



## 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 back for more of Supporting Families Newsletter!

Thank you for coming back to read the second edition of Supporting Families Newsletter, created by the Prevention Services Team within Washington County Community Services. As a reminder, the Supporting Families Newsletter is designed to share valuable information, resources, and updates with agencies and invested community members. The hope is to foster collaboration and increase information-sharing about the great work we're doing together to support families across our community.

In our last (and first) newsletter, we shared information on who the Prevention Team is and what we are working on. Moving forward, this newsletter will celebrate events that have been held, highlight upcoming events, and highlight key initiatives being worked on by the team or in collaboration with other partners.

## Events Held Since April

We have been busy this summer and appreciated the opportunity to be included in several different community events. Here are just a few:

May 29 **East African Family Wellness Event** | Sponsored by the Community Engagement Team.



Left to right: Chris DeCorsey, Megan Roy, and Ayantu Feyissa-Yadassa.

June 3 **Teen Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Information Session for Parents** | Hosted by the South Washington County School District and Community Engagement Team, in partnership with the Prevention Team.

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June 14 **Juneteenth Celebration | Woodbury**



Left to right: Karen Bauman (FRC Family Advisory Board Member [FAB]) and Megan Roy.

July 16 **Stillwater Family Resource Fair |**  
Hosted by the Stillwater School District.

Aug. 14 & 21 **Back-to-School Family Fun Events |**  
Oakdale and Landfall communities |  
Hosted by the Community Engagement Team.

Through **Cimarron Food Distribution**  
November (Two Mondays a month since May.)

## News from the Team

### Family Resource Connections (FRC) Grand Opening



Ayantu Feyissa-Yadassa.



Jerry Klebsch and Ayantu with attendees.

FRC held its grand opening on May 5, at Park Grove Library in Cottage Grove. The open house event offered families the opportunity to connect with Washington County Community Services and to get support connecting with county and community resources. This opening represents work that started in 2022 with extensive community engagement to learn if

the Family Resource Center model would be a good fit for Washington County families.

The goal of the FRC project is to provide community-based hubs that offer a variety of support and services to strengthen families, communities, and reduce child abuse

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and child welfare involvement. FRC aims to offer a variety of services that specifically meet the needs of families in that community. The FRC project team is gathering feedback from community partners, the Family Advisory Board (FAB), and from area families to identify the best way to support families going forward.

FRC does not yet have a permanent location and relies on a pop-up model to offer families support services. The team has partnered with the county libraries and has begun offering resource navigation services at Park Grove and R.H. Stafford libraries on a recurring basis. The goal of the pop-up FRC services is to offer families direct support connecting to county and community services that best meet their needs. In addition to library service hours, the project team attends community events and is developing family-friendly support activities.

*Written by Jerry Klebsch, FRC Program Coordinator/  
Senior Social Worker.*

## Holiday season is approaching!



Gifts  
donated by  
Washington  
County  
Accounting  
and  
Information  
Technology  
(I.T.)  
departments.

### **Holiday Gift Sponsorship Program 2025**

Every year, the Washington County Community Services – Children’s Unit, in collaboration with Fostering Love Project, coordinates a Holiday Gift Sponsorship Program.

Thanks to the kindness of local businesses, community organizations, and individual donors, we’ve been able to ensure that children in foster care experience the magic, joy, and comfort of the holidays.

As we look ahead to the holiday season, we are reaching out to invite you to join us in supporting a heartwarming tradition that has touched the lives of hundreds of children and families in foster care throughout Washington County.

This year, our goal is to provide personalized gifts for over 200 children and families. With your support, each child will receive thoughtful gifts tailored to their age, interests, and needs. These may include:

- Warm clothing and winter essentials.
- Books and educational items.
- Toys, games, and art supplies.
- Other meaningful gifts to brighten their season.

Your participation, whether through sponsoring a child or family, organizing a gift drive, or making a financial contribution will send a powerful message of hope and care to children who may otherwise go without during the holidays.

### **Why It Matters**

Beyond the gifts themselves, this program reminds children and families involved in foster care that they are seen, valued, and supported by their community. It helps create lasting memories and fosters a sense of belonging and joy that can carry them into the new year.

### **Join Us Today!**

If you’d like to learn more or are ready to become a sponsor, please reach out to me directly: [Email Rachel Mlinarcik](mailto:rachel.mlinarcik@washingtoncounty.org) or call 651-279-4010.

If your agency has a similar program, we would also love to hear more and support your agency’s efforts through promotion and referrals as well.

Your generosity and partnership makes this program possible and we are truly grateful. Thank you for considering joining us in making the 2025 holiday season brighter for children in our community!

Written by Rachel Mlinarcik, Family Service Worker.

## Key Initiatives

### Teens and Digital Well-Being

When we picture teens, we often envision them as glued to their phones or devices, using the latest app or social media platform and needing to stay in constant contact with their peers. In 2019, the average teen, aged 13-18, spent 7 hours and 22 minutes (*not including time at school*) each day on screens (Rideout and Robb, 2019). While this is a significant amount of time, it's not surprising considering how much information is readily accessible with a few clicks or how easy it is to get distracted on social media with the endless scroll feature and algorithms designed to keep the user engaged.

Today, more than half of the children in the U.S. have a smartphone (53%) and those who do not, get one by the age of 11 (Kamenetz, 2019). About one in five children have a phone by the age of 8 (Kamenetz, 2019). Teens today spend a majority of their time on social media using platforms such as TikTok, Snap Chat, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Across all five platforms, one third of teens use at least one of these sites almost constantly (Faverio, 2025). On average, teens receive 237 notifications throughout the day and 36% of teens report waking up at least once per night to check their device (Walsh, 2025).

Teens often acknowledge cell phone use is an issue during our diversion meetings and contributes to their inability to focus, engage in daily responsibilities, and get enough sleep. School administrators report usage is problematic at school too. Devices have become prominent fixtures in the classroom, not only for completing assignments, but often for students to disengage during the school day.

Being online constantly both at home and in school has led to cyber-bullying, body image issues, and social-emotional concerns (Vasconcellos et. al, 2025). Additionally, "increased screen time can lead to emotional and behavioral problems, and kids with these problems often turn to screens to cope," (Vasconcellos et. al, 2025). The question becomes, how do we help keep teens connected but also ensure overall digital well-being?

Research indicates we need to set reasonable boundaries with our teens, but not completely cut them off from their connections or devices. Supporting digital well-being should include first discussing with your teen what it looks like for them and creating a plan together.

Boundaries such as limiting screens before or after school, during time with family, or removing devices before bed could be all be options. Additionally, it is important for parents and guardians to model healthy screen time and adhere to these same limits.

One way the Prevention Team is navigating digital well-being is through an online class, "Connected: How to Show Up for Your Kids in the Digital Age" through the Spark and Stitch Institute. The Spark and Stitch Institute is based out of Minneapolis and offers practical guidance, support, and strategies to address teens' mental health and well-being through science and research.

The Prevention Team recently purchased ten courses to offer to parents who want to become a digital mentor to their children and strategies to navigate healthy technology use and media. The self-paced course contains three modules, twelve short five-minute video segments and provides a variety of downloads allowing families to reflect, practice, and prioritize digital well-being on a timeline that works best for them. The course provides insight on how to address challenges that come up with social media and how to navigate screen time in a technologically-dependent society. It also teaches us how to re-connect with each other.

If your school or agency is working on a similar project or initiative and you would be interested in exploring ways to partner, please [email Megan Roy](mailto:megan.roy@sparkandstitch.com).

#### Citations:

Faverio, M. (2025). "10 facts about teens and social media." Pew Research Center.

Kamenetz, A. (2019). "It's a smartphone life: More than half of U.S. children now have one." NPR

Rideout, V., and Robb, M. B. (2019). [The Common Sense census: Media use by tweens and teens, 2019](#). San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media

Vasconcellos, R. P., Sanders, T., Lonsdale, C., Parker, P., Conigrave, J., Tang, S., del Pozo Cruz, B., Biddle, S. J. H., Taylor, R., Innes-Hughes, C., Salmela-Aro, K., Vasconcellos, D., Wilhite, K., Tremaine, E., Booker, B., & Noetel, M. (2025). "Electronic Screen Use and Children's Socioemotional Problems: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies."

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Psychological Bulletin, 151(5), 513–543.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000468>

Walsh, Erin (2025). “It’s Their World: Teens, Screens, and the Science of Adolescence.” Free Spirit Publishing.

Written by Ali Jascor, Diversion program social worker.

### **Mandatory Reporting: Re-imagined**

Community Services is excited to share a new collaborative initiative between our Child Protection Mandatory Reporter Training Team and the Prevention Team, inspired by the Institute to Transform Child Protection’s (ITCP) vision to *Re-Imagine Mandatory Reporting*. This effort is part of a broader movement to rethink how we support families and respond to challenges before involving the child welfare system.

Together, we are developing a workshop designed specifically for mandatory reporters, with the goal of providing deeper guidance and practical tools for ethically, compassionately, and effectively navigating the reporting process. Our approach prioritizes supporting helping professionals consider how communities can respond to families in crisis *before* reporting becomes necessary.

This initiative was sparked by ITCP’s powerful campaign on re-imagining what it means to be a mandated reporter. [View the Reimaging Mandated Reporting video.](#)

By strengthening community-based responses and decreasing reliance on child welfare interventions, we aim to uplift families through trust, connection, and local support networks.

#### **Interested in a presentation for your organization?**

Washington County would love to connect and share more. To schedule a session or learn more about the project, email [Megan Roy](#) or [Nissa Knutson](#).

### **New County Slogan**

Washington County recently adopted a new county slogan: *Rooted in Connection, Growing with Direction*. The slogan reflects Washington County’s commitment to fostering strong, supportive communities and aligns with the Prevention Team’s mission, which emphasizes

the importance of collaboration between families, communities, and partners. It is only fitting, then, that the family resource center model for Washington County is called Family Resource CONNECTIONS.

### **The Five Protective Factors Framework and Family Resource Connections**

As FRC moves into offering resources, support, and services to families, how is our work guided? How are we approaching our work with families?

FRC’s work with families is guided by the Strengthening Families Framework (SFF). Developed in 2005, the SFF is an approach to working with families that supports and builds key strengths and attributes called the Five Protective Factors. Research shows that when the Five Protective Factors are present, families experience improved outcomes for children, reduced instances of child maltreatment, less involvement with child protection services, and are stronger and healthier. The Five Protective Factors are at the core of FRC’s program development and serve as a guide to promoting community well-being.

#### **The Five Protective Factors:**

- **Parental Resilience:** The ability of parents to manage stress and function when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
- **Social Connections:** Social networks provide support, help solve problems, and give concrete assistance to parents. Social connections also reduce family isolation and offer ways for people to become more involved in their community.
- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Accurate information of child development and appropriate expectations at every age helps parents understanding of appropriate behavior and promotes healthy development.
- **Concrete Supports in Times of Need:** Meeting a family’s basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, and health care) are necessary for a family to thrive.
- **Social Emotional Competence of Children:** Parents can talk, create opportunities, and model empathy to create a positive environment for emotional expression for their children.

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These positive interactions impact a child's ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate behavior, and effectively communicate feelings.

Protective factors can come from extended family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, service providers, and others to be beneficial to a family. It is not important where they come from as long as they are present in the family's life. Family Resource Connections, and more than 30 states, rely on the Five Protective Factors to guide our work supporting families. As we grow and develop FRC programming and events, insight from families and the Five Protective Factors are key to shaping impactful supports that support strong, healthy, and successful families.

To learn more about FRC programs, the Family Advisory Board, to connect with the project team, or get involved, view the [FRC project website](#).

*Written by Jerry Klebsch, FRC Program Coordinator/Senior Social Worker.*

## Partnership Opportunities

The Prevention Team is available to present to your organization or group on any of the services and programs 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.

## Upcoming Events

- **Tech-Savvy Parenting workshop** | Hosted by Family Resource Connections (FRC)  
Thursday, Sept. 18 | 5-7 p.m. | Oakdale Library
- **Virtual training sessions for schools on the Truancy/Educational Neglect Diversion Program** | Hosted by the Washington County Diversion Team.  
[Link to register.](#)
  - Monday, Sept. 22 | 9-11 a.m.
  - Friday, Oct. 3 | 8:30-10:30 a.m. (*Specific to Educational Neglect*)
  - Thursday, Oct. 16 | 1-3 p.m.
- **Cottage Grove Point-in-Time (PIT) Stop event** | Hosted by Basic Needs.  
Thursday, Oct. 9 | 9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Cottage Grove Armory
- **Family Resource Connections (FRC)** will continue to hold the following hours, but check our [FRC website](#) for additional events and opportunities for families.
  - **R.H. Stafford Library** | 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month | 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
  - **Park Grove Library** | 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month | 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
- **Mental Health in Motion Outreach Program** is up and running. Check the [Mental Health in Motion website](#) for their schedule. If you are interested in having the team at an event, [email Anne Rooney](#).

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