

On any given day those who work tirelessly on behalf of vulnerable children may hear countless less than favorable messages about how they are perceived by the general public. The messages that make the headlines hardly speak to the hours social workers spend braving both the physical and bureaucratic rubble that accompany abused and neglected children in an effort to keep them safe and provide them with caring families.

Rarely do social workers, lawmakers, the press and media, and the public at large hear the other side of the story; the successes, the joys, the lives forever changed for the better because a CPS social worker showed up at a frightened child's house.

This past fall, the writer of this report sent out an e-mail asking if CA staff had any "thank you letters" from families whom they had helped. What came back was a deluge of Thank you cards, Christmas cards, graduation invitations, faxes, e-mails, crayon drawings, and photographs of bright shining faces in fresh pressed clothes. These items had become the prized possessions of those to whom they were addressed. The response was overwhelming and the letters too numerous to count; these letters represent a fraction of those received.

Dear Interstate Compact Program Manager:

Thank you for all your work on our Interstate Compact paperwork and answering my many questions. Our new son is such a joy, he is our shining star.
— Adoptive Parents

Dear Online Training Coordinator:

This video was so very helpful. My foster child has displayed a lot of the behaviors in this video. At first, my husband and I thought that she just did not like us and wished to be some place else. After watching this video, I understand that this is not the case; she just needs to feel like she belongs in our home with our family.

Thank you so much for doing a video to explain this behavior.
— Foster Mother

Dear Social Worker:

Thank you. I wanted to let you know how much it has been a pleasure working with you. You have been very responsive. I appreciate the way you are able to be honest when you don't have the answer and then go out of your way to find out. Good luck. Hope you enjoy your work helping children and families. I can appreciate what a difficult job it is.
— Relative Caregiver

Dear Area Administrator:

Thank you for hearing me.
— Foster Parent



Dear Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Specialist:

Thank you for the Mother's day wish. I will enjoy my special day on Sunday. I will also continue to enjoy each child who comes into my life through my work as a foster parent - each of them is so very precious and special - I am truly blessed as I care for them.
— Foster Mother

Dear Social Worker:

Thanks for all you have done for me and my daughter. I know I gave you a bad time but in the end I did what was right. You gave me a sense of hope and closure to the case. I can now be the mother I always wanted to be even though my daughter is with her grandparents, I can be her mom.
— Love and my sincere friendship, Birth Mother

Dear Foster Parent Licensor:

Thank you for talking to us about your job. My mom turned in papers for being a foster parent. She wants to be one so bad!! I've learned how hard your job really is. The kids probably don't like what you do, but you're totally making their lives a lot better for them.
— Sincerely 6th grade student.

Dear Area Administrator:

I wanted to let you know how much we appreciate working with our licensor. We have made many demands on her in the last few months...She has always demonstrated a great deal of patience and flexibility when working with us...She has held us accountable in a compassionate and understanding way...She has worked hard on our behalf and for the youth we serve. We feel fortunate to work with someone who is very professional and simultaneously approachable and interested in maintaining a positive working relationship...
— Sincerely, Director, Child Placing Agency

Dear CWS Social Worker:

When you first called me and told me that our foster son had to move, I was not happy and did not want to believe you and I wanted to fight, but you told the truth and my husband and I thank you for this. It has not been easy, we thought we could fix things, but after seeing our son with his new family and seeing him so happy, I know this is the right thing for both our families and especially for our foster son. This poor little guy was caged up for so long and he missed out on everything babies deserve and now he will be able to have a mother who can give him her undivided attention. Thanks for everything, you helped this child find the right family, HIS family.
— Foster Mother

Dear CPS Social Worker:

I just wanted to write a note of thanks! When I saw the CPS business card in my front door, my stomach dropped and my throat closed. But when I met with you, I felt 100 times better. You were warm and friendly and very informative. My life is just right, right where I need to be. So for all your help, support, and services, thank you! You are not the big, bad child stealers I believed you to be, thank you!
— Birth mother

Dear Adoption Social Worker:

...Thank you DSHS for the foster/adopt program that gave us two wonderful children. Our daughter graduated from high school last month with honors (she was in the top 20% of her class). She was accepted to both the University of Washington and Western Washington University. She will be attending Western in the fall. I am grateful for her choice because she will be closer to home!

I have enclosed two pictures, one from 15 years ago and then her senior portrait. Who could have imagined how our lives would have changed when her and her brother were placed with us! She was three years old and he was 16 months. They both had suffered neglect in their birth family. Reunification with their birth mom could not be achieved. Our prayers were answered when the adoption became final...
— Again thanks, Adoptive mom



Child and Family Resources



Important Telephone Numbers

- To report child abuse or neglect..... 1-866-EndHarm, or 1-866-363-4276
- To become a foster or adoptive parent..... 1-888-794-1794
- To resolve concerns about the Children’s Administration or foster care..... 1-800-571-7321
- To find help for homeless youth living on the street or other unsafe locations 1-877-550-HOPE or 1-877-550-4673
- To find child care resources and referrals..... 1-800-446-1114
- To find health and human services information through the Washington Information Network 211

Websites

Adoption:

- Washington Adoption Resource Network..... www.warekids.org
- Northwest Adoption Exchange www.nwae.org
- Northwest Resource Associates www.nwresource.org/af.htm
- Families Like Ours www.familieslikeours.org
- Adopt U.S. Kids..... www.adoptuskids.org

Child Care:

- Licensed Child Care www.del.wa.gov/

Domestic Violence:

- DSHS Domestic Violence Program..... www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/dvservices/index.asp
- Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.wscadv.org

Indian Child Welfare:

- Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs www.goia.wa.gov/
- National Indian Child Welfare Association..... www.nicwa.org/

Foster Parenting:

- Children’s Administration Foster Parent Website..... www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents.index.asp

Mental Health:

- DSHS Mental Health Division..... www1.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth
- SAMHSA National Mental Health Information Center www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child

Social Services and Child Welfare:

- Children’s Administration Internet www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/index.asp
- DSHS Internet www1.dshs.wa.gov
- Department of Health and Human Services..... www.os.dhhs.gov

Substance Abuse:

- DSHS Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse..... www1.dshs.wa.gov/dasa

The following summary of the Children's Administration Strategic Plan outlines the broad goals and strategic outcomes the Administration is working to achieve. We are identifying our progress in achieving these objectives in a variety of ways, some using outcome data and performance measures, and others using case record reviews and client, stakeholder and employee satisfaction feedback. We are continually working to improve our services and to improve child and family outcomes.

CHILD SAFETY

- Goal:** Children will be safe from abuse and neglect.
- Strategic Outcome:** Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Strategic Outcome:** Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.

PERMANENCY

- Goal:** Provide stable, nurturing, and permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care.
- Strategic Outcome:** Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Strategic Outcome:** The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

- Goal:** Help families and communities improve the well-being of children in their own homes and in out-of-home care.
- Strategic Outcome:** Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Strategic Outcome:** Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational (and developmental) needs.
- Strategic Outcome:** Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

SUPPORTING CLIENT OUTCOMES

- Goal:** Continuously improve the organization's capacity to achieve excellent outcomes for children and families.
- Strategic Outcome:** The Children's Administration partners with and is responsive to Tribes, consumers, communities, courts and public and private agencies to serve children and families.
- Strategic Outcome:** Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption.
- Strategic Outcome:** Service array ensures appropriateness, quality, accessibility and flexibility.
- Strategic Outcome:** Information technology and has capability to support field and management needs.
- Strategic Outcome:** Federal requirements for case review system are maintained.
- Strategic Outcome:** Quality assurance system promotes satisfactory outcomes for children and families.
- Strategic Outcome:** Agency has adequate and efficient structure, staffing and fiscal resources.
- Strategic Outcome:** Staff and provider training and development adequately support the goals of the agency.

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA): Federal legislation passed on November 19, 1997, strengthening Titles IV-E and IV-B of the Social Security Act. The ASFA requires more accountability and better efforts and results from state agencies receiving funding, as well as from parents who have children placed in foster care. The law focuses on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in care, and other positive outcomes.

Adoption Support: Financial assistance provided to adoptive parents following the adoption of a special needs child. According to RCW 74.13.109, a child is eligible if that child is “legally free” and “hard to place” at the time the adoption support agreement is established.

Alternative Response System (ARS): The CA contracts with agencies to provide ARS services to low risk families. Services help families develop community support systems in an effort to keep families intact without intrusive CPS intervention.

Behavior Rehabilitation Services (BRS): Agency contracted services for behavioral rehabilitation services for children and youth with serious emotional, behavioral, or medical difficulties who cannot be adequately served in regular foster care.

Braam Foster Care Lawsuit: A class-action lawsuit filed in 1998 on behalf of 13 children who experienced over 30 placements while in foster care. As part of the lawsuit's 2004 settlement, an independent Braam Oversight Panel was created to develop outcomes, benchmarks, and action steps for the CA on the six areas identified in the settlement agreement: stable placements, mental health services, foster parent training and support, unsafe or inappropriate placement, separation of siblings when placed in out-of-home care, and services for adolescents.

Case and Management Information System (CAMIS): Automated information system for the CA.

Chafee Foster Care Independence Act: Federal law passed in 1999 to offer services to adolescents in their transition to adulthood. The CA contracts with community-based agencies to offer outreach, individual assessment and plan development, skill building through instruction, independent living plan reviews, and case management.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA): Federal legislation providing guidelines for states regarding child protection.

CA/N: Child abuse and neglect.

Child Health & Education Tracking (CHET): A legislatively mandated screening program designed to assess children who are placed in the care and custody of Children's Administration. Specialized social workers complete an initial CHET screen within the first 30 days of a child's placement. The CHET assesses the child's well-being and identifies long-term needs in six life domains: physical/medical, developmental, educational, family/social and emotional/behavioral, connections. The child's Health and Education tracking is an ongoing process and continues throughout the child's time in care.

Child in Need of Services (CHINS): A part of the state's Family Reconciliation Act, RCW 13.32A., addressing children over the age of twelve who are beyond the control of their parents, have run away, and have substance-abuse or other at-risk behavior, or whose parents are unable, unwilling or unsuccessful in providing for their basic needs.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR): The federal review of every state child welfare system which evaluates the service provision and achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being for children.

Child Protective Services (CPS): Entity within the Field Services Division, Child and Family Services and Licensed Resources, which responds to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect and provides services and/or placement if warranted.

Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS): Provides both out-of-home placement prevention and permanency planning services to children and families who may need help due to serious chronic problems, abuse and neglect. Services are primarily available for cases transferring from CPS or FRS when the short-term services available through those programs are not successful in resolving the family's problems. Placement cases that extend beyond a court finding of dependency compose the majority of child welfare caseloads.

Children's Administration (CA): One of the Administrations under the umbrella organization Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The CA is composed of four divisions: Program and Practice Improvement, Finance and Operations Support, Field Services, and Technology Services. The CA is responsible for a full continuum of services in Washington State and administers Child Protective (CPS), Child Welfare (CWS), Family Reconciliation (FRS), and licensing services throughout the state.

Crisis Residential Centers (CRC): Facilities available for short-term placement of children 12 years and older. These are often used for children who run away or are in conflict with their families.

Custodian: A person appointed by the parent, guardian, or court to provide care for a child.

Division of Licensed Resources (DLR): In July 2004, the DLR became part of the Field Services Division. It is charged with the licensure and oversight of state licensed foster homes, group homes, and other child placement facilities, and is responsible for investigation of allegations of abuse and neglect in licensed care.

Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS): In July 2004, DCFS became part of the Field Services Division. It is responsible for child protection, placement, and adoption services administered through 44 field offices in six regions throughout Washington State.

Early Intervention Program: Trained public health nurses are available to provide voluntary in-home nursing services which can prevent the need for more intrusive interventions in at-risk families with young children.

Family Preservation Services (FPS): Provided to families whose children face substantial risk of out-of-home placement (per RCW 74.14C), FPS draws on the strengths of families and addresses needs in an effort to keep the family intact.

Family Reconciliation Services (FRS): Available to families with adolescents who are experiencing conflicts, FRS consists of services devoted to maintaining the family as a unit and preventing out-of-home placement.

Family Voluntary Services (FVS): Available to families with adolescents who are experiencing conflicts, FRS consists of services devoted to maintaining the family as a unit and preventing out-of-home placement.

FamLink: The name given to Children's Administration's (CA) new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

Guardian: A person or agency appointed by the court to care for and supervise a child, and who has legal rights to the custody of that child.

Guardianship: A permanency option that provides a child with long-term connection to a family while maintaining financial supports for the child. Guardianship placements are often preferred for older youth who may not want to be adopted, children who maintain ongoing and frequent contact with their parents, and children for whom religious or cultural factors discourage termination of parental rights or adoption.

Independent Living Services (ILS): Services provided, in accordance with the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, to youth in the foster care system to help prepare them for independence.

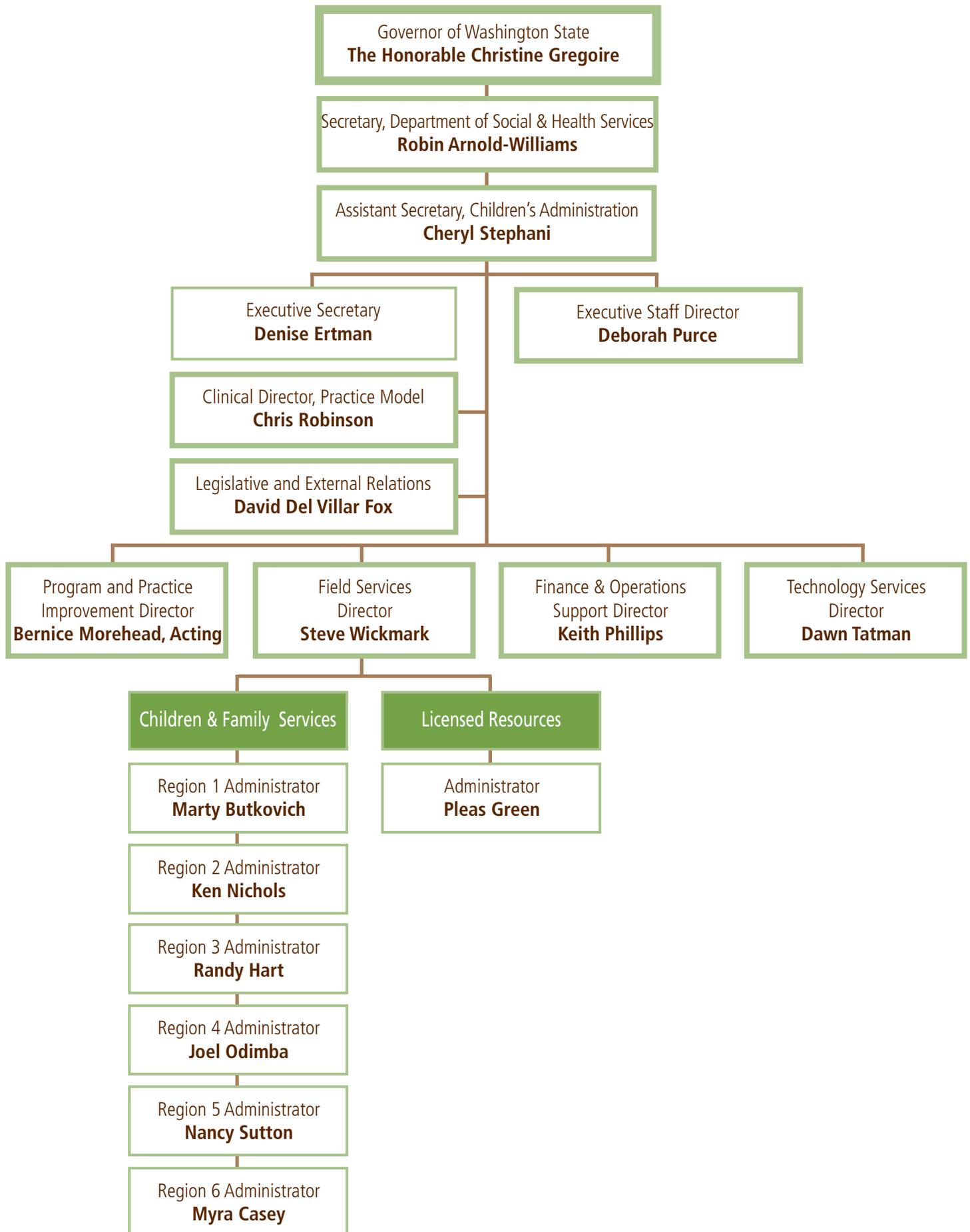
Indian Child Welfare Services (ICWS): Child welfare services provided to Indian children consistent with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in areas of child protective services, foster care, dependency guardianship, termination of parental rights, and adoption proceedings.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC): A statutorily established mandate (RCW 26.34) safety net for children being placed into or out of Washington State.

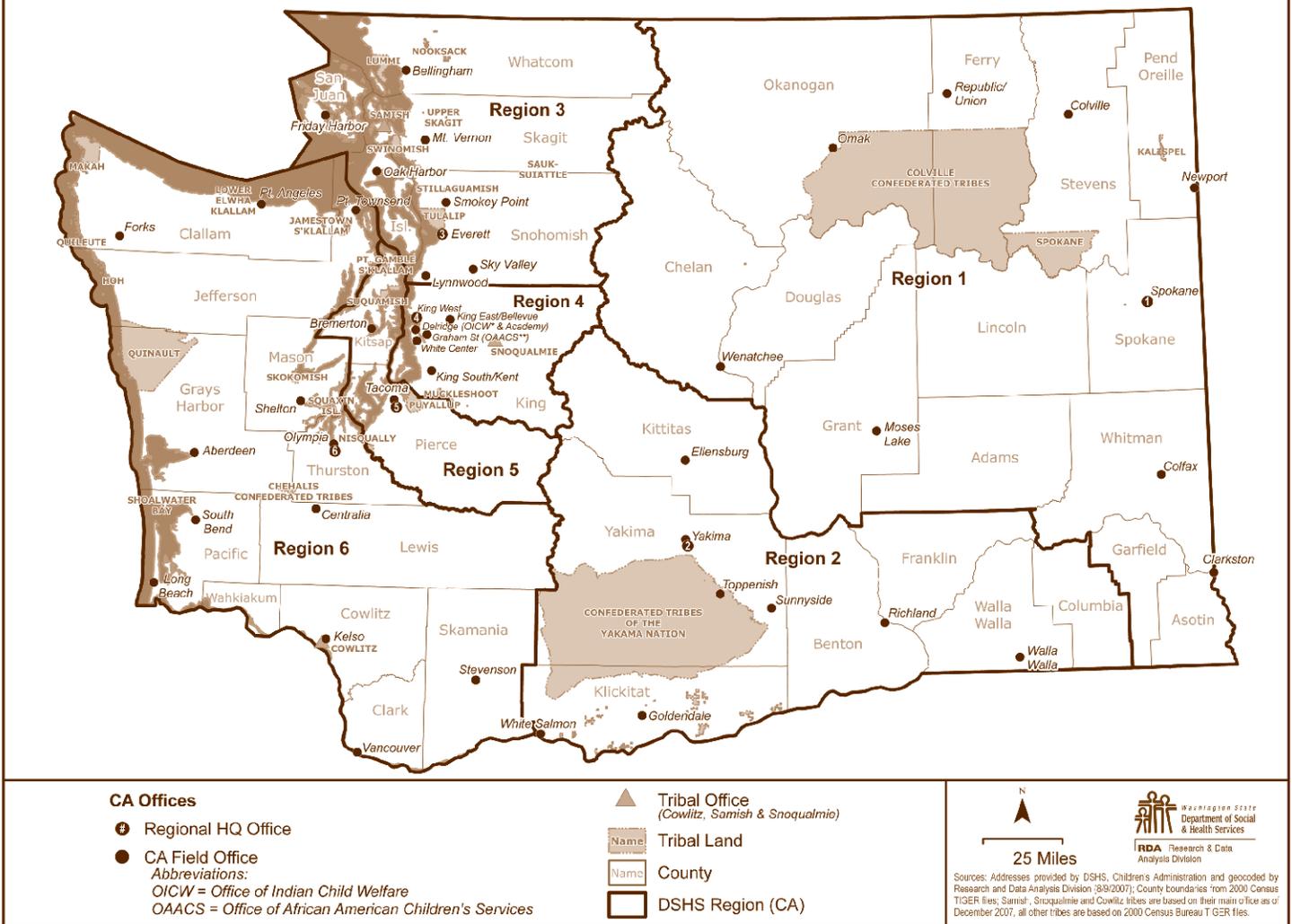
Legally Free: A child is legally free for adoption if the child has no legal parent, either because the parent has died or because parental rights have been terminated through relinquishment or involuntary termination by court order.

Out-of-home placement/out-of-home care: Placement of a child by the CA into a foster family home, relative placement, or group care facility.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR): When a child cannot return home and adoption is the permanent plan for that child, parental rights are terminated. The Adoption and Safe Families Act requires states to terminate parental rights when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months unless there are compelling reasons not to file for termination of parental rights.



Children's Administration Regions and Field Offices



The Children's Administration wishes to acknowledge the efforts of those who made this publication possible.

We extend our appreciation to Marianne K. Ozmun for coordinating the Annual Report workgroup and for maintaining a commitment to accurately telling the stories of the children and families we serve.

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We acknowledge and honor all of the dedicated workers who are tireless in their efforts to protect children and preserve families. We also want to thank the many community partners without whom our work would be impossible: Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Relative Caregivers, Respite Providers, Guardians ad Litem, CASA Volunteers, BRS Providers, Tribal Partners, Washington State Legislators who are committed to child welfare, and child welfare advocates statewide.

Most importantly we thank the families we serve and the children whose hopefulness and resilience remain our inspiration for continuing to improve.

Thank you

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