

Executive Summary



OVERVIEW

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) aims to support the well-being of children and families in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

In October 2023, DCYF Director Deckert operationalized a Listening & Learning Tour.

Feedback gathered from these forums has supported the framework necessary to create a five-year strategic plan for the department.

DISCUSSION

What is working well with DCYF?

What are some of the trouble spots?

What is on your wish list for improvement?

What do you want DCYF leaders to know about your experience with DCYF?

This series of structured, deep engagements has provided opportunities for each staff member, child, young adult, family, formal, and informal community partner that touches our system to engage in meaningful discussions about our challenges, strengths, outcomes, mission, and goals.

KEY FINDINGS

Collaboration, Communication, Inclusion and Workforce

- Enhancing cohesiveness among DCYF divisions and units improves overall outcomes for children, youth and families.
- Strengthened communication and collaboration initiatives contribute to better child well-being.
- Greater involvement of youth in their case planning is essential and genuine inclusion of family, youth, and provider perspectives is critical.
- Cultivating a supportive agency culture with a well-trained workforce that is supportive and respectful is crucial for team cohesion, maintaining casework integrity and building trust with youth and families.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Reinforce DCYF's commitment to the children, youth, and families that we serve.



Center youth and family voice to address challenges.



Drive innovative best practice.



Develop and implement a five-year strategic plan with actionable goals and benchmarks.

IMPACTS

The Listening & Learning Tour took place from **October 19, 2023, to July 31, 2024.**

During this 10-month period, the Director held

78

Meetings across Rhode Island, both online and in person

connecting with over

600

Individuals

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TIMELINE & TARGET AUDIENCE

Phase	Timeline	Target Audience
Phase I Planning	September 1, 2023 - September 30, 2023	Director's Office
Phase II Implementation	October 1, 2023-December 31, 2023	DCYF staff, including frontline, workforce, contract staff, management, senior and executive leadership.
	January 1, 2024- May 31, 2024	Family and youth voice, including birth families, Resource Families, youth in out- of -home settings, and informal partners.
	June 1, 2023-July 31, 2024	Formal community providers and partners including contracted providers, RI Family Court, school districts, and childcare providers.
Phase III Evaluation & Reporting	August 1, 2024 - September 30, 2024	DCYF staff, formal and informal community providers and partners, families and youth, and state government partners.
Phase IV Strategic Plan	October 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024	DCYF staff, formal and informal community providers and partners, families and youth, and state government partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to therapeutic placement resources for children and youth.
- Ensure availability of language-appropriate resources for all families.
- Implement timely referrals and reduce waitlists for therapeutic resources.
- Provide trauma-focused resources for families and training for staff.
- Maintain consistent adherence to processes and policies across divisions.
- Simplify workflows and processes within each division for efficiency.

NEXT STEPS

Develop and maintain a five-year strategic plan with investment on Prevention, Accountability, Collaboration and Engagement.

CHILD WELLBEING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DCYF seeks to strengthen the voices of staff, families, youth, and the community through the Child Well-being Advisory Committee (CWAC). This committee, made up of individuals with relevant experience, will work together to build on 2024 efforts and achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Currently, DCYF gains insights from various groups, including Birth Parents, Resource Families, Kinship Families, and Youth Advisory Boards. While these groups function separately, there is a need for a more unified advisory committee to better align our strategies.