



# ICAPA NETWORK

## Institutional and Out-of-State Placement of Washington Youth Study

### Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee Proposed Request

#### Purpose of Request

To authorize a comprehensive cross-agency study and data audit on institutional and out-of-state placements of Washington children and youth. The goal is to identify the full scope of such placements, the public resources supporting them, safety outcomes, and the community service gaps that lead to institutionalization.

#### Background and Problem Statement

Washington does not currently maintain a unified, auditable record of where its children are placed when they enter residential or institutional care, particularly when those placements occur out-of-state or through private facilities receiving public funds. Oversight is divided among DCYF, OSPI, DSHS, HCA, the ICPC administrator, and other entities, resulting in fragmented data and limited transparency on safety, cost, and effectiveness. This study would build a comprehensive statewide picture to inform legislative policy, budget, and oversight reforms.

#### Study Questions

1. How many Washington children are placed in residential or institutional settings, in-state, out-of-state, or out-of-country?
2. What portion of these placements use public funds, and through which programs or agencies?
3. What are the rates and trends of institutional abuse, neglect, or death in these placements?
4. What service or resource gaps cause out-of-state placement, and what in-state or community alternatives are missing?
5. How many children have been placed outside the United States, under what funding and oversight, and were there indicators of coercion or trafficking?

#### Requested Data Sources

Agency	Requested Data
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Out-of-district and out-of-state residential placements; funding and referral sources
Department of Children, Youth, and Families	Institutional placement data; child abuse and neglect complaints; ICPC placement records
Department of Social and Health Services	State-operated and contracted facilities; abuse reports; funding
Health Care Authority	Medicaid/Apple Health residential or behavioral placements (including out-of-state)
Child Abuse Hotline	Institutional abuse reports (including screened out reports)
Adult Protective Services	Abuse reports involving 18–21-year-olds in institutional care
ICPC Office	All out-of-state placements, reason, and compliance data
Other State Data (Auditor, Treasurer)	Facility payments, grants, or contracts

## Study Objectives

- Produce a cross-agency database of institutional placements and outcomes.
- Quantify public expenditures for in state and out-of-state care.
- Identify facilities with repeated abuse or neglect incidents.
- Document deaths and serious injuries in institutional settings over the past ten years.
- Recommend policy and service improvements to reduce unnecessary institutional placements.

## Anticipated Deliverables

- Comprehensive data report and integrated database (2015–2025 period).
- Performance audit findings on oversight, safety, and funding.
- Recommendations for legislative or budget actions to strengthen in-state service capacity.

## Proposed Timeline

Phase	Activity	Target Completion
Phase 1	Scoping and interagency data agreements	Q2 2026
Phase 2	Data collection and validation	Q4 2026
Phase 3	Analysis and interim report	Q2 2027
Phase 4	Final report and database release	Q4 2027

## Legislative Relevance

This study will provide the Legislature with a verified, cross agency baseline of institutional placements and public spending, strengthen oversight and accountability of residential programs, and measure outcomes against cost. By tying taxpayer dollars to performance and results, the Legislature can reduce waste, limit unnecessary out of state placements, improve child safety, and reinvest in proven in state services that deliver better outcomes at lower long term cost to Washington taxpayers.

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