**Access and Visitation – New Contracts Awarded**

Each year DCS receives Access and Visitation (AV) grant funds from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to help facilitate noncustodial parents' access to and visitation with their children.

The federal AV grant covers up to 90% of total program costs. States are responsible for contributing the remaining 10%.  In Washington DCS is considered a "pass through" entity and does not expend any state funds for the program.  The 10% in matching funds is the responsibility of local service providers.

DCS uses an RFP (Request for Proposals) process to award contracts to local service providers.  This is a competitive process done every three to four years in which contractors submit proposals or "bids" to provide AV services.  Following the completion of the RFP process, new contracts are awarded.  The most recent RFP was completed in August, 2017, and new contracts were awarded October 1st.

DCS staff can refer customers needing help with access and visitation issues to any of the six contracted [providers](https://dcs.esa.dshs.wa.lcl/about/Fiscal/Pages/Access-and-Visitation-Provider-List.aspx) located statewide.  Participants can also self-refer, or may be referred through other sources such as the courts or other community-based organizations.  This happens often in counties where mediation is required before a parenting plan can be filed with the court.

Specific AV services vary by provider and may include mediation, development of parenting plans, guidelines for visitation and alternative custody arrangements, supervised or monitored visitation, neutral exchange/drop off, counseling, and parent education.   New this year is that some AV providers have added the capacity to provide some program services via phone. The number of providers offering parent education classes and supervised visitation services has also been expanded, which increases our ability to provide services to even more AV clients statewide.

Washington also has a well-organized group of dispute resolution centers (DRCs).  This information can be shared with DCS customers at any time.  You can find more information about DRCs through the Washington Courts [website](http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/?fa=court_dir.dispute), or at [http://www.resolutionwa.org/.](http://www.resolutionwa.org/)

Questions about the AV program can be directed to [Kirsten Jenicek](mailto:kjenicek@dshs.wa.gov?subject=Access%20and%20Visitation), DCS Grants Administrator. Information about the [AV](https://dcs.esa.dshs.wa.lcl/about/Fiscal/Pages/Access-and-Visitation.aspx) program can also be found on the Business Services SharePoint page for [grants](https://dcs.esa.dshs.wa.lcl/about/Fiscal/Pages/Grants.aspx).