

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Parents for Parents (P4P) is a court-based early engagement, peer mentoring, education, and professional development program that promotes the safe and timely reunification of children with their parents, as well as supports family preservation through in-home dependency services, or an alternative permanency outcome when reunification is not a viable goal. The program serves families, who are in the dependency system, and services are initiated when a child has been removed from a home by Child Protective Services. Parents receive information and support to navigate the dependency system and, whenever possible, to safely reunify with their child(ren), as well as to understand and provide their child(ren) with resources to promote their optimal development. Parent Allies* (PA)s provide outreach and mentoring for the program. PAs receive extensive training and supervision to demonstrate professionalism while eagerly guiding other parents towards success. By providing early outreach and education, P4P helps shift parental attitudes from anger and resentment to acknowledgment and acceptance, which enhances parent engagement in court-ordered services.

**Per RCW 2.70.060 regarding the Parents for Parents program, "Parent Ally means a parent who has successfully resolved the issues that led the parent's child into the care of the juvenile dependency court system, resulting in family reunification or another permanency outcome, and who has an interest in working collaboratively to improve the lives of children and families."*

In 2005, a birth mother and court stakeholder led the launch of P4P in Pierce County. The program offered educational classes, ongoing mentoring, and other vital supports to parents during dependency court hearings. Dependency 101, a core P4P component, is a 2-hour class designed to educate and empower parents with the tools, strategies, and support to be successful in the dependency process. Parents are also offered additional individual support as well as group educational sessions through Dependency 201 classes. In 2015, P4P was written into law and funded for statewide expansion by July 2021.

Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW) partners with local host organizations to support P4P programs in all 39 Washington State counties. CHSW, which owns the P4P trademark, provides oversight and technical assistance to county based P4P programs. It is funded by public dollars via the Washington State Office of Public Defense, which CHSW distributes to P4P sites.

CHSW also provides consultation to other states and jurisdictions to develop P4P programs. Technical assistance options may include: P4P start-up information and guidance, implementation and customization support, model fidelity training and certification, or Dependency 101 class implementation for established peer mentor programs.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND STAFFING

CHSW Staffing:

- **Director of Family Impact:** Responsible for the overall management of P4P. Supports the technical assistance provided to expand and replicate current and future programs.
- **P4P Program Specialist:** Provides essential administrative support to grow and strengthen P4P.
- **Statewide Family Impact Program Manager:** Provides technical assistance and support to Washington State P4P sites.

Parent Ally (PA) Role:

- Engage with parents at initial dependency hearings and provide ongoing outreach at additional hearings throughout the case.
- Provide the parents with follow-up support and encouragement while helping defuse anger, resentment, and confusion regarding services and court processes.
- Encourage parents to self-advocate for personal and family needs while utilizing their involvement in case services as an opportunity to exit the system stronger and better than when they entered.
- Provide ongoing electronic mentoring and support to assist and encourage parents to successfully navigate barriers during their case.
- Ensure parents have access to up-to-date information on resources they need to complete their court-ordered services, as well as guidance to services and support to transition successfully from the system.
- Additional support varies can across sites and might include offering support or curriculum-based groups to address ongoing barriers, meeting with incarcerated parents, and social-emotional support for parents during important case meetings.

P4P Support Team Members:

- Program Supervisor
- Clinical Supervisor
- P4P Coordinator
- Team of Parent Allies
- P4P Advisory Committee

Host Organization:

- Can be the court,
- Non-profit, or
- Child welfare service providing agency

Host Organization Responsibilities:

- Assume financial management and accountability for the program.
- Hire/contract with the P4P Coordinator.
- Provide supervision to the P4P Coordinator and trainings to the P4P Parent Ally team.
- Support P4P Coordinator to lead Parent Ally team and oversee maintaining model fidelity of the P4P program.
- Provide working space, telephone, copy machine, and computer access.
- Provide accessible meeting space for Dependency 101 and other P4P meetings.
- Provide the liability insurance of the P4P Coordinator.
- Participate with the P4P Advisory Committee in building support and finding sustainable funding for the program.

P4P Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Provide overall coordination of the program, ensuring that all aspects of the program are consistently implemented with fidelity to the program model.
- Directly or through oversight of other Parent Allies, ensure the presence of a Parent Ally at all dependency hearings.
- Ensure the availability of Parent Ally and stakeholder leadership at each Dependency 101 class.
- Ensure that all parent participant and program data is collected and entered into a secure information database.
- Provide leadership at regular meetings of the P4P Advisory Committee.
- Assist in the recruitment and training of additional Parent Allies working with the program.
- Maintain records of Parent Ally training and work.

P4P Advisory Committee:

- Includes partnership of stakeholders that provide guidance, brainstorm, etc. to address issues that may arise.
- Helps recruit support for the program.
- May identify additional program resources.
- Helps reduce unintended consequences because all perspectives are heard and valued.
- Helps reduce the stigma of child dependency involved parents.

PROGRAM APPROACH

- P4P is an early engagement, court-based, educational program.
- Designed and led by peer mentors called Parent Allies (PA)s.
- Partners with child welfare and court system stakeholders.
- Equitable access, wide reach practice covers entire jurisdiction.
- Translates system to parents and parents to system.
- No case managers, Light touch that uses a team approach.
- Flexible framework adapts to surrounding community needs.
- Compliments and partners with other community services and peer programs.

Dependency 101/201 classes are:

- ✓ Designed to educate and empower parents
- ✓ Parent Ally led, child welfare system training
- ✓ One-time, two-hour sessions class
- ✓ Curriculum and support based
- ✓ Pre/post survey to measure effectiveness
- ✓ Skill building, tool sharing, perspective-shifting
- ✓ Video, resources, presenters
- ✓ Provides information folder for parents
- ✓ In-person, virtual, or hybrid

Court support of Parents for Parents is paramount to the program's success. When Parent Allies interact with parents at court, they provide guidance on navigating dependency cases while instilling hope that success is possible, which helps build trust and empowers parents to overcome challenging obstacles. When court representatives establish working relationships with Parent Allies in their jurisdiction it helps ensure parents are guided to and by the program. Support from court representatives and PAs via P4P can help establish a dynamic family court team.

P4P Core elements include:

- 1) **Initial Placement Hearing Outreach** – PAs meet with parents in the courthouse at the first hearing after the filing of a petition by Child Protective Services. Parents often feel scared, confused, angry, and alone. The PA makes an introduction as a parent who was once also involved with the system and successfully resolved their case. This gives parents a relatable peer who can build trust and offer hope reunification is possible. This peer relationship helps diffuse negative attitudes, encourages parents to be open-minded, and engage in the process. PAs also share available resource information and invite parents to a Dependency 101 class.
- 2) **Dependency 101** – This 2-hour class provides parents with the tools, strategies, and support to successfully navigate the court dependency process.

- Parents watch an informational video about the child welfare system and the importance of engaging with services.
 - Parents receive an information packet that contains important resources for navigating the system and accessing treatment.
 - Parents hear directly from professionals in their jurisdiction including the state attorney (lawyer for the department), a child welfare worker, a parent's attorney, a child's representative (volunteer Guardian Ad Litem-GAL or Court Appointed Special Advocate-CASA). In some jurisdictions, the judicial officer presents. Each professional describes their role to the parents and how they can support them and their family throughout their case.
 - The professional presentations help to reduce conflict and destigmatize the "us" versus "them" mentality that often exists between parents and child welfare stakeholders.
 - Parents hear directly from Parent Allies who share their own child dependency stories and demonstrate how they overcame personal and systemic challenges.
- 3) **Mentoring and Ongoing Supports** – PAs provide mentoring and support in the following ways:
- Exchange contact information to reach out weekly through class schedules.
 - Offer mentoring electronic, virtual, and in-person.
 - Attend court hearings or other key events during their case, as capacity allows.
 - Instill hope at first interaction and all future interactions,
 - Assist with a keen knowledge of accessing community resources.
 - Sign up for Dependency 101/201 curriculum-based classes.
- 4) **Dependency 201** -
- A formal structure around specific topics such as Family Time/Visitation, Understanding the Dependency Process, Communication, Goal Setting and Resourcing.
 - Has a curriculum-based support structure that allows parents to receive emotional support and guidance from other participants and Parent Allies.
 - May have additional classes which can be important ongoing support for parents as they move through and transition from services.
 - Builds community and confidence as parents continue to learn together and celebrate successes.

TRAINING/PRACTICE STANDARDS & RESOURCES

PAs receive extensive and ongoing training, supervision, and support to ensure they are the most effective when helping parents to diffuse negative feelings and attitudes while encouraging parents to be more open-minded and engage in the process of working with the professionals in the court system. In addition to receiving training on the program model, additional training focuses on building professional skills to support career advancement.

P4P program model training includes:

- P4P Start-up Guide and program components
- Role & responsibilities
- Dependency system
- Engagement skills
- Story sharing
- Group facilitation
- Cultural competency
- Community resources
- Data collection and retention
- Reframing/validation
- Boundaries and safety
- Court structure
- Mandated reporting
- Confidentiality
- Self-care
- Professionalism
- Employment soft skills
- Leadership
- Recruitment/retention

Start-up and Replication of P4P

- P4P Start-up Guide to train new programs
- Live virtual training series
- 2 day in-person P4P component training at program location
- Ongoing technical assistance
- Model fidelity checklist assesses strengths and replication goals
- CHSW provides one-on-one support and group trainings
- CHSW conducts interview to assess fidelity

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

In both 2011 and 2013, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges evaluated King County's P4P program, which provided court outreach to parents and the Dependency 101 class. Some key study findings include:

- An increased compliance in the court-ordered case plan by both mothers and fathers. (2011)
- Significant increases in parents' compliance with court-ordered visitation at the review hearing. (2011)
- Increased participation by the mother at key court events; mothers were more likely to be present for court hearings by 13%. (2011)
- Dependency 101 participants had greater rates of reunification and lower rates of termination of parental rights compared to non-participants-not statistically significant. (2013)

Based on these evaluations, King County's Superior Court Parents for Parents Program was identified as a Promising Practice by the University of Washington's Evidence Based Practice Institute.

Reference: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: Parents for Parents Outcome Evaluation; Reno, NV, 2011 and 2013

In 2016, the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago conducted a Phase I Evaluation of the Parents for Parents program. Key findings include:

- Parents' attitudes toward the dependency process were more positive after attending Dependency 101.
- Dependency 101 participants' trust in CPS being fair increased after participating in the class.
- Parents who attended Dependency 101 classes were much more likely to believe there is something they can do to improve their chances of reunification.

In 2020, the most recent phase II evaluation was conducted by the Child Welfare Capacity Building, Center for Court. The study used a quasi-experimental design to examine if there are relationships between P4P and compliance with services and case outcomes. Overall, the findings suggest a positive relationship between P4P and parental engagement and case outcomes. A summary of statistically significant findings include:

Parent Engagement

- A relationship between Dependency 101 attendance and increased knowledge of the roles in the child welfare system and an increased level of trust in CPS.
- Dependency 101 attendance and service compliance at the first review hearing and permanency planning hearing for mothers and fathers
- A positive relationship between Dependency 101 attendance and visitation compliance at review and permanency planning hearings for mothers; a positive relationship between Dependency 101 and visitation compliance at the permanency planning hearing for fathers.
- A positive relationship between Dependency 101 and mother attendance at all key hearings; a positive relationship between Dependency 101 and father attendance at the permanency planning hearing and second review hearing.

Case Outcomes

- 70% of parents who participated in Dependency 101 reunified with their children compared to 53% of parents who did not participate in Dependency 101.
- 79% of parents who participated in Dependency 101 and received additional mentoring reunified with their children compared to 67% of parents who participated in Dependency 101 but did not receive any additional mentoring.
- 26% of parents who participated in Dependency 101 had their parental rights terminated compared to 39% of parents who did not participate in Dependency 101.

Reference: Trescher, S., & Summers, A. (2020). Outcome Evaluation Report for Washington State's Parent for Parent Program. Washington, D.C.: Capacity Building Center for Courts. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56bod6d4e707eb68892b71c1/t/5e1d001e44a61407bc11f187/1578958880190/P4POutcomesReport.pdf>