



Resources

Do you know people who need resources? View the [Washington County Community Resource Guides web page](#) for information on basic needs, resources, and assistance for adults/people with disabilities, children, and families.

Prevention Services Team Mission

To collaborate with families, communities, and partners in providing proactive, compassionate, and resource-rich services that prevent child protection involvement, promote family well-being, and support families to thrive independently.



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Welcome to the First Edition of the Supporting Families Newsletter!

We're excited to bring you the first issue of the **Supporting Families Newsletter**, created by the Prevention Services Team within Community Services at Washington County.

Over the past year, our team has been deeply engaged with community partners and members, and one message came through loud and clear: Washington County is rich in resources, but there is a need for stronger connections between agencies and invested community members.

That's where this newsletter comes in. The Supporting Families Newsletter is designed to bridge the gap by sharing valuable information, resources, and updates that align with the Prevention Services Team's mission. We hope this will be a vital tool in fostering collaboration and keeping you informed about the work we're doing together to support families across our community.

Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Team Introduction



Back row (l to r): Rachel Mlinarcik, Katie Olsen, Bailey Johnson, Megan Roy.
Front row (l to r): Touzong Yang, Kari Johnson, Ali Jascor, Nikki Dahlstrom, Kasia Heurh.
(Not pictured: Jerry Klebsch.)

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The Washington County Community Services Prevention Services Team within Children’s Services is dedicated to reducing child maltreatment and minimizing the need for child protection interventions in families. Established in February 2023, this team emphasizes support for families to enhance their resilience and capacity to protect their children.

The supports offered through the Prevention Services Team are aligned with the Five Protective Factors:

- **Parental Resilience:** Supporting parents in managing stress and bouncing back from challenges.
- **Social Connections:** Encouraging positive relationships and social networks for families to receive support.

- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Providing resources and education to help parents understand child development and effective parenting strategies.
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need:** Offering access to services that help families meet their basic needs, such as housing, food, and healthcare.
- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Helping children develop the social and emotional skills necessary for healthy development and relationships.

Overall, the goal of the Prevention Services Team is to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect by providing these essential supports and resources.

More About How the Prevention Services Team Supports Families

What do Family Support Services look like in the Prevention Services Team?

Family Support Services provide assistance to families with meeting basic needs and accessing concrete support. This support may include parenting skills development through home visiting, housing assistance case management, and the navigation of vital resources. I want to express my deepest gratitude to our partners and community members for their incredible support throughout the year. Your collaboration has allowed us to provide a wide range of services to clients in need.

In 2024, through these efforts and our strong relationships with both staff and clients, we were able to distribute clothing, diapers, school supplies, holiday meals, and tailored holiday gifts to 70 families/190 individuals. We also provided gift cards, bikes, and other essential donations based on individual need.

Additionally, we were thrilled to show our appreciation to foster providers on Mother's Day 2024, thanks to the generous contributions from our partners. We would like to extend a special thank you to the Washington County staff who participated in events, as well as to Basic Needs, Fostering Love Project, Frandsen Bank, Hope Church, House of Prayer, Kelly and Fred Rashaw, Afton Bayport Lakeland Lions Club, New Life Church, and Restored. Your dedication and generosity made it possible for us to serve so many in need, and we are truly grateful for all you do to support our great community!

Submitted by Rachel Mlinarcik, Family Service Worker.



Voluntary Supports to Families with Young Children

The Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) is a voluntary, early intervention program that works with families on a short-term basis to build on their strengths,

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identify their areas of need, and connect them to resources and services to enhance their family’s well-being. PSOP services are family-driven, which allows parents to have a voice in prioritizing their goals and determining the outcome of services. PSOP services commonly include assistance with the following areas of need: Basic needs (food, clothing, housing); financial needs (budgeting and applying for financial assistance); family health (medical care, mental and chemical health services); parenting challenges; child care; and child behavioral concerns. In addition to connection to local resources, PSOP workers also help to empower families by building skills for accessing and navigating resources on their own and advocating for their family’s needs.

To be eligible for PSOP, families must:

- Be pregnant or have at least one child under the age of 11, and
- Be experiencing at least two risk factors, including but not limited to: Low income, domestic violence, substance use concerns, mental health concerns, housing instability, and/or history of child protection involvement.

Families can self-refer to PSOP or be referred by community service providers. Katie Olsen and Touzong Yang are the two social workers in the PSOP program. If you wish to make a referral, fill out the [referral form](#). Please [email PSOP](#) all your all referrals.

Submitted by Katie Olsen, PSOP Social Worker.

What's happened, so far?

The project team worked throughout 2023 to explore if FRCs are right for Washington County. Through research, data collection, and community engagement the project team identified that Family Resource Centers would be useful to Washington County families. The project team has started the foundational work needed to identify locations and partners to develop programs and services that will benefit families across the county.

What happens next?

Our team is working to develop a Family Advisory Board and continue collaborating with community partners that are committed to improving supports to families. The Family Advisory Board will be comprised of parents, guardians, and caretakers from throughout the county that will advise the project team on which FRC services to provide, locations, and inform how the FRCs will operate. The project team also plans to continue community engagement throughout the process to ensure the FRC meets the needs of those that it will serve.

Stay Tuned

Family Advisory Board Inaugural Meeting

Community Family Resource Connections (CFRC) held its first Family Advisory Board (FAB) meeting at the Woodbury Service Center in January.

The FAB is comprised of parents who use their voices and lived experiences to guide CFRC project staff and help shape how programming and supports are offered to families. Lead by Senior Social Worker/CFRC Coordinator Jerry Klebsch, the FAB is an opportunity for Washington County families to get involved in the CFRC project and provide insightful direction to the project team in the development of the CFRC.

The board members — who will meet the third Wednesday of each month — develop leadership and communication skills, build community with other involved families, gain valuable board experience, and learn more about supports and resources available to area families.

Recruiting FAB members is ongoing. More information can be found on the [CFRC project website](#).



What is the CFRC Project?

The CFRC project aims to bring Family Resource Centers (FRC) to Washington County. FRCs are community-driven hubs that can offer a variety of services and frequently provide parenting classes, child development activities, and other services with the goal of reducing child abuse and child welfare involvement.

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FAB members (l to r): Maryan Ali, Sandra Jemie, Ntang Elad, Karen Bauman, Timothy Brewington II, and Jerry Klebesch.

For more information on the CFRC project, [email Jerry Klebesch](#), CFRC Project Coordinator.

Submitted by Jerry Klebesch, CFRC Program Coordinator/
Senior Social Worker.

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship Care is the practice of relatives or close family friends stepping in to care for a child when the parents are unable to do so. This can happen in two primary ways:

- **Informal Kinship Care:** A private arrangement within the family, where relatives take on the caregiving role without formal involvement from child welfare agencies.
- **Formal Kinship Care:** This involves more structured arrangements, such as foster care licensing and oversight by child protection services, often with legal and financial support.

Navigating the resources and support systems available to kinship caregivers, whether in informal or formal settings, can be challenging. Fortunately, Foster Adopt Minnesota (FAM) is here to help. FAM offers valuable information, resources, and community support tailored to kinship families.

Submitted by Megan Roy, Prevention Team Supervisor.

Washington County's Truancy Diversion Program: A Focus on Student Attendance

Now that the 2024-2025 school year is nearly complete, it is an opportune moment to highlight Washington County's Truancy Diversion Program. This crucial service, a collaboration between Washington County Community Services and the Washington County Attorney's Office, aims to address attendance-related concerns by working closely with schools and families throughout the county.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the program provided support to 400 students, marking a 24% increase from the previous year. Notably, the program successfully diverted 90% of the referrals from escalating into court proceedings or involvement with the child protection system. This success underscores the program's effectiveness in addressing truancy before it reaches more serious levels.

Targeted Support for At-Risk Students

The program has identified the highest rate of truancy referrals comes from 8th grade girls and 9th grade boys. Additionally, there is growing concern about the number of re-referrals from previous school years, indicating a need for sustained and targeted intervention.

In response, Social Worker Kasia Heurh, who primarily works with schools in the South Washington County (SoWashCo) School District, will be partnering with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) intern to pilot an enhanced intervention model. This initiative will focus on providing additional support and monitoring to students in these specific target groups throughout the school year.

The goal of this pilot program is to reduce the rate of re-referrals and provide these students with the tools and support they need to improve their school attendance. If successful, there is hope to expand this approach in future school years to further reduce truancy rates across Washington County.

The Truancy Diversion Program's ongoing efforts reflect a commitment to keeping students engaged in their education and addressing the underlying issues that contribute to truancy. With this new pilot program, Washington County is taking proactive steps to support at-risk students and ensure they have the resources they need to succeed.

Submitted by Megan Roy, Prevention Team Supervisor.

Events



Left to right: Jerry Klebsch, Ali Jascor, Megan Roy, and Bailey Johnson at the Forest Lake Resource Fair.

The Prevention Team continues to expand its community presence. In the last year, the team has represented at a variety of community events. Events included:

- Back-to-School events in Oakdale and Landfall.
- Point-In-Time (PIT) Stop events aimed to support individuals and families experiencing housing instability.
- Multilingual Resource Fair.

These events offer families easy access to supports such as free haircuts, clothing, vaccinations, school supplies, food, financial assistance applications, and information on local community organizations.

Partnership Opportunities

The Prevention Team is available to present to your organization or group on any of the services and programs that we offer. We are also available to table at community outreach events and resource fairs.

Please [email Megan Roy](#) if you are interested in having the Prevention Team and other services offered by Washington County Community Services at an event.

Prevention Services Team

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