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Evaluation of the Foster Care Hub Home Model: *Interim Report*

The hub home model is an approach to licensed foster care delivery where an experienced foster “hub home” provides activities and respite care for a group or “constellation” of foster homes. The Mockingbird Society has operated Washington’s only hub home program, frequently referred to as the Mockingbird Family Model, on a small scale since 2004.

The 2016 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to evaluate the “impact and cost effectiveness” of the hub home model (HHM).¹ The evaluation, due June 2017, will address child safety, permanency, placement stability, and if possible, sibling connections, culturally relevant care, and caregiver retention.

To meet the cost effectiveness analysis requirement specified in the legislative assignment, we plan to examine high school completion rates, criminal justice involvement, behavioral health, teen pregnancy, and indicators of economic security for cases where youth have transitioned to adulthood.

This interim report provides a brief description of HHM program operations and presents WSIPP’s evaluation plan.

Summary

The hub home model is an approach to licensed foster care delivery where an experienced foster “hub home” provides activities and respite care for a group or “constellation” of foster homes. The program has operated on a small scale in Washington State since 2004.

The 2016 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to evaluate the hub home model by June 30, 2017. The study will include an outcome evaluation and a benefit-cost analysis to address the cost effectiveness of the hub home model in comparison to traditional foster care delivery

In this interim report, we briefly describe the hub home model, operated in Washington State by The Mockingbird Society, and outline WSIPP’s evaluation approach.

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¹ Second Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2376, Chapter 36, Laws of 2016, 1st Special Session.

The Hub Home Model

The hub home model (HHM) is an approach to licensed foster care delivery where a group or “constellation” of foster homes in close proximity is supported by a shared “hub home.” The hub home is an experienced foster home that provides families in their group with peer support, assistance navigating the child welfare system, group social activities, and both scheduled and emergency respite care.

Goals of the HHM are to increase the stability of out-of-home placements for foster youth and enhance foster caregiver recruitment and retention.² In Washington State, the number of licensed foster homes has declined over the past decade.³

All HHM providers are foster homes supervised by Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children’s Administration or by private child placing agencies (e.g., Catholic Community Services, Olive Crest). Child placing agencies recruit families to become state licensed foster homes, certify that homes meet licensing requirements, and provide supervision of the homes.⁴

The HHM foster care program has been funded since 2004 through a combination of public and private sources.⁵

Legislative Assignment

...the Washington state institute for public policy [shall] evaluate and report to the appropriate legislative committees on the impact and cost effectiveness of the hub home model, a model for foster care delivery. The institute shall use the most appropriate available methods to evaluate the model's impact on child safety, permanency, placement stability and, if possible, sibling connections, culturally relevant care, and caregiver retention. The report shall include an analysis of whether the model yields long-term cost savings in comparison with traditional foster care...The institute shall submit an interim report by January 15, 2017, and a final report by June 30, 2017

Second Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2376, Chapter 36, Laws of 2016, 1st Special Session.

² *The Mockingbird Family Model*, retrieved from http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/images/stories/docs/MF_M_Brochure_2010.pdf.

³ Children’s Administration (2015). *Report to the legislature: foster & adoptive home placement*. Olympia, WA.

⁴ WAC 388-147.

⁵ The 2016 state budget allocated \$253,000 in both FY 2016 and FY 2017 to fund the HHM. See Second Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2376, Chapter 36, Laws of 2016, 1st Special Session, p. 60.

The Mockingbird Society has operated the HHM on a small scale in Washington since 2004, primarily in King, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom counties. Currently available program records indicate that a total of 16 hub homes were in operation between 2004 and 2015, with the number of hubs ranging from one to nine in a given year. During this period, hubs supported a total of 165 satellite foster homes, with the number of homes ranging from 8 to 75 per year.

From late 2015 through 2016, The Mockingbird Society initiated an expansion in Pierce County foster homes supervised by child placing agencies. In 2016, seven new hubs opened in Pierce County, supporting 49 new satellite families. Even with the recent expansion, HHM foster homes currently represent 2% of licensed foster homes in the state (see [Exhibit 1](#)).

Exhibit 1

HHM Hubs, HHM Foster Homes, and Total Licensed Foster Homes Operating in Washington by Year

Year	HHM hubs	HHM foster homes	Licensed foster homes
2004	1	8	6,194
2005	2	17	5,920
2006	4	31	5,841
2007	4	33	5,965
2008	3	32	5,875
2009	6	50	5,739
2010	8	56	5,773
2011	7	43	5,570
2012	7	39	5,253
2013	6	28	5,133
2014	9	68	5,125
2015	9	75	4,945
2016	15	106	4,889

Sources: HHM data provided by The Mockingbird Society. 2004-2014 licensed foster home counts, Children's Administration (2014). *Report to the legislature: Foster & adoptive home placement*. Olympia, WA.

2015 licensed foster home count, Children's Administration (2015). *Report to the legislature: Foster & adoptive home placement*. Olympia, WA.

2016 licensed foster home count, D. Hancock, Division of Licensed Resources Administrator, Children's Administration (personal communication, 1/10/2017).

Note:

Licensed foster home data reflect end of year counts for state fiscal year. Due to data clean-up efforts enacted by the Children's Administration in FY2015, counts for 2015 and 2016 are not directly comparable to those for earlier years.

WSIPP Evaluation Plan

The legislature directed WSIPP to evaluate the effect of the HHM on child safety, permanency,⁶ placement stability and, if possible, sibling connections, culturally relevant care, and caregiver retention. The final evaluation report, due in June 2017, will also use benefit-cost analysis to address the cost effectiveness of the model relative to traditional foster care.

We will compare outcomes for youth served at least once in an HHM foster home with outcomes for a group of similar foster youth who were never in an HHM foster home. We will match comparison youth based on year and quarter of foster placement, youth demographics, Child Protective Services (CPS) and child welfare history, history of documented mental health need, and history of documented criminal justice involvement.

We will then determine whether outcomes for HHM youth differ from outcomes for youth in traditional non-HHM foster care placements in two main areas.

First, we will evaluate group differences in child welfare outcomes including foster parents' use of respite care, youth runaways, placement with siblings, placement stability, placement outcomes, time to permanency, and safety while in care. For children who have achieved permanency, we will also evaluate new reports to CPS and out-of-home placements.

⁶ Permanency refers to adoption, guardianship, reunification, or reaching the age of majority.

Second, for youth transitioning to adulthood by 2017, we plan to evaluate group differences in areas where foster youth have been shown to be at elevated risk, compared to non-foster youth.⁷ These outcomes include the following:

- high school completion,
- teen births,
- behavioral health,
- criminal justice involvement,
- TANF receipt,
- food stamp receipt,
- unemployment, and
- homelessness.

We will also evaluate whether participating in the HHM affects caregiver retention or the length of time that foster parents remain licensed and active. We will match HHM caregivers with similar non-HHM comparison caregivers based on characteristics such as year and quarter of licensing, length of time fostering prior to joining the HHM, and caregiver demographics. We will then evaluate the length of time a foster caregiver is licensed

⁷ Burley, M. (2013). *Educational outcomes of foster youth—updated benchmarks* (Doc. No. 13-06-3901). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy; Cawthon, L., Lucenko, B., Woodcox, P., & Felver, B. (2014). *Pregnant and parenting youth in foster care in Washington State: Comparison to other teens and young women who gave birth* (Report 11.202). Olympia: DSHS Research and Data Analysis division; Pavelle, B., Lucenko, B., Hughes, R., & Felver, B. (2015). *Behavioral health treatment needs and outcomes among foster care children in Washington State*. Olympia: DSHS Research and Data Analysis division; Allwood, M.A., & Widom, C.S. (2013). Child abuse and neglect, developmental role attainment, and adult arrests. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 50, 551-578; and Currie, J., & Widom, C.S. (2010). Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect on adult economic well-being. *Child Maltreatment*, 15, 111-120.

and active after joining the HHM, compared to retention over the same time period for non-HHM caregivers.

For both youth and foster caregivers, we will use regression analyses to control for factors known to be associated with outcomes as appropriate. We will use survival analysis techniques to address the varying length of follow-up periods within the study sample.

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Washington State Institute for Public Policy

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