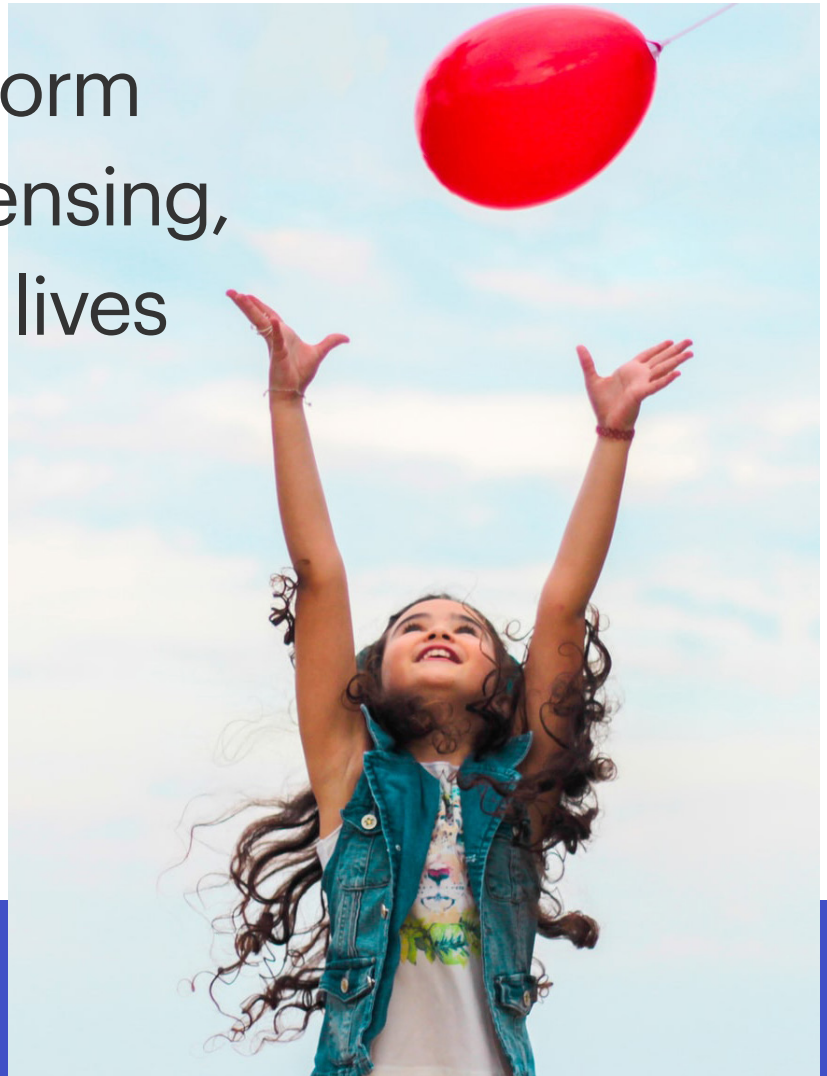


CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



Ideas to transform foster care licensing, and childrens' lives



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Industry: Public Sector

Results

300+

substantive
comments shared
and ideas submitted

5

ideas identified
and implemented
immediately

3.5X

potential
reduction in
foster care
licensing time

Medallia

SUMMARY

- Washington State engaged with key stakeholders to gain input on improving the foster care licensing process, focusing on kinship families.
- Using Medallia Crowdicity, more than 3,000 stakeholders shared ideas and comments on licensing challenges and opportunities.
- Feedback resulted in 300+ process improvement suggestions, including legislative and policy changes, that are transforming the foster care licensing process and improving the lives of foster children.
- Though Washington State will not require kinship caregivers to be licensed, based on the ideas submitted and changes made it now has a clear plan to increase the number of licensed kinship caregivers from 11% to 70% while also reducing licensing time frames from 160 to 60 days.

Redesigning the foster care licensing experience

New America Foundation, a think tank and civic innovation organization, is working with 17 states to redesign the foster care experience. During the first phase, the organization partnered with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families to improve the foster family licensing process.

While safely reducing the number of children in foster care is the ultimate goal, currently the easiest and best path for foster kids is placing them with kinship families; people they already know and trust. Kinship families can be relatives or close family friends. If a kinship family isn't available, it's recommended that kids be placed with someone

from the same community, who shares their race, culture, religion and language.

In practice, this doesn't happen due to a complex and overwhelmed foster care system. In addition, socio-economic and racial bias come into play, with the federal government estimating that 60% of children are in foster care because they are poor, with disproportionate impact on some ethnic and racial groups.

While Washington state has one of the higher kinship foster placement rates in the country at 55%, only 11% of Washington kinship caregivers receive financial support because they can't complete the complicated and often inefficient licensing process.

For example, disadvantages that can often disqualify Native American kinship families include tribal homes that lack recycling services or the "correct" number of points of egress from bedrooms required by Washington licensing standards (which were adopted from the federal model standards). While many tribal homes foster children, they don't receive financial support for them because of these requirements. These were just a few of the barriers uncovered and addressed through this process.

Ensuring that kinship foster families get licensed and receive the financial support they are entitled to is one of the best ways to minimize trauma, improve well-being and increase permanency for foster children.

Identifying opportunities for improvement

In the past, foster care policy makers made decisions not fully understanding the downstream process and impacts for kinship foster families. Using the Medallia Crowdicity® idea collaboration platform, WA DCYF collected feedback, stories and ideas from key stakeholders. They explored the best ways to eliminate barriers to kinship licensure, make the process easier and faster to navigate, and get families access to financial support and resources.

Crowdicity was used to solicit stakeholder feedback through the Innovation Hub on the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families website. The easy-to-use platform ensured transparency in the feedback process, which led to buy-in from and engagement with thousands of stakeholders to improve the state's foster care program.

Comments, insights and ideas on challenges and process improvements were received from 83 tribal partners, 54 private licensing agencies and 2,500 field staff. In addition, Crowdicity allowed Washington to keep track of recommendations from nine different task forces.

Using this information Washington mapped the foster care licensing process from end-to-end and combed through the various licensing laws and regulations. They then laid out a new streamlined process and organized changes into three categories:

- Improvements that require legal changes through legislative action, which can take up to 2 years
- Those that require administrative code changes, which can take up to 9 months
- Others that require policy and practice changes, which can be addressed immediately.

The organization is pursuing legislative and administrative actions and rapidly implementing easier, less-restrictive changes.

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Stakeholders were engaged and spent a lot of time providing comments to improve the foster care licensing process. This signaled they had faith they were going to be heard and that changes would be made.

Marina Nitze

New America Public Interest Technology Fellow

Former Chief Technology Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs

Turning feedback into action

Bringing together more than 3,000 stakeholders, New America identified 300+ changes to improve Washington state's foster care licensing process and program.

Several relatively easy fixes were identified and acted on immediately, including:

- Implementing a new technology system to reduce inefficiencies and redundancies.
- Moving the licensure process online, saving time and ensuring consistency. It's anticipated that 90% of foster families will use the online process.
- Launching the Caregiver Engagement Unit to provide licensure application assistance to kinship families.
- Applying a race and equity lens to the licensing process, with the goal of equitable outcomes for all kinship caregivers.

Washington has also begun the two-year process to make changes that require legal or legislative action. These include updating the legal definition of “relative” to include more supportive adults who may be able to serve as a safe placement for children.

The transformation of the foster care licensing system in Washington State is in its early stages and still evolving. But based on the ideas submitted and changes made so far, the state is demonstrating what it can look like to move from 11% to 70% licensed kinship caregivers while reducing licensing times to under 90 days.

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Our experience from revamping childcare licensing showed us that listening to families, end users, and community partners is an invaluable key to success. Crowdicity allowed us the flexibility to seek feedback from thousands of people across the state, which was especially crucial during the pandemic.

Luba Bezbordnikova

Assistant Secretary of Licensing

Washington State Department of Children
Youth & Families

Learn more at medallia.com

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Medallia is the pioneer and market leader in Experience Management. Medallia’s award-winning SaaS platform, the Medallia Experience Cloud, leads the market in the understanding and management of experience for customers, employees and citizens. Using Medallia customers can reduce churn, turn detractors into promoters and buyers and create in-the-moment cross-sell and up-sell opportunities, enabling clear returns on investment. [Medallia.com](https://medallia.com).

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