

Washington State Judicial Branch

2025-2027 Biennial Budget

Reflective Practice Training

Agency: Office of Public Defense

Decision Package Code/Title: 1L – Reflective Practice Training

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Office of Public Defense (OPD) requests funding to provide ongoing Reflective Practice training and support for contracted Parents Representation Program social workers and social service workers. Reflective Practice is an effective professional development tool to enhance capacity to work within high-stress situations. Continual training helps OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers mitigate the direct and vicarious trauma they experience in their daily work with families in child welfare cases.

Fiscal Summary: Funding is requested for Reflective Practice training for contracted social workers/social service workers.

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$229,000	\$229,000	\$458,000	\$229,000	\$229,000	\$458,000
4E Federal Reimbursement .1984	(\$45,000)	(\$45,000)	(\$90,000)	(\$45,000)	(\$45,000)	(\$90,000)
Total Expenditures						
	\$184,000	\$184,000	\$368,000	\$184,000	\$184,000	\$368,000

OPD is a subrecipient (DCYF) of federal Title IV-E funding. Certain child welfare-related expenditures, including legal services, are eligible for partial federal reimbursement. State funding appropriated to implement this decision package is projected to generate federal Title IV-E reimbursement as noted above.

Package Description:

Background and current situation:

Reflective Practice is “A meaningful and effective professional development strategy. A way of thinking that fosters personal learning, behavioral change, and improved performance. Through systematic inquiry and analysis, it is a way for individuals to create meaningful and enduring change by changing themselves,” (Osterman & Kotkamp, 2015, p.1).

From February through June 2024 the Office of Public Defense (OPD) offered a Reflective Practice pilot project for Parents Representation Program social workers and social service workers. During that time, OPD contracted with three Reflective Practice practitioners/trainers to provide 84 monthly individual and group sessions. OPD social workers/social service workers described their early experiences with Reflective Practice as meaningful and effective in supporting their challenging work. A final analysis and report of pilot project data is under way and is expected to yield a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the training.

Problem:

OPD’s Parents Representation Program-contracted social workers/social service workers spend every day in traumatic settings with distressed families in the child welfare system. This high-stress environment presents ongoing professional

and personal challenges that can manifest in ways that are intrinsically harmful to the contractors' health and well-being. Without a supportive outlet, this harm can have a compounding negative impact on their ability to continue providing effective service to indigent parents involved in dependency and termination of parental rights cases.

Proposed Solution:

OPD requests funding for the 2025-2027 biennium to continue offering Reflective Practice training for contracted social workers/social service workers. OPD will contract with four Reflective Practice practitioners/trainers to serve 84 monthly slots for individual and group sessions. Reflective Practice training slots cost \$215 per hour. Approximately 10 hours of administration and scheduling work also is required each month at a cost of \$100 per hour.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

This decision package helps ensure that OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers can maintain high-quality professional services for indigent parents involved in dependency and termination cases.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option.

OPD's independent contractors are not eligible for employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits. Reflective Practice training can be a meaningful alternative to traditional counseling. Reflective Practice provides a means for self-reflection, self-awareness, and personal and professional development.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Not funding this decision package will deny access to training that can help OPD contractors reach and maintain their fullest professional development.

Is this an expansion or alteration of a current program or service?

This decision package funds a training service that OPD initiated as a pilot project in February 2024.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Job Title Classification	#s of FTE Round to Nearest Tenth				Workload Assumptions/Description
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
No FTEs	0	0	0	0	

Use Standard Costs?

No.

If No, Explain Additional Costs	Round to Nearest \$1,000				Description/Assumptions
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
Contracts	\$229,000	\$229,000	\$229,000	\$229,000	Four Reflective Practice contracts to provide monthly training slots for OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers.

Reflective Practice				
	Hourly	Hours per month	Per Year	Total
Counseling / training	\$215	84	1,008	\$216,720
Admin	\$100	10	120	\$12,000
Fiscal Year				\$228,720
Biennium				\$457,440

How does the package relate to the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives? .

Accessibility

This decision package provides training that is accessible to OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers regardless of cultural, linguistic, ability based, or other characteristics.

Access to Necessary Representation

This decision package supports social workers/social service workers who assist indigent clients at the direction of court-appointed Parents Representation Program attorneys. Effective defense social work services can help a client work productively with their attorney and fully engage in their legal strategy.

How does the package impact equity in the state?

Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.

This decision package offers OPD social worker/social service worker training that ultimately benefits parents in dependency and termination proceedings, where racial disproportionality is well-documented.

Describe how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

Over many years OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers have expressed a need for greater practice support. In researching responsive options, OPD learned from other practitioners in the child welfare field that Reflective Practice training is an effective tool to enhance professional capacity to work within stressful situations.

Consider which target populations or communities would be disproportionately impacted by this proposal.

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.

This decision package does not disproportionately impact any communities.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

No

Stakeholder response:

At its September 12, 2024 meeting, the OPD Advisory Committee voted to approve this decision package. OPD-contracted social workers/social service workers who participated in a Reflective Practice pilot project from February through June 2024 provided favorable reviews of the training. Contractors see Reflective Practice as supportive of their difficult work.

Office of Public Defense
Policy Level – 1L – Reflective Practice Training

Are there legal or administrative mandates that require this package to be funded?

No.

Does current law need to be changed to successfully implement this package?

No.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No.

Are there other supporting materials that strengthen the case for this request?

See Attachment A: 1L – Reflective Practice Training – Dr. Veloni

Are there information technology impacts?

No.

Agency Contact:

Sophia Byrd McSherry
OPD Deputy Director for Government Relations
360-878-0550
Sophia.ByrdMcSherry@opd.wa.gov

Reflective Supervision(RS): “A collaborative relationship for professional growth that improves program quality and strengthens practice. RS builds the capacity of individuals, relationships, and organizations by cherishing strengths and partnering around vulnerabilities.” (Shahmoon-Shanok, 1991)

Reflective Practice(RP): “A meaningful and effective professional development strategy. A way of thinking that: fosters personal learning, behavioral change, and improved performance. Through systematic inquiry and analysis, it is a way for individuals to create meaningful and enduring change by changing themselves” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2015, p.1)

Reflective Supervision Consultation(RSC)/ Reflective Consultation(RC): Regular, predictable time for staff to reflect with a supervisor/ RSC about their work stressors 1:1 or in groups. Safe/Trusting space to share what’s on one’s mind, be seen and heard, and consider the perspectives of others and themselves. It allows a person time to feel support and at times create new ideas when moving forward.

Benefits of RS-Research on Impacts of RS: Watson & Gatti, 2012: Galen 20:13

- Discovered new ideas and developed new strategies
- Increased specific language skills in conversations with families, increased positive relationships with families and co-workers
- Increased perspective taking and thoughtfulness/awareness of experiences of others. Noticed improved service delivery, support and stress reduction.
- Increased confidence when faced with challenges with colleagues, children and families.
- Decreased stress, identified need for this structured time to attend to important issues, feelings, develop strategies.
- Consider multiple complexities of systems, paper work and family challenges
- Identified this process more important than participating in various training workshops

Effects of Online Face-to-Face RP in Community of Practice Groups by Dr Gina Veloni 2017

Online face-to-face Reflective Supervision/Practice groups were found to be a supportive, safe, and growth-fostering environment for participants in Veloni’s online group research in 2017. Both cohorts reported appreciation of the experience and the benefit of experiencing the face-to-face interactions between participants and with the modeling of reflective facilitators. All of the participants found it to be a helpful and supportive experience in this online forum.

Holding, Observing, Listening and Discovery (HOLD) were four themes found in this interactive web conferring RS practice groups. HOLD, along with growth and relief, were all identified in the context of the relationships in the safe and reflective space. Within the reflective process of interacting and experiencing RS, there was an increase in understanding, felt support, strategies created, increasing growth, discovery, and relief.

We would like to take the experience and research practices found in the field of the Infant and early childhood field and online RC space and integrate it into the OPD as a pilot. We hope to offer individual and group opportunities for Reflection from Feb 2024 through June 2024 as a pilot.

We have three Reflective Consultants with calendar times ready to support this potential. Dr. Gina Veloni will be the primary contact, collaborating with the leads and Micheal on this project Pilot. We look forward to the collaborative partnership of piloting this experience.