

Focus On the Child— Year One Evaluation Report

Prepared for State of Washington,
Department of Social and Health
Services

ECONorthwest

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

A growing body of literature demonstrates the benefits of providing family-centered services to parents with active IV-D cases. Family-centered services are designed to “promote the family’s capacity to manage their own lives.”¹ With the goal of increasing the provision of such services, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funds access and visitation (AV) services through an AV grant program. These services include family mediation sessions and counseling to facilitate non-custodial parents’ (NCPs’) access to their children. In the 2007 multistate analysis of state AV programs, OCSE recommended that IV-D agencies more effectively refer families to AV programs,² and the provision of family-centered services was a priority area in OCSE’s 2009 Section 1115 demonstration grant funding cycle.

OCSE awarded a three-year demonstration grant to Washington’s Division of Child Support (DCS) in mid-2009. The demonstration project is designed to assist unwed parents in developing and filing parenting plans. Parenting plans provide critical structure to how non-cohabiting parents interact with each other and with their child on issues that affect the child’s wellbeing and upbringing.

DCS’s had four principle objectives for the Focus on the Child: Family-centered services for unwed parents in Washington State (FOC) demonstration:

1. Demonstrating that DCS can become a full partner in referring unwed parents to AV programs in a variety of urban and rural settings across the state.³
2. Measurably increasing the share of AV clients who are unwed parents in three demonstration sites: Olympia, Seattle, and Spokane.
3. Evaluating the effects of program participation on parent-child interaction and child support outcomes and the costs and benefits that would accrue to children and the state through statewide implementation.

¹ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/famcentered/services/>, accessed on November 3, 2010.

² *Child Access and Visitation Programs: Participant outcomes*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, May 2007.

³ As in other states, very few of Washington’s AV clients in 2008 were referred by DCS.

4. Strengthening collaboration among DCS, Workforce Development Councils, and Washington 211.

To achieve these goals, DCS proposed three program elements for the FOC demonstration:

1. **Mediation and parenting plan development.** Staff at project sites would assist unwed parents in getting services needed to develop parenting plans, including mediation if needed.
2. **Parent education seminars.** Selected sites would provide parent education seminars designed to improve parent-child contact, prevent conflict, and support successful implementation of parenting plans.
3. **Referrals to community-based organizations.** DCS and providers would direct parents to clearinghouses for information about workforce development opportunities and other community resources.

At the end of this first year of the FOC demonstration, Washington has a program in place that funds family-centered services for unmarried parents. In particular, FOC helped eligible clients pay for the costs associated with developing and filing a parenting plan. The three FOC sites have been serving clients since late spring 2010, although FOC has not successfully worked out arrangements to explicitly refer clients from DCS to FOC or to refer FOC clients to DRCs or other community resources.

FINDINGS

This report presents our evaluation findings from the first year of the FOC demonstration, including our process study of FOC implementation and preliminary findings based on data collected to date. The data analysis, based on FOC administrative data and IV-D case data from DCS provide a good description about the characteristics of clients FOC has served and can help DCS better target AV referrals to clients with specific case characteristics.

Our analysis of FOC and IV-D data for FOC clients receiving services during the first four months of the demonstration (428 cases in total) suggests a natural classification of FOC cases along two dimensions. First, we find strong correlations between self-reported CP and NCP agreement about NCP visitation and the extent of self-reported NCP visitations (see Table ES-1). The intensity of services FOC clients need to successfully file a parenting plan likely varies with classification because more agreeable cases have fewer barriers to success. Second, we find significant differences in IV-D involvement (e.g., whether an FOC family has an open IV-D case) and financial support (e.g., whether an NCP has made a recent child support payment), depending on whether a CP or an NCP first sought FOC services. These differences in IV-D case characteristics again suggest differing needs for services.

Table ES-1: Classification of FOC cases and selected case characteristics

Group	Definition	Number of cases	Percent of cases initiated by NCP	NCP visitation	
				% at least once per week	% never
Agreeable	"Mostly agree" on appropriate amount of parenting time; no difficulties scheduling time	67	66.7	68.7	3.0
Scheduling trouble	"Mostly agree" on appropriate amount of parenting time; difficulties scheduling time	68	75.0	58.8	2.9
Disagreeable	Parents disagree on appropriate amount of parenting time; difficulties scheduling time	174	62.7	51.2	11.5
No contact	No contact with other parent	84	74.1	14.3	59.5
Other	One or more missing responses to parenting time questions	13	94.4	38.5	15.4
<i>Total</i>		<i>406</i>	<i>69.1</i>	<i>47.3</i>	<i>18.7</i>

Note: Table excludes 22 cases with missing parenting time information.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

At present, the available data do not indicate significant differences in FOC service use across the FOC case categories, although it is too early to evaluate case outcomes with any rigor. Additional data collection may shed light on the extent to which FOC services address the specific needs of FOC clients and promote parenting plan development and improved child support payment outcomes.

Despite the short follow-up period, the patterns of services provided to FOC clients provide additional context about the needs of the FOC target population:

- **Most service episodes were brief.** Overall, 60 percent of FOC cases had had all received services invoiced on the day of the intake.
- **The most common services received were facilitator services (78 percent of cases) and various administrative activities (72 percent of cases).** The most common constellations of services were combinations of facilitator services, administrative services, and the filing fee.
- **Total cost varied considerably across cases, but not across sites or types of case.** The median case received \$56 in services, but the total cost ranged from \$20 to \$569. The distribution of costs is bimodal, driven by whether or not services included a filing fee.

Ultimately, the FOC and IV-D baseline data can help DCS better target AV referrals in the future and help DCS and AV providers better understand the need for services and costs of serving this population.

NEXT STEPS

While FOC has not implemented all program elements as originally planned, FOC has laid the foundation for further experimentation during the remainder of the demonstration period. Concurrent with FOC's attempts to further engage DCS field offices and IV-D clients, the evaluation team will continue to analyze program data and to document FOC implementation.

As of publication, a client follow-up survey was scheduled to begin during spring 2011, with enough completed surveys for our analysis possible by late summer of the same year. The survey data will provide our first look at post-participation parenting time outcomes. Additional data from DCS will also allow for more comprehensive follow-up on post-participation IV-D payment outcomes for FOC clients. These analyses will shed light on the extent to which FOC services address the specific needs of FOC clients and promote parenting plan development and improved child support payment outcomes.

IMPROVING CHILD SUPPORT OUTCOMES THROUGH FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) defines family-centered practice as:

“...a way of working with families, both formally and informally, across service systems to enhance their capacity to care for and protect their children. It focuses on the needs and welfare of children within the context of their families and communities. Family-centered practice recognizes the strengths of family relationships and builds on these strengths to achieve optimal outcomes....”⁴

Family-centered services, which may be formal or informal, implement elements of this approach to service delivery, and are designed to “promote the family’s capacity to manage their own lives.”⁵ A growing body of literature demonstrates the benefits of providing a constellation of family-centered services to parents with active IV-D cases. Depending on program elements, target population, and other factors, benefits may include improved child support payments, more stable parenting time arrangements, and improved family relationships along a number of dimensions.⁶

Aligned with the spirit of providing family-centered services, ACF’s Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) funds access and visitation (AV) services through an AV grant program that funds family mediation sessions, counseling, and other services to facilitate non-custodial parents’ (NCPs’) access to their children. OCSE’s 2007 multistate analysis of state AV programs recommended that IV-D agencies more effectively refer families to AV programs and more fully engage in providing family-centered services generally.⁷

OCSE, recognizing that IV-D agencies have not fully realized the benefits of providing family-centered services, included provision of these services as a priority area in the 2009 Section 1115 demonstration grant funding cycle. As in other states, very few—less than two percent—of Washington’s AV clients

⁴ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/famcentered/overview/>, accessed on November 3, 2010.

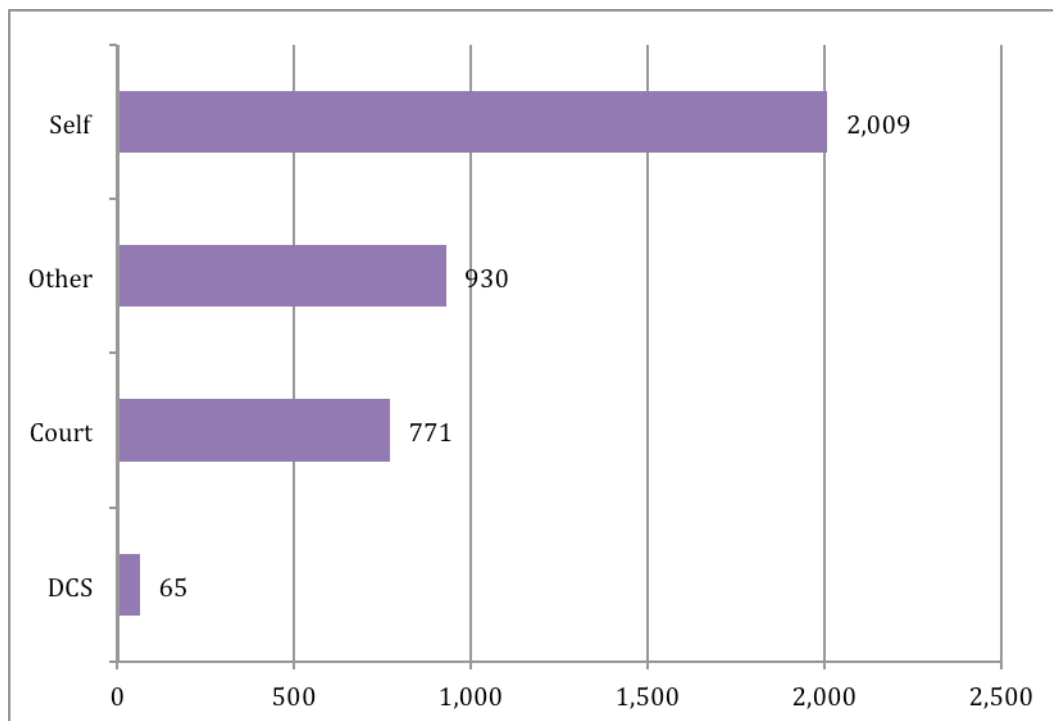
⁵ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/famcentered/services/>, accessed on November 3, 2010.

⁶ For an overview of relevant research funded by OCSE, see *Child Access and Visitation – Employment and Training – Fatherhood – Incarceration and Re-Entry – Projects In Progress*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, July 2009.

⁷ *Child Access and Visitation Programs: Participant outcomes*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, May 2007.

in FFY 2008 were referred by the Division of Child Support (DCS) (see Figure 1.1). Indeed, Washington's AV program shares many of the strengths and weaknesses of counterpart programs across the country. The program served 3,775 cases in Federal Fiscal Year 2008, with about one third of participating noncustodial parents reporting increased parenting time, although only 25 percent of these were unmarried.

Figure 1.1: Referral source of Washington's Access and Visitation clients, FFY 2008



Source: Adapted from *Child Access and Visitation Grants: State/Jurisdiction Profiles for FY 2008*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, March 2010.

As a result, Washington's DCS proposed a demonstration project designed to assist unwed parents in developing and filing parenting plans. A Parenting Plan provides critical structure to how non-cohabiting parents interact with each other and with their child on issues that affect the child's wellbeing and upbringing. Parenting Plans address residential schedules, parental rights to information about the child, and many other issues. OCSE awarded a three-year demonstration grant to DCS in mid-2009.

DEMONSTRATION GOALS

Washington's overarching goals for the Focus on the Child: Family-centered services for unwed parents in Washington State (FOC) demonstration were to demonstrate the ability of DCS to fully engage in referring unwed parents to AV programs and to strengthen the collaboration between DCS and other social service organizations serving similar populations. Achieving these goals will ultimately result in a better alignment of services with the

recommendations in OCSE's 2007 AV report. Specifically, the demonstration began with four principal objectives:

1. Demonstrating that DCS can become a full partner in referring unwed parents to AV programs in a variety of urban and rural settings across the state.
2. Measurably increasing the share of AV clients who are unwed parents in three demonstration sites: Olympia, Seattle, and Spokane.
3. Evaluating the effects of program participation on parent-child interaction and child support outcomes and the costs and benefits that would accrue to children and the state through statewide implementation.
4. Strengthening collaboration among DCS, Workforce Development Councils, and Washington 211.

To achieve these goals, DCS proposed three program elements for the FOC demonstration (see Chapter 2 for more detail):

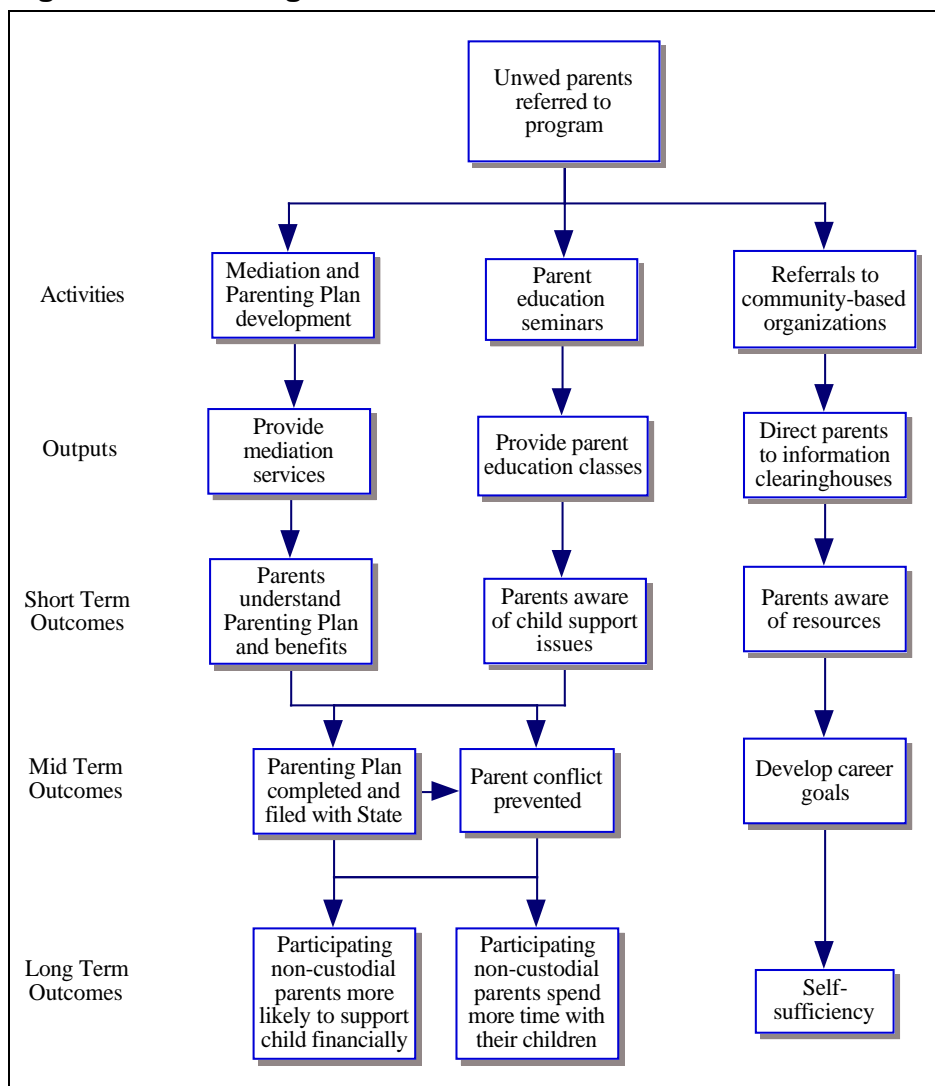
1. **Mediation and parenting plan development.** Staff at project sites would assist unwed parents in getting services needed to develop Parenting Plans, including mediation if needed. Court facilitators would work with them to complete a Parenting Plan for the child.
2. **Parent education seminars.** The selected sites would provide parent education seminars designed to improve parent-child contact and prevent conflict. These classes help parents learn about the issues children deal with when their parents live apart, and help support successful implementation of Parenting Plans and other formal and informal arrangements.
3. **Referrals to community-based organizations.** Many parents have pressing needs for a variety of services. To address these needs, DCS and providers would direct parents to clearinghouses for information about workforce development opportunities and other community resources.

THEORY OF ACTION

Figure 1.2 illustrates the presumed links between provision of the service elements (“activities”) and desired outcomes. The mediation and parent education seminars comprise the core of the program, with direct, positive impacts on child support outcomes the expected result through the paths indicated in the figure. Referrals to other community-based organizations, which require relatively little direct investment of resources by DCS, could improve FOC clients’ knowledge about and ability to access important

services (e.g., job training programs) that they might otherwise not receive. With an ultimate goal of economic self-sufficiency, these services can improve FOC clients' wellbeing.

Figure 1.2: FOC logic model



Our evaluation focuses on two specific outcomes:

- Noncustodial parents served by the program will show higher average payment rates than similarly situated parents who are not served. Holding other factors constant, DCS expects average payment rates (share of child support due that is paid) could increase by up to 20 percentage points.
- Participating parents—custodial and noncustodial—will report that noncustodial parents spend more and higher quality time with their children after involvement in the program.

Research commissioned by OCSE supports the contention that the proposed FOC services promote these and other positive outcomes (see the studies cited in the footnotes above). Consistent with the project goals, DCS also hoped that FOC would establish the feasibility and efficacy of IV-D's role in referring couples to AV resources.

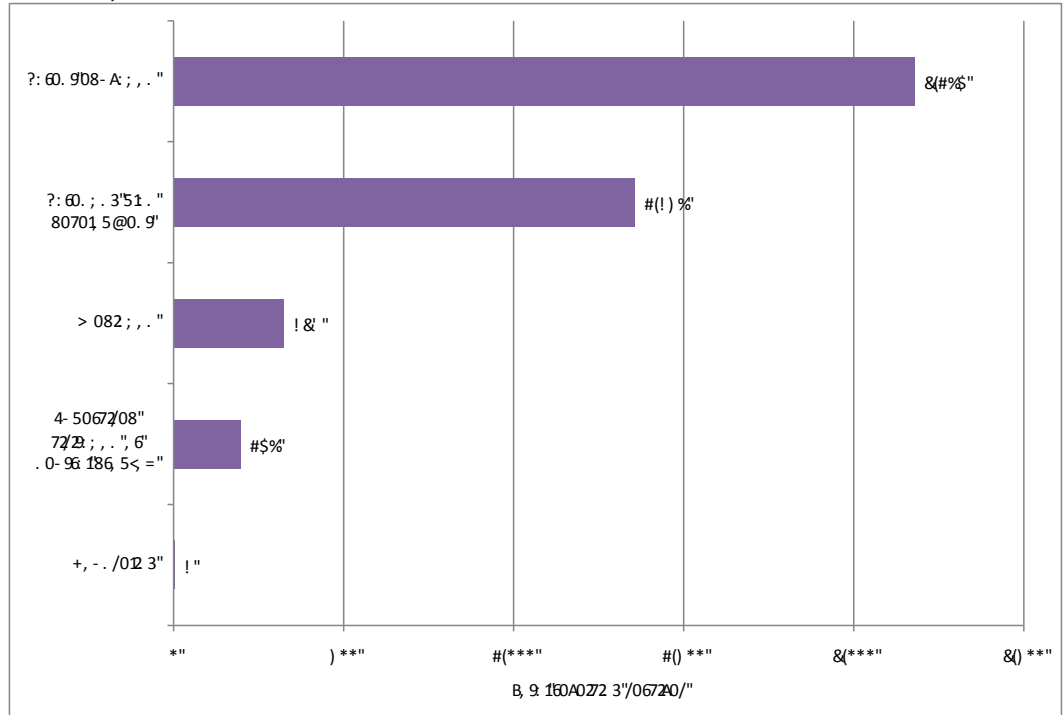
ACCESS AND VISITATION IN WASHINGTON STATE

OCSE awards AV grants under the “Grants to States for Access and Visitation” Program, which was authorized by the passage of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The program has an annual appropriation of \$10 million dollars, which are awarded to states in proportion, subject to a minimum of \$100,000 per state, to each state's relative prevalence of children living with a single biological parent. The grants require a minimum 10 percent state match, but otherwise provide states flexibility in determining which organizations to fund, which services to provide, and the geographic extent of service availability.

In FFY 2008 (the most recent year for which OCSE has published comprehensive data), Washington received \$175,056 in federal AV funds. Combined with the state match, these program funds were used to serve a total of 3,775 parents or other legal guardians at eight service providers throughout the state. As noted in the introduction, only 1.7 percent of these parents were explicitly referred to the program by DCS, while the national average was 23.8 percent. However, 80.6 percent of IV-D AV referrals occurred in Texas (59.0 percent of all Texas referrals), and most states had IV-D referral rates well below 10 percent—19 states and the District of Columbia had zero AV referrals from their IV-D agencies. Washington's AV clients were somewhat less likely to be unmarried than the national average (25.0 percent versus 47.6 percent), but the unmarried population still represents a sizeable fraction of the AV caseload, and the share would presumably increase if DCS succeeded in increasing its referral rate. The Washington AV sites provided a range of services, with emphasis on the services planned for FOC (see Figure 1.3).

DCS planned to leverage this existing AV infrastructure to quickly implement FOC in three DCS catchment areas: Olympia (Thurston and Clallam Counties), Seattle (King County), and Spokane (Spokane County). Olympia and Seattle had existing AV providers. Although no longer active, Spokane had a long-running and successful AV program called the Parent Enhancement Program that focused on helping unwed parents develop Parenting Plans.

Figure 1.3: Services provided to Washington Access and Visitation clients, FFY 2008



Source: Adapted from *Child Access and Visitation Grants: State/Jurisdiction Profiles for FY 2008*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, March 2010.

PROGRAM RECRUITMENT

The court system serves as the locus for a significant amount of access and visitation-related activity (the Thurston County Court Clerk has been an AV provider in the past), potentially including the filing of parenting plans, court-based establishment of child support orders, onsite mediation services, and referrals to partner organizations such as dispute resolution centers (DRCs), parenting class providers, and others. DCS planned to make the offices of county court clerks' the center of FOC activity. DCS planned to actively recruit unwed parents with AV issues to demonstration sites for FOC services, anticipating that the majority of the referrals would take place at the time paternity and support orders are established.

Referrals would also come from Washington's paternity affidavit program as an outgrowth of what began as a Washington Section 1115 demonstration known as Bright Start. The demonstration officially ended in 2009, but Washington has incorporated successful elements of the demonstration into the regular paternity affidavit program. In particular, the program now offers unmarried mothers and possible fathers the opportunity to apply for no-cost genetic testing soon after the mother has given birth at the hospital. DCS proposed to refer interested parents for FOC services if they met one of three criteria:

1. A no-cost genetic test provided through the paternity affidavit program has determined a biological father. The mother and father have filed a paternity affidavit form with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).
2. The paternity affidavit program rejects the application for genetic testing because the birth record names a legal father.
3. The paternity affidavit program closes the genetic testing application because the mother and father filed a paternity affidavit after applying for genetic testing but before the genetic test was completed.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The FOC evaluation consists of two major components. The first component, a process study, provides a detailed description of the demonstration's implementation phase and of the referral processes and services as they are actually deployed by DCS and service providers. The second component, an impact analysis, will use data from several sources to quantify program impacts. This study will provide the best possible evidence about the extent to which the FOC interventions improved outcomes.

PROCESS STUDY

The Year 1 process study consists primarily of two rounds of visits to FOC demonstration sites to interview actual and potential FOC service providers, and of discussions and meetings with DSHS staff. The first round of interviews, completed prior to the beginning of FOC services, provide a first look at potential difficulties in implementation and providers' perspective on the likely impacts of the demonstration. The second round of interviews covered topics including:

- The number of parents each provider expects to serve during the course of the demonstration
- Provider contingency plans if the number of referrals is considerably higher or lower than their expectation
- Unanticipated barriers or synergies discovered during implementation
- Provider interactions with other partners (e.g., DRC interactions with court clerks)
- How Focus on the Child services complement current operations
- How providers would determine the success of their pieces of the demonstration.

- A request for workshop materials and other documentation describing the services provided.

As the demonstration comes to a close, the research team will return to each provider of new services. Interviews will document how their programs worked in practice, with a focus on how implementation varied from their pre-demonstration plans. The nature and scope of the interviews will necessarily differ by provider, but we anticipate covering at least the following topics:

- Mid-course adjustments to outreach, curriculum, and other processes that resulted from provider staff experiences
- Status of and changes in the provider’s relationship with DCS
- How far parents were willing to travel for the service and whether the site’s location was perceived as an asset or a barrier
- The impact of financial or time considerations on parent participation level
- Aspects of the curricula or services that worked well and those that did not
- Clients’ perceptions of the value of the services
- Future prospects for offering similar services and maintaining newly developed partnerships

IMPACT STUDY

The impact study will provide the most robust quantitative evidence possible regarding the effectiveness of the Focus on the Child services. This study will focus on changes in (1) the time parents spend with their children; (2) parents’ perception about changes in parenting time pre- and post-service receipt; and (3) patterns of child support payments and parenting time. The impact study will seek to answer two central questions for each outcome:

1. *To what extent does FOC appear to have affected the outcome?*
2. *How do differences in client characteristics, provider services, and other salient program characteristics relate to the observed outcomes?*

Data for the impact study come in part from an intake form completed when clients first request FOC services. The intake form, included in the Appendix, requests contact information for the parents, basic demographic information, and information about parenting time. Two other data sources supplement this information. DSHS will conduct a post-participation follow-up survey to determine the extent to which parenting time outcomes have changed since clients first received services, and DCS data matched to clients identified on the intake forms provide detailed information about case characteristics and support payment history. The DCS data provides both baseline and post-participation outcome measures. We describe these data in more detail in Chapter 3.

PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS REPORT

This report presents our evaluation findings from the first year of the FOC demonstration. At the time of publication of this report (November 2010), the three FOC sites had been serving clients since late spring, although FOC had not successfully worked out arrangements to explicitly refer clients from DCS to FOC or to refer FOC clients to DRCs or other community resources.

Chapter 2 presents our process study of FOC implementation. In that chapter, we describe FOC in more detail and findings from our site visits regarding implementation. We also describe the major barriers that prevented FOC from fully implementing all planned services. Chapter 3 describes data collection to date and preliminary findings based on this data. Chapter 4 presents our conclusions regarding the first grant year and describes activities anticipated for the remainder of the demonstration.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we describe FOC implementation—the sites and providers selected to provide services during the first grant year, the services funded by the grant, the implementation timeline, and findings from our site visit interviews. We also describe the current status of FOC at the demonstration sites and aspects of implementation that did not occur as planned. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of prospects for the years remaining in the demonstration period.

After the completion of a round of preliminary site visits to potential service providers, completed during November 2009 through January 2010, FOC staff decided to limit the demonstration to King, Spokane, and Thurston counties, thereby removing Clallam County from the grant, at least at first. ECONorthwest evaluators accompanied FOC staff on these visits. Two trips (Spokane and Thurston counties) included separate meetings with family court staff and separately with DRC staff. The King County court system provides mediation through the court clerk. The primary meeting goals were to introduce the FOC demonstration to partner agencies and for evaluators and project staff to understand each county's processes related to parenting plans and the role of mediation in these processes.

In general, attendees seemed uniformly supportive of the goals of the FOC demonstration, and all providers anticipated adequate capacity to handle a reasonable flow of FOC clients. But prior to FOC participation, as anticipated, each site had different processes for client intake, assessment of fees, and referral to mediation. Below, we summarize the most salient of these differences across sites—those likely to impact demonstration operations and our FOC evaluation:

- **King County Superior Court.** This visit involved the King County court clerk and staff from the county's family court services, which also offers mediation services to parents. This is the only demonstration site where parents can both navigate establishment of a parenting plan and receive mediation services. The office assesses both court fees and mediation fees on a sliding scale, but clients have to request a fee waiver—it is not advertised to clients.
- **Spokane County Superior Court.** This visit involved the county court clerk. County staff reported collecting relatively little client data at intake. In contrast to other regions, court staff reported that money was typically not a barrier for parents. This may be attributable to the fact that parents can request a fee waiver to the family court

commissioner who can waive all or some of the filing fee (parents must still pay a twenty dollar facilitator fee). The court clerk does not determine eligibility for the fee waiver. Spokane staff also expressed interest in having FOC pay for guardian ad litem (GAL) fees, noting that such fees are often a much more important consideration for parents than are filing fees. For eligible families, the office typically waives all filing fees other than a twenty-dollar facilitator fee.

- **The Fulcrum Institute (Spokane-area DRC).** Fulcrum staff indicated that the DRC explicitly asks clients about their income to determine eligibility for a fee reduction, although they do not require the client to provide proof of income to receive a reduction. More importantly, the courts and the DRC had very different perspectives on the success of mediation through partners such as DRCs. Court staff reported having seen only limited success with DRC mediations, noting that mediation agencies frequently fail to follow through to ensure that parents actually get a signed parenting plan—a step that parents do not always understand as critical. The DRC, on the other hand, reported a high level of success at seeing parenting plans through to completion, including the final court filing.
- **Thurston County Clerk’s Office.** This visit involved the Thurston County court clerk and court facilitator. Staff reported that fees created a hardship for many families, and the county has a fee waiver process, but staff did not want to decide eligibility for the purposes of the FOC intake. Instead, interviewees indicated a strong preference to fund services for all otherwise eligible clients, regardless of income. The clerk’s office agreed that they could provide demographic data for clients served by FOC.
- **Thurston County Dispute Resolution Center.** The Thurston County DRC collects useful demographic information about clients and conducts a follow-up telephone survey with clients six to twelve months after mediation. The data availability is driven in part by reporting requirements for the DRC’s AV grant. During the visit, DRC staff agreed that they could provide participant demographic and survey data to ECONorthwest for the evaluation. The DRC uses a sliding scale to assess fees, based on client-reported income, although they always charge a nominal fee to help clients understand the value of the services they are receiving. The DRC noted that a large increase in clients could strain available capacity to provide services.

FOCUS ON THE CHILD SERVICES

FOC planned to offer three core services to eligible clients—unmarried parents seeking parenting plan assistance and who have established paternity for their child. The core services include: assistance with parenting plan development and mediation, parent education, and referrals to other

community-based organizations. In this section, we describe the planned services in more detail.

MEDIATION AND PARENTING PLANS

Parenting plans lie at the heart of the FOC agenda. These plans formalize certain rights and responsibilities of custodial parents (CPs) and non-custodial parents (NCPs) with respect to visitation, a child's education, and many other issues. The plan, enforceable by the court if filed appropriately, provides a court-based process for preventing or resolving parental conflict. Indeed, a court may require that parents complete an acceptable plan before finalizing a support order. Parenting plans typically address:

- The child's residential schedule (where the child resides each day of the year, including provisions for holidays, birthdays of family members, what contact the child will have with each parent, and so on). The residential schedule also identifies the child's custodial parent.
- The child's school schedule, which establishes which parent the child will reside with for the purposes of school enrollment, as well as the schedule for school breaks.
- Transportation arrangements, which determine how the child will be transported between and during visits with parents.
- Sharing of information about the child. The parenting plan can detail each parent's rights to information about the wellbeing of the child, including access to copies of report cards, school meeting notices, results of standardized tests, and communications from healthcare providers.
- Special events. The plan can spell out a parent's rights to attend extracurricular activities (e.g., sports or music recitals) when the child is not residing with that parent.
- Telephone contact with the nonresident parent. The plan can establish a parent's right to contact a child when the child is residing with the other parent.

While parents can and do complete and file parenting plans independently, many parents need assistance in developing an appropriate plan and in resolving significant areas of conflict with the other parent. King County courts provide mediation services in-house. Spokane and Thurston counties refer clients to external DRCs for mediation. The mediation itself can consist of one to several mediation sessions conducted by professionally trained mediators in a neutral environment. DRCs also provide assistance to parents in preparing the parenting plan document. Parents are responsible for submitting the document at the court. With or without mediation, completing the parenting plan can require that parents pay a number of fees for forms, court filings, and other expenses.

FOC planned to assist unwed parents in getting the services needed to develop a Parenting Plan, including referrals to mediation, help completing a parenting plan for the child, and assistance with filing fees. In a later section we describe the specific fees funded by FOC.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BRIGHT START DEMONSTRATION

DCS began the FOC demonstration having learned important lessons about parenting plan development through an earlier Washington Section 1115 demonstration, Bright Start, an extension of which may ultimately provide a source of referrals for FOC (see introduction). Through the demonstration, which focused on providing services that support voluntary paternity establishment for unmarried parents of newborn children, DCS learned of several challenges to parenting plan completion that can affect unmarried parents more than they do for divorced parents. The Bright Start evaluation reports summarize the challenges to parenting plan development for this population

- **Unwed parents are less likely to have had joint problem-solving experiences.** Unlike divorced parents, unwed parents are less likely to have worked together as a team and may have little or no history working together to solve problems.
- **Some unwed mothers are unwilling to participate in a voluntary process that is initiated by the father.** Many mothers have no interest in continuing a relationship with the father, while the father has no means to compel the mother's participation. Given this difficulty, one mediator concluded that formal court-based referrals may be the only viable approach for interested fathers to develop a parenting plan.
- **The time required for mediation proves challenging for many parents.** Most Bright Start applicant parents had low incomes and inflexible work schedules, as is likely to be true of FOC clients. Even with fully subsidized parenting plan fees, parents may still face the very real additional costs of lost wages, childcare, and transportation.
- **Fully subsidized mediation may devalue the service from the perspective of parents.** Some DRC representatives suspect that because parents were not expected to pay anything for the mediation, they may have perceived the service to be of little or no value. This suggests that requiring a nominal co-payment, as is done in Spokane, might increase interest and participation.

Despite these challenges, child support partners at all levels, from OCSE to local AV grantees, recognize the importance of encouraging parenting plan development as a component of efforts to provide comprehensive, family-centered services.

PARENT EDUCATION SEMINARS

OCSE's 2007 report explicitly recommended that IV-D agencies incorporate basic child support information into parent education classes. Under OCSE guidelines, parent education seminars can be provided by the courts or community-based organizations. Classes can cover a variety of issues that encourage the development of parenting plans, increase NCP parenting time, and promote shared parenting.⁸ Discussion topics might include shared parenting, the effects of divorce on children, and court procedures involved in visitation and custody orders.

Parenting education seminars are offered in each of the three demonstration site counties, with Spokane County and King County requiring attendance from all clients who file parenting plans. A seminar is offered in Thurston County, but attendance is not mandatory for parents who file parenting plans. Four different agencies offer seminars in Spokane County, and the King County Superior Court offers classes in three different locations. Each county offers either a sliding scale or fee reductions for low-income clients (class fees are \$40-50 per person). The classes are focused on strategies to help children experiencing the separation or divorce of their parents or who live separately from one or both parents. Topics covered include grief and loss, stress indicators in children, the impact of parental conflict on children, parenting plan development, and communication skills for parents.

To improve parent-child contact and prevent conflict, FOC planned to support parent education class development and attendance. As of the publication of this report (November 2010), FOC had not become involved with parent education classes in the demonstration areas. The exception is in King County, where one client had had the cost of the parenting education seminar paid for by FOC.

REFERRALS TO COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the standard AV services described above, FOC planned to refer custodial and noncustodial parents to other community-based organizations that might provide needed services to AV clients. In particular, the program was to refer clients to existing clearinghouses of information about workforce development programs and other community resources. While generally readily available at no cost, many parents have little or no knowledge about these resources. Through the project, DCS would develop referral methods appropriate not only for FOC clients, but for IV-D clients generally.

The Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State is a prominent example of a possible referral target. Using the Calculator, parents can examine overall

⁸ See OCSE's 2009 Local Service Provider Survey. Retrieved November 29, 2010 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/access_visitation/localserviceprovidersurvey.pdf

household budgets and learn about resources that can assist in planning and making progress toward self-sufficiency. Developed by the Workforce Development Councils of Washington State, the web tool is available across the state and allows users to develop career goals, determine whether current jobs pay enough to meet family needs, assess eligibility for public benefits, and compare living situations. Calculator referrals would be particularly useful for non-TANF parents who may not already be engaged in job search or work advancement programs.

A second example discussed during FOC planning is the Washington Information Network 211—or WIN 211. Incubated through the United Way, WIN 211 connects users to a network of almost 6,500 health and human service providers through an on-line community resource database and via a telephone helpline.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM FEES

A guardian ad litem (GAL) is “an adult who is appointed by the court to represent the best interests of an individual for a specific purpose for a specific period of time. Under the direction of the court, a GAL performs an investigation and prepares a report for the court of the GAL's findings and recommendations.”⁹ The courts often appoint a GAL to represent minor children in family law cases, such as court-based establishment of a child support order, or establishment of a parenting plan.

Although not part of the original proposal, attendees at the preliminary site visit to Spokane presented a case that, by paying GAL fees, FOC could help families overcome an expensive, and reportedly often insurmountable barrier to completing a parenting plan. A Spokane Superior Court commissioner stated that GAL fees typically amount to about \$1,300 per case, and that, when the court appoints a GAL, parents have the responsibility to pay for these fees before the court will finalize a parenting plan. FOC requested and received permission from DCS and from OCSE to expend grant funds on GAL fees. As of publication, however, this service had not yet been offered to FOC clients.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES

Soon after the preliminary site visits, FOC staff concluded that the FOC providers during the first grant year should consist of the three systems (King, Spokane, and Thurston), The Fulcrum Institute, and the Thurston County DRC. Staff also pursued permission from OCSE to fund GAL fees in the Spokane region. FOC staff began negotiating implementation with the demonstration sites soon after the visits, with a goal of offering services beginning in the spring of 2010.

⁹ http://www.courts.wa.gov/committee/?fa=committee.display&item_id=314&committee_id=105, accessed November 9, 2010.

For the most part, negotiations with the court systems proceeded smoothly, with primarily administrative hurdles that program staff overcame with relative ease. The Thurston County Clerk began serving clients in April 2010, with King and Spokane courts offering services beginning in May 2010.

DRC MEDIATION SERVICES

FOC had less success at bringing DRC providers online. The Fulcrum Institute contract negotiations never progressed. Thurston County DRC appeared ready and willing to participate in the grant, and FOC had reached an agreement with the DRC regarding services that FOC would fund and the amount of reimbursement for the services. FOC and the DRC agreed that the grant would fund all necessary mediation sessions necessary for referred clients to establish or modify a parenting plan,¹⁰ and agreed in principal to pay an additional intake fee of \$100—higher than the DRC’s standard intake fee of \$15 because of additional grant reporting requirements.

Unfortunately, discussions bogged down in negotiations over data exchange regarding DRC clients. FOC requested that the DRC submit client intake sheets that included personally identifiable information (see below). The individual identifiers would allow FOC to link clients to child support and parenting plan outcomes after the clients received services. Citing legal requirements and a commitment to client privacy, the DRC director and FOC staff spent over two months trying to find a mutually acceptable way for the DRC to provide FOC with the client data needed for the evaluation and to track parenting plan outcomes for grant reporting. Ultimately, DCS could not approve committing to a non-disclosure statement that the DRC believed was necessary to exchange the data. As of publication, DRCs were not providing FOC-funded mediation.

ENGAGEMENT OF DCS

Greater engagement of IV-D agencies with family-centered services available through AV service providers was a primary impetus for the Section 1115 priority area, and an important component of DCS’s proposal for the FOC demonstration. However, during the first demonstration year, FOC staff determined that caseload pressures and hiring restrictions would limit the ability of DCS to engage immediately in referring clients to FOC services. Instead, project staff convened several meetings with DCS management to identify agency priorities with respect to AV services and FOC specifically. Referrals of Bright Start clients had also not begun.

At the time of publication, FOC and DCS were developing marketing materials to advertise FOC services to eligible DCS clients (details were not yet finalized). FOC had also left open the possibility that DCS might engage with

¹⁰ Thurston County DRC reported that most clients completed the process within two two-hour sessions. FOC would reimburse the DRC at a rate of \$200 per session.

service providers to provide information about DCS generally or about specific cases, and to modify parent education seminars.

INTAKE FORMS

Prior to serving clients, FOC worked with the three demonstration sites to develop a client intake form. The form, based in part on intake forms already used by AV providers and the courts, would serve two main purposes. First, the form, required for grant reimbursement, provides a consistent set of information for tracking clients over time. Second, the personal identifiers requested on the form allow DCS to match FOC clients with existing child support records. This data match will allow an evaluation of child support outcomes for FOC clients. Finally, the one-page intake form includes a series of brief questions about parenting time issues that will provide baseline data for evaluating parenting time impacts.

Other than the confidentiality concerns raised by Thurston County DRC, providers were willing to work with the intake form ultimately produced by FOC (see the Appendix for a blank form). FOC instructed sites to submit an intake form for clients when they first entered the program. In some cases, sites have been submitting an intake form every time a client requests a new set of services. According to site staff, this is easier than trying to quickly associate clients with prior intake forms. A side benefit is that, with a sufficient number of clients completing multiple forms, the evaluation can examine changes in parenting time as clients progress through the system, which would not have been possible without the duplication. Chapter 3 describes the data collected on these forms in detail.

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Evaluating parenting time outcomes requires post-participation data. Because DCS does not routinely collect parenting time data, the evaluation will rely on a post-participation survey of clients for information about parenting time. During the summer and fall of 2010, ECONorthwest, FOC, and DSHS Research and Data Analysis (RDA) collaborated to develop the follow-up survey questions and methodology. At the time of publication, RDA had agreed to conduct the telephone survey using their staff of trained interviewers (see the Appendix for the most recent draft survey questions). RDA was to begin conducting surveys in April 2011. The goal is to survey clients about six months after they completed an intake form, although the timing of the survey relative to intake had not been finalized due to lingering uncertainty about FOC funding levels during the remainder of the demonstration period.

POST-IMPLEMENTATION SITE VISITS

In June and July 2010, the ECONorthwest project team interviewed county clerk employees at each of the three FOC sites. Interviewees included facilitator program supervisors, cashier supervisors, accounting supervisors,

and family court operations supervisors, although we did not interview every staff classification at every site. The goal for the visits was to understand the FOC implementation process and to query providers about any actual or anticipated barriers to implementation. In general, interviewees reported that implementation was smooth, with no major changes to pre-implementation plans. Respondents provided some suggestions for expanded or altered coverage for the second and third years of the demonstration, although these suggestions were not necessarily targeted directly at the populations served by DCS.

As noted above, FOC had not overcome barriers to developing referral flows from DCS to FOC providers or from the court clerks to DRCs and other organizations. Below, we summarize the comments of interviewees from the FOC clerks' offices in response to nine interview questions. Each interview occurred within three months after the site began accepting FOC clients.

1. Please describe the services that the Focus on the Child demonstration (FOC) funds at your site.

- Spokane County interviewees reported that FOC funds were being used to cover the following client costs:
 - Parenting plan filing fees: \$308
 - Parenting plan modification filing fees: \$69
 - Paperwork packet fees: \$20
 - Facilitator fees: \$28
- King County interviewees identified a similar set of services funded by FOC:
 - Parenting plan filing fees: \$250
 - Parenting plan modification filing fees: \$56
 - Facilitator fees: \$20
 - Paperwork packet fees: \$6 to \$39
 - Ex parte (clerk fees): Not used
 - Parenting seminar fees: \$40
 - Mediation service fees: Not used as of publication
 - Facilitator document review fees: Not used as of publication
- Thurston County FOC also covers a similar set of activities (one interviewee noted that the fees for these services can add up to \$400-450 per case):
 - Parenting plan filing fees: \$230
 - Parenting plan modification filing fees: \$36
 - Facilitator surcharge: \$20
 - Facilitator session fees: \$20
 - Certified copies: \$3 to \$40
 - Paperwork packet fees: \$6 to \$39

FOC and the Spokane site decided not to provide GAL services early in the demonstration because such services, if necessary, are typically required only after a long lag. Thurston County FOC also does not fund GAL services, although clients can access these services from agencies outside of the courts. The services require a considerable investment in addition to the fees listed above. The King County site did not raise the issue of providing GAL assistance.

2. To what extent are facilitator fees, filing fees, and other costs a barrier to unmarried parents filing a completed parenting plan with the court? How do FOC services help the families you serve?

A supervisor in King County said that she doesn't think costs are as much of a barrier as clients' ability and willingness to do the necessary work—the courts already have “a lot of tools in place to help people find reductions in fees or point them in the right direction” (e.g., free classes, access to forms online, having clients print forms). The county reportedly advertises the availability of assistance, puts information about waivers online, and refers clients for help based on their response when they learn about the fees. The supervisor said that despite these efforts, it's possible that some parents are deterred by the potential costs and never ask for help. She noted that the FOC funding certainly benefits the court budget, but she questions the net benefit for clients because the filing fee can already be waived for many of them.

However, a Thurston County worker said that waiving the filing fee without the grant requires clients to do a lot of paperwork and go before the court, which adds about a day to the process, which in turn increases the likelihood that they do not complete the process. She added that if clients don't qualify to have the fee waived, the process is delayed further while they try to get money elsewhere.

Interviewees in Spokane and Thurston counties were confident about the grant's benefits:

“Several people broke down in tears when they got a voucher. Most of my clients have trouble [paying for and completing] the forms. Being able to give them the forms is awesome.”

“The program takes a couple of steps out and makes the process more accessible.... Now clients have forms, waived fees, and a structure to follow.”

“The packet is wonderful. I can get them started and tell them which parts of the large packet to fill out at home before coming back for the next step.”

“As little as \$10 can be the problem. It wouldn't work to fund just part of the amount.”

“It has accelerated the paperwork process for clients—it can take a week or two with the funding, whereas it can take months without the help. Because the staff can’t help with the paperwork, being able to send clients to meet with the facilitator really accelerates the process. It’s a big stress relief for clients, which has a bottom line effect on the kids.”

3. Have your implementation plans changed since the initial FOC meeting? If so, how?

County clerk employees did not report having to change their implementation timeline. The most significant issues were administrative in nature (see responses to other questions, below) and were generally straightforward to address. Not surprisingly, interviewees noted that the court’s clients typically need a broader range of services than those currently covered by FOC, and they expressed interest in expanding FOC funding to cover additional costs:

- A King County interviewee said that coverage for the cost of evaluations prior to the completion of parenting plans would be helpful. Such evaluations aren’t required, but when parties can’t agree and judges order or want to see an evaluation, the cost can be prohibitive for many parents (the court assesses fees on a sliding scale from \$150 to \$3,000 per case).
- An employee in Thurston County said that their site was interested in adding FOC coverage for administrative overhead associated with the project. She also indicated that clients would benefit from increased coverage for certified copies of court orders. She noted that parents need certified copies for many reasons.

4. Were there any significant obstacles to implementing the services as you originally planned? If so, what were they and how were they overcome? Any unanticipated synergies?

Beyond the following few issues, interviewees again indicated that the implementation process went well:

- An interviewee in Spokane said that it is not clear whether all clients who receive a voucher for the parenting plan filing fee actually start a case (they are reportedly working out a system to look into this and streamline the process).¹¹
- In King County, the supervisor thought that their smaller number of FOC clients at the time of the interview (just 4 compared to 100 or

¹¹ The Spokane County site facilitator indicated that she writes “voucher” on FOC client questionnaires to indicate that the court is waiving filing fees.

more for other sites) may have been because of differences in enrollment requirements: the King County clerk's office required clients to have a court order or a certified copy of the paternity affidavit prior to enrollment in the grant.¹² However, comparing King County's processes with those in Thurston County revealed that Thurston County has the same requirements for potential FOC clients, so this does not explain the enrollment difference between the sites.

The supervisor also suggested that expanding the grant to the court clerk's office in Kent would likely increase their pool of potential clients because that catchment area reportedly has a larger population of lower income, unmarried parents. The supervisor reported that the FOC grant was successfully expanded to Kent on October 1, 2010. The increase in clients thus far has been small but significant. Over time it will be clear whether expanding the grant to the Kent office has substantially increased the number of FOC clients in King County.

Finally, in November, the King County supervisor reported that the clerk's office has changed the way it advertises the grant: potential clients now receive information about FOC when they first inquire about parenting plans instead of when they meet with the facilitator. This could result in an increase in grant enrollment.

- King County workers also reported that they made plans to begin reviewing facilitator documents before they go to the commissioner, but this program has not yet been implemented because of staff shortages. This review process is scheduled to begin on January 3, 2011.
- The King County supervisor pointed out the benefits of FOC services being available to both parents. In King County, the parent who does not initiate the case receives a summons in the mail. The supervisor expressed interest in sending information about FOC services with the summons, but cannot do so because the office must remain neutral and cannot influence the parent's decision to respond to the summons.

5. How many clients do you expect to serve during the demonstration? Do you have a contingency plan in case the number of referrals is considerably higher or lower than your expectation?

¹² The certified copy must be on file for 60 days before it can be used in court to establish a parenting plan. Parents who don't want to wait this long can follow the standard court process. At the time of the interview, the office supervisor said that staff were unsure how often clients were willing to wait up to 60 days versus using the regular process (assuming it was affordable) or foregoing the services altogether.

King County was the only site with interviewees who knew precisely how many FOC clients they had served (four at the time of the interview). They calculated that they could probably serve up to about 20 additional clients, assuming all clients required all available services. One interviewee said that during the demonstration, King County would probably see one or two cases where clients don't complete the process, then return later and have to restart the process. In these cases the court has to order the case to be reopened.¹³ The King County supervisor indicated that, because the court is "self-funded," they would welcome more referrals: "The more clients we can serve the better."

Spokane County workers were fairly certain that they would have extra funds at the end of the first grant year and expressed hope that any extra funds will carry over. They said that they do not actively advertise the program; rather, at intake the supervisor uses her discretion to determine which clients have a need for FOC-funded services. .

Thurston County interviewees reported having no trouble recruiting or finding clients, even without any explicit outreach efforts—most clients find out about FOC services through word of mouth. She said that Thurston County does not track whether clients fill out the intake form more than once (i.e., when clients request FOC services during multiple visits to the clerk's office). When asked whether the recession had any effects on the client population, one Thurston County employee reported an increase in child support garnishments throughout the county as well as an increase in the number of parents deciding to stay together because of the financial benefits of doing so.

Thurston County workers said that they determine client eligibility by evaluating clients' answers to verbal and survey questions. They "will have no trouble using the money" but will have extra funds at the end of the first grant year. They said that a big influx of referrals wouldn't be a problem for them because the grant enables clients to see the people who can help them complete the process quickly. In sum, "there is no negative to having more referrals if there's a funding source."

6. If the parenting plan is never completed, do families benefit from mediation, or is actually filing the parenting plan the most important part of the process?

As noted earlier, Spokane County clerk's office and one of the local DRCs have observed some confusion among clients regarding the finalization of parenting plans. In the second interview with the court clerk, staff again reported a problem with "unofficial" parenting plans that are not necessarily consistent with legal requirements. One worker explained that any kind of

¹³ The fee to reopen a case that is in agreement is \$30. If a case to be reopened is contested, there is no fee but a hearing is required.

document can be filed, but filing with the court is not the same as having a court-approved order that is signed by both parties and the judge. Some mediators reportedly charge \$500 to draft an unofficial plan, which is “a waste of time and money” because the court cannot enforce the plan. In sum, the Spokane County court won’t sign a parenting agreement unless there is a child support order.

King County interviewees did not think they could have this problem because of the way their facilitators review and track cases. One worker said that parenting plans must be entered into the court to be finalized, but clients sometimes come to an agreement by meeting with an early resolution case manager before they meet the judge. She noted that if parents get back together or decide to resolve things on their own, there is a \$30 non-compliance fee and clients who come back have to start the process from the beginning.

One Thurston County employee described the three different versions of plans:

- Proposed parenting plan—summoned by first filing
- Temporary parenting plan—signed by the judge until case is finalized
- Final parenting plan—in force until modified

The county reportedly does not have any problems with the finalization of parenting plans. When there is a temporary plan, the court “does what it can to finalize it.”

7. What interaction do you and your staff have with DCS? Do they refer families to your office?

Interviewees reported very little interaction between the county courts and DCS. King County workers didn’t know whether they receive any referrals from DCS. One noted point of contact was that “all superior courts are supposed to forward all copies of orders to child support enforcement.” Spokane County reportedly receives some DCS referrals but they are not always appropriate (“people have different levels of understanding about what we can and can’t do”). One worker also noted that “most DCS cases have parentage already adjudicated, so they wouldn’t qualify [for the grant].” Thurston County interviewees said that they can identify whether DCS refers families; they do not interact otherwise.

8. Would greater interaction with, or referrals from, DCS be valuable?

Workers at each demonstration site said they would welcome more referrals from and interaction with DCS. However, they said they were not fully aware of what DCS does and wondered if DCS is fully aware of what they do (also see above). One interviewee noted that more interaction might help to

ensure proper referrals. Another pointed out the overall benefit of fostering the relationship between the agencies: “The faster you can get child support going, the better.”

9. Are there any other ways to help families complete and file parenting plans that DCS should consider supporting?

The interviewees made several suggestions about additional ways for DCS to support the parenting plan process (recognizing that some ideas were less feasible than others):

- Developing a formal referral form for families referred by DCS (according to one interviewee, clients referred by DCS frequently do not know why they have been referred to the clerk’s office, and determining which services the client needs sometimes requires significant staff time)
- Requiring and paying for a mandatory parenting class for parenting plan clients
- Facilitating an orientation class in which court facilitators can present descriptions of their services to staff of DCS, Child Protective Services (CPS), and law enforcement agencies
- Having clients bring a copy of their court order or paternity affidavit to simplify the process of enrolling them on the grant
- Providing a copy of the award letter (the award letter shows incomes and dates so it could help determine income eligibility)
- Extending FOC to cover dissolution or non-parental custody cases (these have all of the same issues and challenges plus the extra cost of background checks for all involved adults)

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Initially, the demonstration highlighted two key outcomes for evaluation: child support payments and parenting time with children. The first outcome is only relevant for children with IV-D cases, while the second applies to all potential clients. In particular, the impact study will focus on changes in (1) the time parents spend with their children; (2) parents' perception about changes in parenting time pre- and post-service receipt; and (3) patterns of child support payments and parenting time. The impact study will seek to answer two central questions for each outcome:

1. *To what extent does FOC appear to have affected the outcome?*
2. *How do differences in client characteristics, provider services, and other salient program characteristics relate to the observed outcomes?*

The extent to which we can identify a comparison group of families that resembles families that received FOC services but who were not part of the demonstration will determine the evaluation's success at answering the counterfactual: *How would key outcomes have been different for FOC clients if they had not received FOC services?*

STUDY CAVEATS

Soon after receiving grant funding, FOC determined that implementing an experimental research design would not be feasible. As a result, the impact study must rely on less robust methods of estimating program impacts. The study will evaluate changes in parenting time outcomes between intake and a follow-up survey conducted about six months after intake. At present, we do not anticipate having similar parenting time data for individuals who did not receive FOC services.

To evaluate changes in child support outcomes, we will analyze child support data that DCS matched to FOC client data. While we will ultimately also have access to child support records for non-participants, unobserved differences between FOC participants and non-participants with similar observed characteristics could produce differences in outcomes. For example, FOC might attract only the parents who are the most committed to supporting their child financially. If so, we might observe better child support outcomes for this group not because of FOC, but because of the unobserved difference in motivation.

Because we lack a meaningful control group, our findings regarding program impact will remain suggestive rather than conclusive of causality. If DCS ultimately produces a flow of new referrals to demonstration sites, a

comparison of DCS-referred FOC clients and otherwise similar clients in non-FOC regions could potentially provide more robust estimates of program impact. At present, it seems unlikely that DCS referrals will occur early enough or be numerous enough to make this approach feasible.

A further limit to the study results from the fact that we have no way to measure the extent to which FOC clients receive services they would not otherwise have received. As of publication, all FOC clients decided independently to seek assistance with a parenting plan. In many cases, fee waivers for FOC services would have been available even without the FOC demonstration. As noted above, FOC sites do not always advertise the availability of waivers, and FOC may well increase access to these services. But we cannot easily identify clients who receive services they would not or could not have received without FOC.

Despite these caveats, the data analysis will, at a minimum, augment what little is known about the characteristics and child support outcomes of populations seeking AV services through the court system.

THE INTAKE FORM

The intake form requests client contact information, basic demographic data, and the following additional information (see the Appendix for a blank intake form):

- *Referral source (DSHS, court, self, attorney, child support, other)*
- *Whether the respondent lives with the children listed on the form*
- *How often the respondent spends time with the children (more than once a week, once a week, one or more times per month, less than once per month, or never)*
- *How often the other parent spends time with the children (as above)*
- *How difficult is it for the respondent to agree with the other parent on visitation (no contact with the other parent, not difficult, difficult but usually reach agreement, or difficult and one parent misses visitation opportunities because of the disagreement)*
- *Whether the respondent and the other parent agree on the amount of time each should spend with the children (mostly agree, the other parent wants more time than respondent thinks is fair, or the other parent wants to have less time than respondent thinks is fair)*

As noted earlier, the demonstration sites submit one or more completed intake forms to FOC for each client who requests and receives services.

BILLING DATA

Each FOC provider sent ECONorthwest spreadsheets itemizing the services for which the site invoiced the grant during the analysis period. We linked billing data to intake form data using the FOC case number. The data

included the FOC case number assigned by the provider, the date of service, type of service, and amount billed for the service. For analytic purposes, we collapse the available FOC services into the following categories:

- **Admin:** FOC paid client fees for various administrative services, including provision of forms, court clerk fees, ex parte fees, and certified copies of documents.
- **Parenting plan filing:** FOC paid client fees for filing documents with the court.
- **Parent seminar:** FOC paid client fees for a parenting seminar (King County only).
- **Facilitation:** FOC paid client fees for court facilitator services.
- **Mediation:** FOC paid client fees for mediation (King County only, not provided as of August 2010).
- **Modification of parenting plan:** FOC paid clients fees for modification of a parenting plan.

The billing data also includes case status that indicates whether the parents have completed a parenting plan. FOC instructed the demonstration sites to update the case status indicator as data become available.

CHILD SUPPORT DATA

ECONorthwest manually entered intake form data for clients entering the program between April and August 2010, and provided client identifiers to DCS for matching to child support records contained in DCS's Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS). For this report, SEMS staff provided the following types of data for FOC clients with matching IV-D cases:

- **Case information.** Data elements include type of case (e.g., TANF or non-TANF), status (open or closed), the monthly current support amount and arrears amount owed as of the reporting month.
- **Individual information.** Data elements include individual role (child, CP, NCP), paternity establishment indicators, and date of paternity establishment.
- **Payment information.** Data elements include the amount of current support and arrears paid on each case in each month for all payments from May 2009 to the most recent reporting month.

DCS used client-reported social security numbers, names, and other identifying information to match FOC intake data to records in SEMS. In all, SEMS identified 647 IV-D cases that involved at least one FOC parent. The payment data associated with these cases includes 3,632 case-month observations. Not all FOC cases had a matching DCS case, while others were associated with multiple cases, but the data clearly indicate that a large

majority of FOC cases had one or more parents with IV-D experience. Of the 428 unique FOC cases, 91 (21 percent) had no associated IV-D case; 57 (13 percent) had one or more parents associated with a IV-D case but for children other than those listed on the intake form; and 280 FOC cases (65 percent) were associated with a IV-D case for at least one listed child. Of these, 171 had more than one associated case.

For FOC parents associated with multiple IV-D cases, we designated a “primary” case as follows: First, we checked whether any children on the FOC case were present in each IV-D case using child name and date of birth. We excluded from consideration any cases with no matching children. Next, if we found multiple IV-D cases with matching children, we assigned the IV-D case with the most recent status date as the primary case for the purposes of the DCS data analysis presented below.

THE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

The follow-up survey will cover the following topics:

- *Parent characteristics and family composition (age, race and ethnicity, language spoken at home, education level, marital status, employment status, distance from the residence of the child’s other parent)*
- *Level of difficulty agreeing on visitation prior to receiving services*
- *Type of services received*
- *Changes in parenting time since receiving services*
- *Perceived value of the services received*
- *Whether the parents filed a parenting plan with the court subsequent to receiving services*

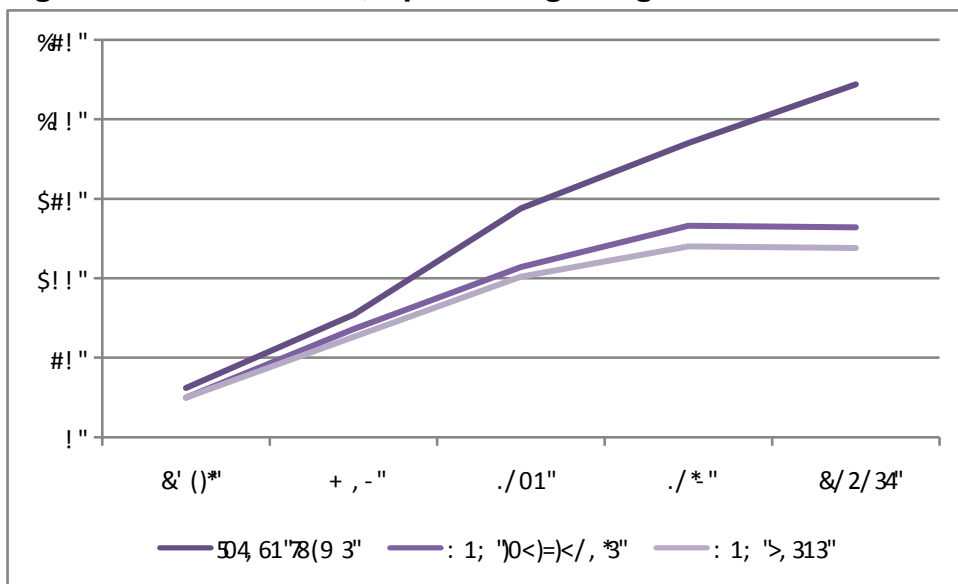
Where appropriate, the wording of survey questions will mirror the wording of similar questions on the intake form. RDA will revise the draft questions (see Appendix A) to simplify the language and to facilitate the planned telephone administration of the survey.

YEAR 1 DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents our preliminary analysis of the intake form data and linked DCS data. Because these data include relatively little data about client activities post-intake, we provide primarily descriptive statistics about client characteristics to provide a baseline context for the more detailed analysis completed during the final years of the demonstration. We begin by describing the FOC client caseload during April through August 2010, including client demographics, reported parenting time situations, case service use, measures of child support payments, and a brief analysis of child support payment data for cases with a child support case open prior to intake. We conclude with a brief description of the FOC services accessed by recent clients.

Figure 3.1 characterizes FOC intakes during the analysis period. April 2010 intakes only occurred in Thurston County, with the King County and Spokane sites beginning services in May (King County had its first intake in June). The total number of intakes continues to increase throughout the period. However, because Spokane and Thurston counties submit multiple forms for individuals with multiple FOC service visits, the number of new clients actually plateaus in August. In addition, both parents completed an intake form for a small number of cases, so the number of unique new cases falls below the number of new individuals completing a form. In total, FOC providers initiated services for 428 unique cases during the five-month period.¹⁴ On average, FOC received about 1.5 forms per case. The average does not vary appreciably by month of first intake.

Figure 3.1: FOC Intakes, April through August 2010



Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

Thurston County contributed 60 percent of the total cases, with Spokane contributing 38 percent, and King County the remaining 2 percent. As illustrated in Table 3.1, only King County did not submit multiple forms per case. They also have a very small caseload, which we discussed in Chapter 2. On average, providers submitted 1.5 forms per case (23 percent of cases had multiple forms).¹⁵ The table also shows the total number of children involved in the cases. The average for every site is 1.2 children per case, with 23

¹⁴ Because of inconsistencies in how parents completed the intake form during repeat visits, our totals may over- or understate the actual number of cases. Future reports may include different totals as we resolve these inconsistencies. A similar qualification applies to other statistics reported in this chapter.

¹⁵ More recent intakes are clearly less likely to have multiple forms submitted. The data bear this out: For intakes during May 2010, providers had submitted an average of 1.7 forms per case by the end of the analysis period, with 29 percent of cases having more than one form submitted.

percent of all cases involving more than one child. In other words, a large majority of cases involve only a single child.

Finally, the table shows the percent of cases originally referred to the providers (but not necessarily to FOC specifically) by DCS. The DCS referral rates are consistent with the referral rates presented in Chapter 1, although Spokane saw relatively more DCS referrals than did Thurston County. There are too few King County cases to draw any conclusions regarding DCS referrals other than that DCS is not a source of a significant number of referrals.

Table 3.1: FOC intake characteristics April through August 2010, by site

	Site			Total
	King Co.	Spokane Co.	Thurston Co.	
Intake forms	8	225	426	659
Individuals	8	176	281	465
Cases	8	162	258	428
Children	10	207	327	544
% referred by DCS	0.0	3.9	1.6	2.4

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 3.2 displays selected characteristics of the FOC caseload. We define “primary parent” as the parent in the FOC case who filled out the first intake form for the case (i.e., the parent who initiated the case), while “other parent” refers to the parent that did not. As highlighted in the table, the primary parent does not necessarily have custody of the children, although most do.¹⁶ The small number of King County FOC cases renders essentially meaningless the seemingly large differences between King County cases and those from the two other sites.

We find no statistically significant¹⁷ difference in age between the primary and other parents either within cases or across sites. The average age of Spokane’s FOC children was somewhat younger than that for the other sites even though parents were not appreciably younger in Spokane. The primary parents in Spokane were, however, much more likely to have legal custody and much more likely to be female than were parents at other sites. At all sites, a much smaller share of primary parents was non-Hispanic white than was the general population, as measured using data from the Census

¹⁶ The intake form asks the parent to indicate whether “the children reside with you the majority of the time.” For this report, we classify parents as CP or NCP on the basis of responses to this item on the intake form. A small number of parents did not complete this item and are excluded from tabulations based on a parent’s custodial status.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all differences reported as statistically significant have p-values less than 0.05.

Bureau's American Community Survey. The client follow-up survey will provide additional demographic characteristics of the FOC population.

Table 3.2: FOC case characteristics, April through August 2010, by site

	Site			Total
	King Co.	Spokane Co.	Thurston Co.	
Ave. age of:				
Primary parent	33.5	29.2	28.9	29.1
Other parent	28.2	29.2	29.6	29.4
Children	6.4	6.4	4.9	5.5
Primary-parent characteristics				
% custodial	25.0	62.5	73.8	68.8
% female	25.0	47.5	62.0	52.6
% non-Hispanic white	12.5	71.6	70.2	69.6
% non-Hispanic white (ACS)	67.2	87.5	80.3	72.0

Note: Table excludes 11 cases with missing parenting time information.

Source: American Community Survey and ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

REPORTED PARENTING TIME

Table 3.3 displays parenting time information as reported by the primary parent on the first intake form for each case. The table reports the share of NCPs who visit with their children one or more times per week for cases where the CP is the primary parent and for cases where the NCP is the primary parent. Differences in the share of primary parents reporting at weekly visits that depend on whether the parent has custody could be attributable to many factors: differing motivations for seeking FOC services (e.g., we might observe relatively more NCPs reporting weekly visits if frequent visits indicate an engaged parent who also has a corresponding interest in formalizing visitation), different perceptions about frequency of visitation, or others.

Table 3.3: Frequency of NCP visitation, by site and parent initiating the FOC case, April through August 2010

		Site			Total
		King Co.	Spokane Co.	Thurston Co.	
CP- initiated	Visits > once/wk.	50.0%	44.6%	50.3%	48.4%
	Visits < once/wk.	33.3%	30.0%	37.6%	33.5%
	No NCP visitation	16.7%	25.5%	12.1%	18.1%
	Number of cases	2	92	185	279
NCP- initiated	Visits > once/wk.	0.0%	40.0%	53.0%	44.9%
	Visits < once/wk.	82.6%	40.5%	27.5%	36.1%
	No NCP visitation	17.4%	19.5%	19.5%	19.0%
	Number of cases	6	55	66	127

Note: Table excludes 22 cases with missing parenting time information.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

The share of NCPs who self-reported at least weekly visits is slightly higher than the share of CPs who reported at least weekly NCP visits, but the difference is not statistically significant at conventional levels. The difference

in share of NCPs with weekly visits across sites is not statistically significant either. Overall, 18 percent of primary parents reported that the NCP had no contact, a statistic that also did not vary significantly depending on whether the primary parent was CP or NCP.

Table 3.4 displays the distribution of responses to the two additional intake form questions on parenting time: “How difficult is it to agree with your children’s other parent on when and where each of you spend time?” and “Do you and your children’s other parent agree on the amount of time each of you should spend with your children?” Responses to these questions can shed light on whether the amount of visitation reported in Table 3.3 is consistent with what parents want or expect. The table displays statistics for the entire FOC caseload combined. We found no statistically significant differences in responses across FOC sites.

About one fifth of primary parents reported no contact with the other parent. A slightly smaller share reported no disagreement arranging visitations, while a majority of primary parents (62 percent) reported some level of disagreement. Primary parents who were NCPs reported more disagreement than did those who were CPs—41 percent of the NCP primary parents reported missing visitation opportunities because of the disagreement, compared to only 25 percent of the CPs, a statistically significant difference.

Table 3.4: Reported level of agreement over visitation arrangements, by parent initiating FOC case, April through August 2010

Agreement on time and place of visitation	No contact with other parent	Not difficult at all	Difficult, usually reach agreement	Difficult, missed visitation opportunities
% of CP-initiated cases	22.7	17.3	34.9	25.2
% of NCP-initiated cases	17.2	18.0	23.4	41.4
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>31.7</i>	<i>30.0</i>
Agreement on NCP parenting time	Mostly agree	Other parent wants more time	Other parent wants less time	Other*
% of CP-initiated cases	40.4	42.3	17.0	0.4
% of NCP-initiated cases	31.5	54.8	12.9	0.8
<i>% of Total</i>	<i>37.5</i>	<i>46.6</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>0.5</i>

*Other includes two responses indicating that the parent wanted both more and less time with children.

Notes: A small number of respondents (less than 3% of the total responses for each question) selected more than one response to at least one of the two questions. Where possible, we recoded these responses to the category that seemed most logically consistent with the individual’s response pattern. The table excludes 22 cases with missing parenting time information.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

A large minority of primary parents (37 percent) “mostly agreed” with the other parent on amount of time each should spend with their children, suggesting that agreement on scheduling may pose a greater hurdle to arranging visitation than quantity of time desired for many FOC clients. Nonetheless, more parents indicated that the other parent wanted too much time with the children than indicated agreement on amount of visitation

time. And relatively few—about 15 percent—thought the other parent wanted to spend too little time with their children. The observed differences between CP and NCP responses to this question are also statistically significant ($p < 0.10$).

Not surprisingly, parents reporting the most agreement about quantity, and least difficulty scheduling parenting time also reported higher frequency NCP visitation to a statistically significant degree. Of parents reporting the most difficulty scheduling parenting time, 40 percent of NCPs saw their children at least once per week, compared to 68 percent of parents reporting no scheduling difficulty. Of parents who agreed on the appropriate amount of parenting time, 59 percent reported that the NCP had visitation at least once per week, compared to 51 percent of those reporting that the other parent wanted too much parenting time, and to 23 percent of those reporting that the other parent wanted too little.

In summary, the intake data suggest the range of parenting time issues faced by FOC clients. A small share of FOC parents report no troubles negotiating visitation (“Agreeable” parents), although a small share of these report differences in desired amount of NCP visitation time. A sizeable minority of parents generally agrees with the “other parent” on the appropriate amount of parenting time the NCP should spend with children but have trouble negotiating the specifics (parents with “Scheduling trouble”); a larger group disagrees on quantity as well as scheduling (“Disagreeable” parents); a fourth group has no contact with the other parent, resulting in minimal NCP contact with the children (“No contact” cases). Each group likely requires different types and amounts of FOC services to successfully remedy any difficulties with visitation and related issues. Table 3.5 explicitly defines these groups and displays parenting time outcomes for each group.

Table 3.5: Classification of FOC cases and selected case characteristics

Group	Definition	Number of cases	Percent of cases initiated by NCP	NCP visitation	
				% at least once per week	% never
Agreeable	"Mostly agree" on appropriate amount of parenting time; no difficulties scheduling time	67	66.7	68.7	3.0
Scheduling trouble	"Mostly agree" on appropriate amount of parenting time; difficulties scheduling time	68	75.0	58.8	2.9
Disagreeable	Parents disagree on appropriate amount of parenting time; difficulties scheduling time	174	62.7	51.2	11.5
No contact	No contact with other parent	84	74.1	14.3	59.5
Other	One or more missing responses to parenting time questions	13	94.4	38.5	15.4
<i>Total</i>		<i>406</i>	<i>69.1</i>	<i>47.3</i>	<i>18.7</i>

Note: Table excludes 22 cases with missing parenting time information.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of FOC intake data.

As illustrated in the table, reported NCP visitation frequency falls dramatically as the reported disagreement between parents associated with an FOC case increases. The share of cases initiated by the NCP varies somewhat across groups, but not to a statistically significant degree. Each group is also spread more or less proportionately across intake sites.

IV-D STATUS

Although DCS explicitly refers very few clients to AV services, many parents who seek the services have active child support cases. Understanding the extent of FOC clients' involvement with DCS can help DCS target referrals of DCS clients to FOC or other AV services. The data also provide a baseline for measuring how child support payments change after FOC clients receive services. This section characterizes the DCS involvement at the time of intake for recent FOC clients, first by describing involvement with the IV-D system (i.e., whether an FOC case has an associated IV-D case and whether the IV-D case has an established support order), and second by summarizing support payment patterns for FOC cases with an open IV-D case. We find relatively little variation in child support indicators across the three demonstration sites, so in this section we focus on differences across the case classifications defined in Table 3.5.

Table 3.6 displays selected measures of child support engagement for the FOC caseload. Overall, about three in five FOC cases had an open IV-D case at intake. An additional seven percent of the caseload had an IV-D case created during the analysis period but after FOC intake. Three quarters of FOC clients with a IV-D case open by FOC intake had cases open for at least six months, while about three-fifths had an order for current support already

established; about half were associated with cases that had accumulated arrears.

Table 3.6: Selected child support indicators by FOC case classification, April through August 2010

Group	Number of cases	% with open IV-D case at intake	% with a IV-D case open at least six months at intake	% with current support due as of intake	% with arrears due as of intake
<i>Total</i>	428	60.5	45.1	35.1	30.1
Agreeable	71	52.1	40.9	28.2	21.1
Scheduling trouble	68	60.3	47.1	36.8	22.1
Disagreeable	181	63.5	44.8	35.9	32.6
No contact	85	60.0	48.2	36.5	38.8
Other	23	65.2	43.5	39.1	30.4
CP-initiated	288	57.6	73.4	29.5	27.1
NCP-initiated	129	65.9	89.0	48.8	38.0

Note: For eleven cases, parents did not self-report which parent lived with the children “the majority of the time”, and so we could not classify the case as CP- or NCP-initiated.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of DCS and FOC intake data.

Broadly, cases with the most agreeable parents tend to have the least engagement with the child support system: such cases are less likely to be associated with an open IV-D case; of those that are, the cases tend to have been opened more recently, were less likely to have an established current support payment, and less likely to have associated arrears built up as of the FOC intake date. However, the differences across case classifications based on agreement over parenting time are not statistically significant.

IV-D involvement did vary significantly by whether an FOC case was CP- or NCP-initiated. Compared to CP-initiated FOC cases, NCP-initiated cases were more likely to have an older IV-D case, more likely to owe current support, and more likely to owe arrears. One possible interpretation is that NCPs with child support obligations have a greater incentive to seek legal remedies to visitation issues, although we cannot test this hypothesis with available data.

In contrast to our findings with respect to the IV-D involvement indicators, child support payments do not appear to vary systematically across groups of FOC cases defined by self-reported parenting time issues, unless the initiating parent reported no contact with the other parent (see Table 3.7). Not surprisingly, this latter group of cases has a relatively poor record of recent support payments—NCPs on these cases are less likely to have made any current support payment in the six months ending with the month of FOC intake. Overall for the “no contact” cases, NCP current support payments amount to 29 percent of current support due, compared to the 54 percent paid by FOC cases where CP and NCP had some contact. Both differences are statistically significant.

Table 3.7: Child support payment history for the six months leading up to and including intake, by FOC case classification, April through August 2010

Group	Number with open cases at intake	% of cases with current support due with any current support payment	% of cases with arrears due with any arrears payments	Average % of current support due actually paid on cases with current support due
<i>Total</i>	166	76.5	52.7	50.7
Agreeable	24	73.7	50.0	51.0
Scheduling trouble	30	88.0	66.7	70.0
Disagreeable	71	78.0	51.9	49.8
No contact	32	64.0	48.0	29.4
Other	9	75.0	50.0	62.7
CP-initiated	99	69.3	41.8	45.1
NCP-initiated	64	85.0	68.2	56.9

Notes: Table includes only FOC cases with, as of intake, a DCS case that had been open for at least six months. Including all FOC cases with an open DCS case does not significantly alter the cross-classification differences apparent in the table. For three FOC cases with an open IV-D case, parents did not self-report which parent lived with the children "the majority of the time", and so we could not classify the case as CP- or NCP-initiated.

Source: ECONorthwest analysis of DCS and FOC intake data.

On the other hand, whether a case was CP- or NCP-initiated strongly correlates with payment outcomes. Of FOC cases with an established support order, 69 percent of CP-initiated cases had an NCP payment in the six months to FOC intake, compared to 85 percent of NCP-initiated FOC cases. We observe a similar pattern for arrears payments. NCPs associated with NCP-initiated FOC cases also paid a significantly higher share of current support due than did NCPs associated with CP-initiated FOC cases. Unfortunately, we do not have any objective measures of the need for AV services. Nonetheless, as with the IV-D involvement indicators, we find evidence that NCPs showing the most initiative in seeking AV services appear more involved in supporting their children. At a minimum, these differences suggest that families might need different types of support depending on which parent first seeks AV services.

SERVICE USE

The available data provide a good description about the characteristics of clients FOC has served. Although the follow-up period has been too short to draw conclusions about client outcomes, data about the services provided to each case give deeper insight into how FOC might benefit clients. The FOC invoice data, from which we obtain information about services received do not, however, provide a perfect picture about case status. For example, when Spokane invoices FOC for the cost of providing the parenting plan packet, we do not necessarily know that the individual takes any further action. On the other hand, an invoice for a parenting plan filing fee is a strong indicator that a case has reached an end point, at least with respect to the goals of the demonstration. Thus, at this point in the demonstration, we do not draw strong conclusions about these data.

Ambiguities in the data make the link between intake forms and billing data less than perfect. Below, we exclude billing data for which we could not identify the corresponding intake data, and vice versa. This exclusion removes less than six percent of the cases from each data source. Below, we summarize key characteristics of service use by FOC clients.

- **Most service episodes were brief.** Overall, 60 percent of FOC cases had had all received services invoiced on the day of the intake (including all King County cases, 71 percent of Spokane cases, and 52 percent of Thurston County cases). Another nine percent had all services invoiced within one week of intake. Nonetheless, a handful of cases received additional services weeks after intake. Of the 62 cases begun in May 2010, 16 cases (26 percent) received services one or more months after intake.
- **It is too early to analyze outcomes.** Although most service episodes were brief, and about one third of parents filed a parenting plan with the help of FOC, only 16 percent of FOC cases were reported as having a completed temporary or final parenting plan at the time we received data from the FOC sites in September (simply paying the fee does not complete the process and about half of the cases identified as having a plan did not receive a filing fee from FOC).
- **The most common services received were facilitator services (78 percent of cases) and various administrative activities (72 percent of cases).** The most common constellations of services were combinations of facilitator services, administrative services, and the filing fee: 27 percent of cases received all three, 22 percent received administrative fees only, 20 percent received administrative and facilitation fees only, 19 percent received facilitation fees only, and 8 percent received administrative and filing fees only. Less than two percent of all cases received each of the remaining combination of the six service types.
- **Total cost varied considerably across cases, but not across sites or types of case.** The median case received \$56 in services, but the total cost ranged from \$20 to \$569. The distribution of costs is bimodal, driven by whether or not services included a filing fee. Cases that required the relatively expensive filing fee cost an average of \$325, and those that did not cost an average of \$30. We find no large differences in typical case costs across FOC sites or by type of case. At this point in the demonstration, we do not know if these statistics will resemble total case costs after we have data for a longer follow-up period.

SUMMARY OF BASELINE DATA

Based on our analysis of FOC and IV-D data for FOC clients receiving services during the first four months of the demonstration, we have identified case characteristics that serve to classify FOC cases along two dimensions. First, we find strong correlations between CP and NCP agreement about NCP visitation and the extent of self-reported NCP visitations. The patterns of reported visitation across four categories of FOC case (“agreeable”, “scheduling trouble”, “disagreeable”, and “no contact”) suggest the relative need for more and less intensive AV services. For example, “agreeable” families likely need less help finalizing the details of a parenting plan than “disagreeable” families, while “no contact” cases face a different set of challenges in establishing mutually agreeable visitation arrangements. We find interesting, but only marginally significant in a statistical sense, differences in IV-D involvement across these groups of cases.

Second, we find significant differences in IV-D involvement (e.g., whether an FOC family has an open IV-D case) and financial support (e.g., whether an NCP has made a recent child support payment) depending on whether a CP or an NCP first sought AV services through the demonstration. NCP-initiated cases were more likely to fall into the “disagreeable” category, although not to a statistically significant degree. Nonetheless, the observed differences in IV-D case characteristics depending on which parent initiated an FOC case again suggest differing needs for services.

At present, the available data do not indicate significant differences in FOC service use across the FOC case categories, although it is too early to evaluate case outcomes with any rigor. Additional data collection may shed light on the extent to which FOC services address the specific needs of FOC clients and promote parenting plan development and improved child support payment outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this first year of the FOC demonstration, Washington has a program in place that funds family-centered services for unmarried parents. While FOC has not implemented all program elements as anticipated, FOC has laid the foundation for further experimentation during the remainder of the demonstration period. In particular, the demonstration has established, at three demonstration sites, processes for increasing the access of unmarried parents to services that facilitate completion and filing of an official parenting plan. FOC and IV-D data associated with FOC clients served during the first four months of the demonstration provide a useful

description of the characteristics of the population being served and can help DCS better target AV referrals to clients with specific case characteristics.

The demonstration has not, however, increased the flow of referrals from DCS as originally planned. With processes for delivering FOC services in place, Year 2 will focus on expanding FOC activity to include initiatives to increase referral flow as originally planned.

NEXT STEPS IN THE EVALUATION

Concurrent with FOC's attempts to further engage DCS field offices and IV-D clients, the evaluation team will continue to analyze program data. As of publication, the client follow-up survey was to begin during spring 2011, with enough completed surveys for our analysis possible by late summer of the same year. The survey data will provide our first look at post-participation parenting time outcomes. Additional data from DCS will also allow for more comprehensive follow-up on post-participation IV-D payment outcomes for FOC clients. In addition, we will continue to report on FOC efforts to engage DCS and IV-D clients in the demonstration.

Appendix

SAMPLE FOC INTAKE FORM

Figure A.1: Focus on the Child intake form

Client Questionnaire

(Thurston County Clerk)

Please fill out the questionnaire below.
PRINT names, addresses, children's names, etc.
Select the answers that best fit how you feel.

Your full name and date of birth:

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

Your phone number:

Home: Area code Phone

Cell: Area code Phone

Other parent's full name and date of birth:

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

Other parent's phone number:

Home: Area code Phone

Cell: Area code Phone

You are the: mother father

Your Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____

Your address: _____

Street Apt.

City State ZIP

Your race / ethnicity is (check all that apply):

American Indian/Alaska Native
 Asian American/Pacific Islander
 Black/African American Hispanic White
 Other _____

Your children's full names and dates of birth:

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

First MI Last Date of birth (mm/dd/yy)

The children reside with you the majority of the time.

Yes No

You were referred by:

DSHS court self attorney
 child support other _____

Do you have a child support case?

No Yes, Case # _____

How often do you spend time with your children?

More than once per week
 Once per week
 One or more times per month, but less than once per week
 Less than once per month
 Never

How often does the other parent spend time with your children?

More than once per week
 Once per week
 One or more times per month, but less than once per week
 Less than once per month
 Never

How difficult is it to agree with your children's other parent on when and where each of you spend time with your children?

No contact with the other parent
 Not difficult at all
 Difficult, but we usually reach an agreement on time and place
 Difficult, we usually disagree and one parent misses visitation opportunities because of this

Do you and your children's other parent agree on the amount of time each of you **should** spend with your children?

Yes – mostly agree
 No – the other parent wants **more** time than I think is fair
 No – the other parent wants to have **less** time than I think is fair


This section for Thurston County Clerk USE ONLY

Date of Service _____

Case # _____

Service Provided (Filing Fee, Court Facilitation Fees, Ex Parte Review, Paperwork Packets, Certified Copy Fees)

Thank you!



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services
DSHS 22-1427 (4/10)

DRAFT SURVEY QUESTIONS

FOC SERVICES

1. *Identify the services that were provided to you or your children (select all that apply):* Court filing fees, other fees, a court facilitator session, a parenting education class or seminar, mediation/parenting plan development, referrals to other agencies.
2. *Overall, how valuable were these services to you?:* Extremely valuable, somewhat valuable, not at all valuable, don't know.
3. *Without Focus on the Child, would you have received the services you listed?:* Yes, all of the same services; no, I could not have afforded some of the services; no, I could not have afforded any of the services; no, I could have afforded the services but would not have requested the same services for another reason [Please explain briefly].

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

4. *How far do you live from the child's other parent?:* Less than five miles, five or more miles but less than 25, 25 or more miles but less than 50, more than 50 miles, don't know where the other parent lives.
5. *What is the highest educational degree you have received?:* High school diploma or GED, College degree or higher, none.
6. *Are you currently employed?* Full-time, part-time, not employed.
7. *What is your family's annual income?* Less than \$25,000, between \$25,000 and \$50,000, more than \$50,000.

PARENTING PLANS

8. *During the past six months, have you been in mediation with your child's other parent to develop a parenting plan?* Yes, no, don't know.
9. *Do you have a completed, formal parenting plan with your children's other parent?* Yes, no, don't know.
10. *If yes, was the plan completed prior to receiving the services you identified earlier?* Yes, no, don't know.
11. *If yes, have you filed the parenting plan with the court?* Yes, no, don't know.

CHANGES IN PARENTING TIME

The specific wording of these questions may depend on whether the respondent is the custodial parent or the non-custodial parent.

12. *During the past three months, how often have you [if respondent is the non-custodial]/has the child's other parent [if respondent is the custodial parent] spent time with your children? More than once a week, once a week, one or more times per month but less than once per week, less than once per month, never.*
13. *During the past three months, how difficult has it been for you to agree with your children's other parent on visitation? No contact with the other parent, not difficult, difficult but we usually reach agreement, difficult and one parent has missed or canceled a visitation opportunity because of the disagreement.*
14. *Do you and your children's other parent agree on the amount of time each should spend with your children? Mostly agree, the other parent wants more time than you think is fair, the other parent wants less time than you think is fair, don't know.*
15. *Six months ago, your child's visitations with the non-custodial parent: Usually occurred on a regular, set schedule; did not occur on a set schedule.*
16. *Now, your child's visitations with the non-custodial parent: Usually occur on a regular, set schedule; do not occur on a set schedule.*
17. *Compared to six months ago, your child's visitation time with the non-custodial parent has: increased, stayed about the same, decreased.*
18. *Compared to six months ago, the number of visits scheduled with your child and the non-custodial parent has: increased, stayed about the same, decreased.*
19. *Compared to six months ago, the usual length of your child's visits the non-custodial parent has: increased, stayed about the same, decreased.*

The following questions are ONLY for clients who received FOC mediation services. Responses for the following questions are: completely agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, and completely disagree, not applicable.

20. *The mediation helped resolve parenting time issues with the child's other parent.*
21. *Our formal parenting plan agreement helps resolve conflict about parenting time.*
22. *Our formal parenting plan agreement has helped improve communication with the children's other parent.*

The following questions are for ALL clients. Responses for the following questions are: completely agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, and completely disagree, not applicable.

23. Compared to six months ago, my communication with the child's other parent has improved.

24. Compared to six months ago, my relationship with my child improved.

25. Compared to six months ago, the child's relationship with the other parent has improved.