

The logo for Alliance CaRES is a large, light blue circle with a darker blue double-lined border. Inside the circle, the word "Alliance" is written in a dark blue, sans-serif font, and "CaRES" is written in a larger, light blue, sans-serif font below it.

Alliance CaRES

QUARTERLY REPORT
FIRST QUARTER
2023-2024

SUMMARY

The Alliance CaRES team walks alongside caregivers at all points of their journey: with kin receiving unexpected placement of a child, with prospective foster parents inquiring about licensure until the first time a child is placed in their home, and through the ongoing joys and challenges of caring for children and partnering with their families and the child welfare team. CaRES offers a variety of individual and group supports and connections, including the engaging, skill-building training for which the Alliance is known.

This report is our chance to share updates on the CaRES program's scope and impact including successes, challenges, recommendations, and details of our support to caregivers during our Quarter 1 of 2023-2024 (March 2023-May 2023).

The CaRES program's support provides individual outreach to caregivers and prospective caregivers at specific points. In addition, we offer topic-based discussion support groups across a wide variety of subjects (see Appendix B). We also host innovative special events and community-based support groups with remote and in-person options, and partner with community organizations.

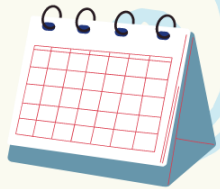
The CaRES team is proud to run a program that makes a difference to caregivers across the state. By offering genuine and robust support opportunities, we impact caregiver satisfaction and retention, and improve outcomes for children in care. We are grateful to all the partners, stakeholders, and team members who are helping guide and inform our work. Together, our small steps lead to big changes.

Alliance CaRES

1st Quarter Snapshot

Notable Achievements

Across the state, **892** current caregivers received supportive contacts from CaRES program staff.



754 caregivers participated in special events.



272 caregivers participated in topic-based support groups with training.



285 prospective caregivers received individual supportive contacts.

There were **41** in-person opportunities representing every region in the state.



CARES

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Alliance CaRES Program is made up of six elements, listed below and detailed in Appendix A. Each section of this report details the relevant successes, challenges, trends, and data, as well as sharing quotes and stories from the CaRES Program.

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1) SUPPORT THROUGH THE LICENSURE PROCESS

Prospective caregivers can find the licensure process confusing and intimidating. We send clarifying information to all those who inquire about licensure. CaRES staff call all prospective kinship caregivers for individual support. CaRES staff also call all those who inquire about foster care who live within the top 25 highest removal ZIP codes. We offer virtual weekly lunchtime sessions to answer frequent questions around the licensing process, a monthly evening session focused on kinship licensing, as well as a "While You Wait" support group for those who are preparing to welcome their first placed child.



892 welcome emails were sent this quarter by the CaRES team to prospective caregivers providing guidance and offering resources.

Alliance CaRES

Si desea leer este mensaje en español [haga clic aquí](#).

Hello!

We're so happy to hear you're thinking about joining the community of caregivers across Washington. Foster parents can make all the difference in the lives of children and families in need of support by providing temporary or "for now" parenting. People like you are central to providing stability to the 5,500 children on average who enter care every year until they can safely return home.¹

It's All Relative: Kinship Support

**1st Thursday from 7:00 - 8:00 pm
via zoom**

Drop by for kinship resources, help with licensing, and answers to your kinship questions



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SUPPORT THROUGH THE LICENSURE PROCESS CONTINUED

This quarter, a total of **892** prospective foster parents received a welcome email detailing next steps. Of those, **746** received a general welcome email, while **146** (**98** from high removal ZIP code areas and **48** who identified as prospective kinship caregivers) received emails as well as a personal phone call. These individual contacts were based on our contracted engagement requirements. There were an additional **139** supportive contacts to prospective caregivers this quarter.

The following are two examples of the type of support a prelicensure call provides from this quarter:

"Spoke with M. She has already received the welcome email but was feeling overwhelmed by all the links and wondering where to start. We made a plan that she would start with KCT and First Aid/CPR/bloodborne pathogens and then we'd talk again and plan next step. Followed up with text."

"T. texted me asking if we could set up a phone call to answer questions. We spoke this afternoon and I was able to answer questions regarding CPA vs. licensing directly through the state, details about trainings needed, and I attempted to help her recover her Alliance account but ultimately had to refer her to tech support for that."



SUPPORT THROUGH THE LICENSURE PROCESS CONTINUED

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Licensure for Prospective Kin

We are receiving increasing inquiries from relatives who have heard that a child related to them may be entering care. The potential caregivers want to get licensed so they can be considered as a placement option but are not eligible for KCT without a placement already in place. We are hearing requests for KCT and child-specific license options for potential placements.

Kinship Caregivers Needing More Information About Reunification

Kinship caregivers are often uninformed or misinformed about the reunification process. Some kin do not want to be licensed because they believe reunification is imminent while others are shocked when the child is returned home within a matter of weeks. We recommend requiring the session of KCT around understanding the system, as well as the creation of DCYF handouts to be given at the time of placement.

Licensing Confusion

Prospective caregivers have reported high levels of relief in finding that CaRES can offer assistance in navigating the licensing process, which they report is confusing and daunting. Most questions are around requirements that might make a caregiver ineligible, the steps of the process, and pursuing adoption.

2) SUPPORT AT KEY POINTS

CaRES Mentors reach out to all caregivers at those moments when we know support is most needed, including at the time of licensure, at the time of first placement of a child into a home, kinship placements, and six months after licensure. These calls provide community resources, advice, and emotional support. We work to ensure that caregivers will build an ongoing connection with their local Mentor so they have someone to call as issues arise.



Over the last quarter, the CaRES Mentors called a total of **656** newly licensed caregivers, those with their first placement, and kinship caregivers, per our engagement strategy. Of those calls, 97% were to kinship caregivers, 1% were to newly licensed caregivers, and 2% were to caregivers with their first placement.



We think it is important to highlight that there have also been **446** additional contacts (individual emails, calls, and texts) to support current caregivers in this quarter (including calls to caregivers at six months). These contacts show that we are successfully building ongoing relationships with caregivers so that they call back for more support when issues arise. These contacts are one way we measure our program's success.



SUPPORT AT KEY POINTS

CONTINUED

KINSHIP SUCCESS STORIES

Every quarter we report on examples of our caregiver support by sharing comments, testimonials, notes from Mentor calls, and examples. Here are a few from this quarter to illustrate the impact of our Mentors' support.

The following are pulled from Mentors' notes describing successful kinship support calls:

- *"Spoke to K. Baby is not growing well and K. has increased the formula concentration and changed to a faster flowing nipple. I encouraged her to loop in early intervention services and seek feeding therapy evaluation and dietician services. K. was able to access TANF and is trying to find time to work on kinship KCT. I encouraged her to reach out to social worker to get connected to kinship licensure as KCT is no longer a prelicensure requirement. I answered questions about how to fill out the TANF/Dept of Child Support enforcement questionnaire (ability to write unknown as answers and to indicate on the form that kiddo in question is a foster child.)"*
- *"Caring for 2 grandsons 3 and 8 yrs old. Family has received gift cards and are being shipped beds and bedding. 8 yr old is staying in his home school and transportation has been arranged through the school districts. As the school district provided transportation will only last through this school year, R. expressed that she would like him to attend the local elementary school in the fall. I encouraged her to discuss with social worker and then begin the enrollment process this spring for the fall enrollment. R. reported the 3 yr old is not yet speaking in a developmentally appropriate way. I shared info on school provided services for preschoolers and encouraged her to connect with her local school district to request formal evaluation to determine eligibility for services. I answered questions regarding visitation and emphasized that she is not obligated to supervise or host visitation. Shared info on WIC, TANF, and general permanency timelines."*



SUPPORT AT KEY POINTS CONTINUED

FOSTER PARENT SUCCESS STORIES

The following are pulled from Mentors' notes describing successful 6 month post-licensure and referral calls to foster parents:

- *"Lengthy phone call with A. Encouraged her to share her journey to foster care and doing foster care. We talked about frustrations and wins with kiddos and how sometimes our expectations don't match the child's current abilities. I encouraged her to advocate for her kiddo at school and extra curricular activities in developing a plan that allows him to process big emotions in a positive way by teaching him other options (instead of lashing out). We talked about how kids with trauma often don't have the S/E skills to navigate life situations. She stated that she often feels under appreciated by the non-fostering community and lacks connection due to working full time. I said "maybe we should try to arrange a celebration at a park for foster parents this summer", to which she responded excitedly and offered to provide the ice cream (she owns an ice cream shop). I told her I would reach out in the next couple of weeks to see how things were going and we can plan this activity. Also discussed: *BEST program *Montesori School *Tai Kwando *504 plans." (A DCYF staff referral)*
- *"Called and spoke with T. She said she has two placements now both from out of region. She said she is working with some relatives and that is working out well. She said she has a courtesy worker and she has been happy working with her. She had no questions. I let her know I would be emailing her a brochure that has helpful information and resources." (6 month contact)*
- *"Spoke with R. who reports that all things are going well. Family is on their 3d placement. R. reports that so far communications with DCYF have been going well. They are currently planning summer trips and have been working with DCYF to sort out transition for baby or permission to take baby on the trip out of WA state." (6 month contact)*



SUPPORT AT KEY POINTS

CONTINUED

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Caregiver Dissatisfaction, Confusion, and Need for More Information

Across the state, we hear many reports from caregivers who are unable to get responses to significant requests related to the child's medical or educational needs. Caregivers are requesting a single point person in each region for urgent matters when they cannot reach the child's worker. In addition, we continue to get many reports from kin caregivers that they do not know who to reach out to for questions that arise related to the case. They often express confusion with the number of people who are involved in the case. We recommend increasing clarity for kin around contact points through the use of printed cards they can post in their homes.

Placement Challenges

Dissatisfaction with the system is influenced by significant placement challenges for both kinship and foster caregivers. Caregivers are reporting feeling pressed into taking placements that are not good fits with their circumstances or skills. This is contributing to instability and disruptions for the youth and burnout for the caregivers. Additionally, kinship families report feeling unprepared and unsupported when taking a relative placement. They express frustration with inadequate resources for material goods, transportation, and childcare and concern that when they voice needs children will be removed from their care. Kin caregivers are requesting that children come to placement with carseats, diapers, supplies, and an automatic enrollment in TANF.

Data Challenges for Kinship Contacts

We are seeing significant problems with DCYF's kinship caregiver data that allows our Mentors to contact kin to offer support. This quarter about a third of the DCYF provided kin phone numbers and email addresses were incorrect or missing. In those cases, we mail a welcome packet via USPS but kinship caregivers rarely contact CaRES as a result of these. Many kinship caregivers express gratitude for the support and resources CaRES offers and incorrect contact information is a barrier to providing support to those kinship caregivers. We are eager to find more accurate data from DCYF.



3) DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

CaRES now offers **26** online topic-based support groups for facilitated discussion and problem solving with other caregivers. These confer training credit and are listed in Appendix B. Community-based groups offer the opportunity for state-wide connections with caregivers with shared experiences and local in-person supportive connections with other caregivers. Some of these include trainings for credit, depending on the interest of the group. Our community-based groups include "walk and talks", coffee meet-ups, park playdates, and more. Our drop-In groups are online informal groups that give caregivers the chance to connect as the need arises around topics like integrating TBRI principles into their caregiving..



DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

CONTINUED

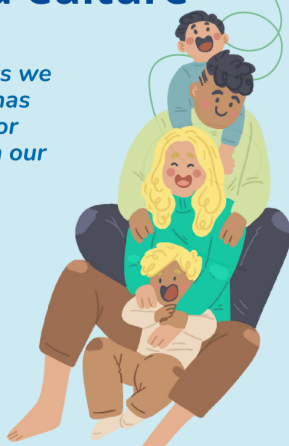
TOPIC SUPPORT GROUPS

Over the last quarter CaRES offered **72** Topic Support Groups (Supportive Facilitated Discussion Groups) covering a range of topics. In the last quarter support groups were attended by a total of **272** people. (As a reminder, these are not necessarily **272** unique participants as caregivers may take multiple sessions of a group or engage with multiple groups.)

Fostering Across Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

A supportive facilitated discussion about the ways we can support a child who has a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background from our own.

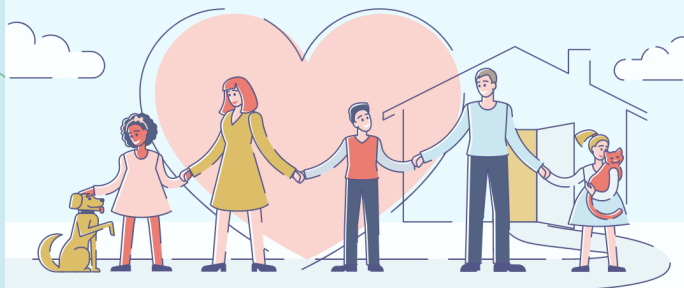
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FOSTERING WHILE PARENTING SUPPORTING OUR BIOLOGICAL AND ADOPTED CHILDREN

A CaRES Supportive Facilitated Discussion Group



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DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

CONTINUED

FEEDBACK FROM TOPIC SUPPORT GROUPS

The response from attendees has been extremely positive. This quarter we received 23 total surveys from participants in 8 different support groups. Participants were asked to rate several statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants would recommend the group to others (4.7) and plan to attend more support groups in the future (4.7). They feel they received useful resources and information from the group (4.7), and feel better able to cope with caregiving challenges after attending (4.6). Participants indicated that on the whole the online discussion format worked for them (4.6). On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), participants' self-reports of their skills related to the support group topic averaged 3.4 prior to the group and 4.3 after attending the group. When asked what was most useful about the support group they attended, comments included:

- *Sharing experiences with others that "get it". (This theme was shared by 7 participants with different wording.)*
- *Hearing from other caregivers about their experiences and ideas regarding the topic. The book club format was great and I'm glad I have the book to look back on for future reference. (Theme shared by 4 participants.)*
- *Everything we learned was useful information that can be applied (e.g., the 3 Es and 3 Rs; the toolbox principle). (Theme shared by 3 participants.)*
- *Group discussion and our leader's ability to get the group to talk and connect with each other. (Theme shared by 3 participants.)*
- *The TBRI process is very experience-based and brainstorming ideas together is very helpful! (Theme shared by 2 participants.)*
- *Balance between information and connection.*
- *Having the space to discuss anxieties about homophobia in the fostering experience.*



DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUED

FEEDBACK FROM TOPIC SUPPORT GROUPS, CONTINUED

When asked to share their thoughts about the accessibility, equity, and inclusion of the support group they attended, comments included:

- *I feel like it is a great platform for equitable access to all. It's often possible to find the classes I want at the time and on the platform I need to be able to participate. (Theme was shared by 3 participants in varying words.)*
- *It felt very welcoming and included everyone. (Theme shared by 2 participants.)*
- *I would say Alliance and CaRES have succeeded. This support group was exactly what I needed. I would even consider taking it again as a refresher.*
- *This one was certainly multicultural. It was neat sharing stories from our cultures and childhoods.*

Attendees this quarter were also asked what improvements could be made to the support group they attended. Seven participants felt no improvements were needed. Three participants indicated that groups/book clubs should continue in order to build connections. Other suggestions included higher attendance at groups, easier catalog and registration process, and more breakout rooms.

When asked to share their thoughts about CaRES in general, caregiver responses included:

- *Great courses and resources. (Theme shared by 5 participants with different words.)*
- *Very knowledgeable facilitator. They made the class interesting, informative, and interactive. (Theme shared by 2 participants.)*
- *So supportive.*
- *Love how much help you get just from one class.*

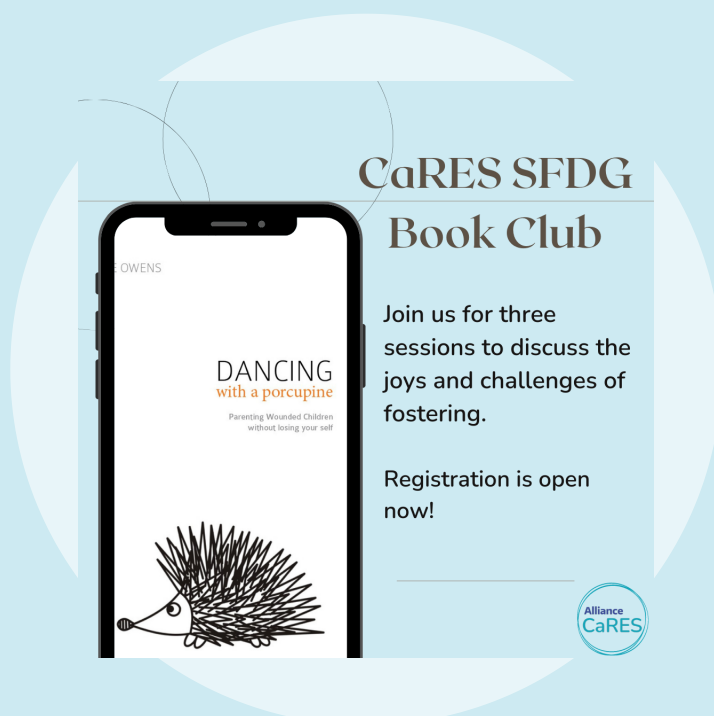


DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUED

TOPIC SUPPORT GROUPS: BOOK CLUBS

The Book Club portion of the program are consistently well attended and are now considered a flagship of our program. The options continue to grow, now with five books: "Dancing With a Porcupine," "FASD: Trying Differently Rather Than Harder," "TBRI: The Connected Child", "TBRI: The Connected Parent," and the newly launched advanced book club, "TBRI: The Connected Therapist, Relating Through the Senses."

Book clubs are an excellent way for caregivers to build connection while learning new principles. They are also a wonderful tool to go a little deeper with challenging topics such as attachment issues, long-term outcomes, and self-care while caregiving. Our long-standing book club, "Dancing With a Porcupine" offers veteran caregivers a unique way to share their experiences and build self-care skills.



**CaRES SFDG
Book Club**

Join us for three sessions to discuss the joys and challenges of fostering.

Registration is open now!

OWENS

DANCING
with a porcupine
Parenting Wounded Children
without losing your self

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS

CONTINUED

COMMUNITY GROUPS

This quarter, Community Groups were attended by a total of **174** people with CaRES offering **41 groups across** the state in **10** cities representing every region. There were multiple groups in Regions 1 and 2 to ensure that caregivers throughout those large regions had options near them.



Events this quarter around the state

Along with the Community Groups hosted by CaRES, we partnered with local organizations such as Skookum Kids, Compelled to Care, Wishing Well, and Foster the Harbor. Beyond the traditional support groups and park play dates, our Community Connectors have also hosted caregiver coffees and walk-and-talks. We look forward to adding more fun connection options in the coming months.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUED

DROP-IN DISCUSSION GROUPS

Drop-in Groups for communities with shared experiences: These unique drop-in groups are a place for caregivers across the state to connect with others who just "get it." Single caregivers, those who take medically complex placements, those who are focused on practicing the skills learned in TBRI classes, and people who are just beginning their caregiving journey have all expressed feelings of isolation. These tailored drop-in groups have been met with gratitude and engagement.

TBRI Drop in Group
TBRI Tuesday is a free drop in group
2nd Tuesday of every month
7:30 - 8:30 pm

Join a TBRI (Trust Based Relational Intervention) practitioner and fellow caregivers to talk TBRI principles and approaches!

**FOSTERING AS A SINGLE PARENT
DROP-IN DISCUSSION**

3rd Thursday | 8:00 - 9:00 pm
Zoom:
754 974 4679

**MEDICALLY COMPLEX
CAREGIVERS**

Drop-In Discussion Group
4th Tuesday of the month, 7:30-8:30pm
Stop by for connections, resources, and fostering support.

6 SESSIONS! STARTING SEPT. 27TH
ZOOM: 8150 560 4085

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUED

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

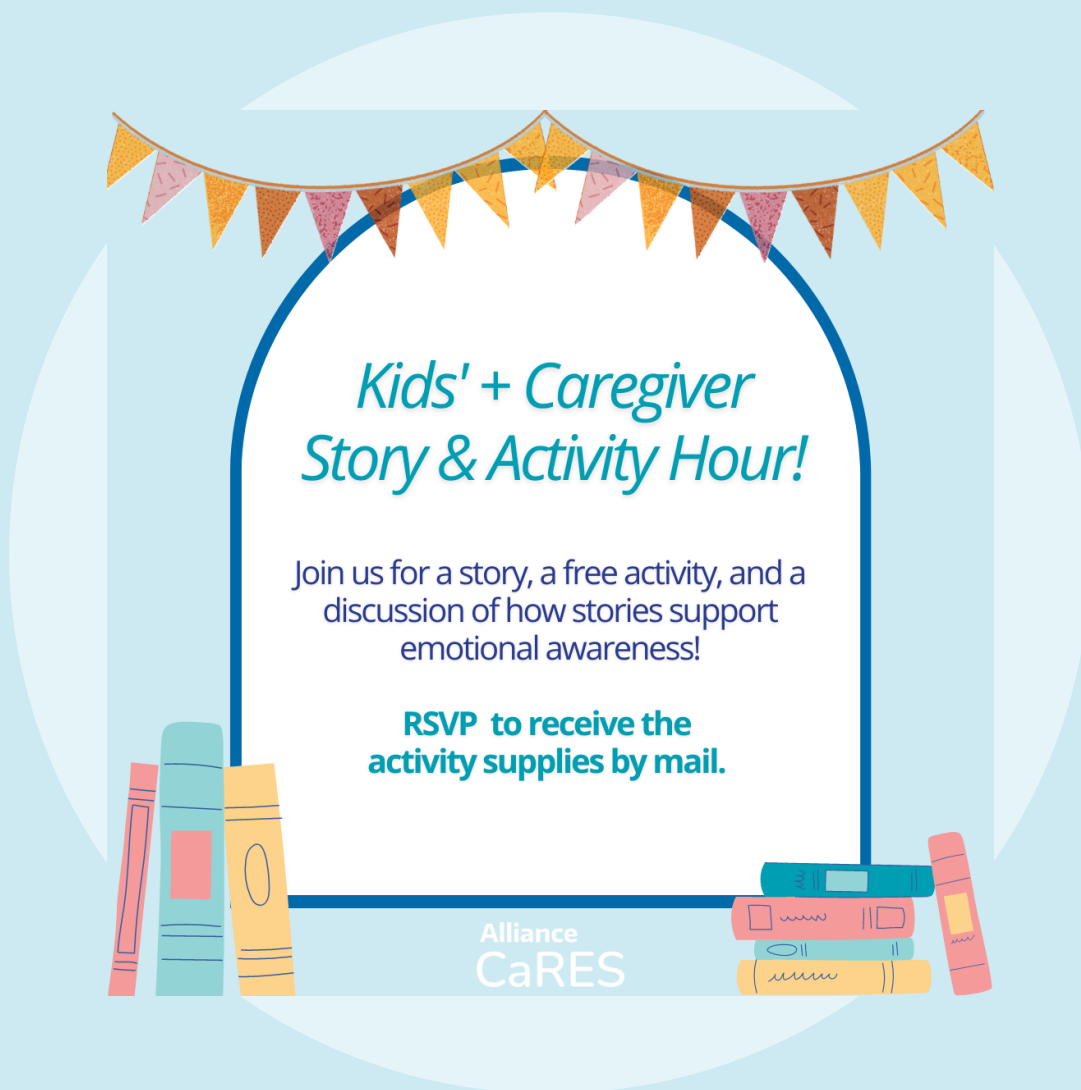
Attendance Challenges

The CaRES team is struggling with attendance for our events. Despite ongoing requests for support groups that provide training hours, ways to connect, and in-person gatherings, we are not getting high attendance at the events we organize. Based on caregiver requests and marketing feedback, we have tried different types of activities, a wide variety of training topics, offering child care, providing food, and direct invitations from Mentors. Despite these diverse efforts we continue to see low turnout. We have been speaking to partner organizations and other community organizations who report the same response from caregivers to their events. We will continue offering both remote and in-person events but we believe the landscape has shifted dramatically in this post Covid time and in-person events do not have the pull they once did on the Western side of the state, in particular. In addition, as more and more caregivers are kin, who are not required to get training hours, attendance for support groups with training credit is lower.



4) SPECIAL EVENTS

CaRES aims to reach caregivers at every level of need and interest. Beyond our varying support group offerings, we also have special events that build connections for caregivers around unique areas of interest. Special events are sometimes statewide, like Caregivers + Children's Story Hour with books written by Black authors. Other times, special events are in-person like our partnership with DCYF at We Are Family day or Compelled to Care at their BINGO night. Special events give caregivers the opportunity to connect with CaRES and fellow caregivers outside of traditional or formal program elements. They are a unique way CaRES is caring for the caregivers.



SPECIAL EVENTS CONTINUED

754 caregivers and children participated in CaRES' special events this quarter. Special events include in-person community events in partnership with other organizations, digital community events, and drop-in discussion groups.

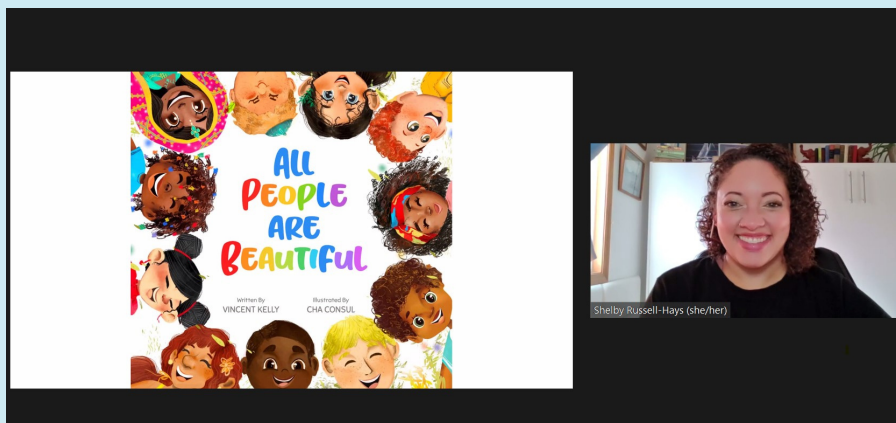
During the first quarter, we were thrilled to partner with organizations across the state for in-person events such as Compelled to Care's BINGO night, DCYF's We Are Family day with the Rainiers, and foster parent appreciation events across the state from Walla Walla to Vancouver, Shelton, and Pierce county.

We relish the opportunity to meet caregivers and the children and youth in their homes, as well as build partnerships with their community organizations.



SPECIAL EVENTS CONTINUED

CaRES also offers statewide special events. Two very popular special events this quarter were the Gentle Yoga for Caregivers and the Caregivers + Kids Activity and Story Hour. Gentle Yoga for Caregivers provided a relaxing practice guided by an Alliance trainer and certified yoga instructor. The practice included mindful movements that also followed the principles of trauma sensitive yoga. One participant had this to say about the special event:



The book read by special guest -
Alliance Trainer, Shelby Russell-Hays



The craft supplies mailed
to families for our
Storytime event

Caregivers + Kids Activity and Story Hour included an engaging activity along with a discussion on how stories support emotional awareness. The event included a reading of "The Shape of Me and Other Stuff" by Dr. Seuss and "The Way I Feel" by Janan Cain. Each participating child drew a life-size silhouette to fill in with their feelings. The supplies for the silhouette were sent by mail to caregivers who RSVPed. Some participants shared:

"It is a great opportunity to engage with the kids and do a fun art project."

"It was great, especially to teach children self love."

SPECIAL EVENTS

CONTINUED

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Special Events are a Highlight

Special events are frequently our most well-attended offerings. Caregivers express appreciation for the opportunity to try something new or engage with caregivers who have had similar experiences. We recognize the value of informal, creative, and fun options for caregiver connections and look forward to continuing expanding our special events. We are always looking for new ideas and opportunities for partnership in the community.

DCYF Regional Disparities in Appreciation Events

As CaRES partners with DCYF around caregiver appreciation events we are observing the differences between regions in terms of the time and budget allocated for caregiver appreciation events. We want to support DCYF's work to show caregivers how much they matter but the regional disparity is a challenge and is leading to caregivers in some regions feeling undervalued and unseen.



5) ANYTIME SUPPORT, INCLUDING RESOURCES AND TRAINING

We offer a wealth of resources through emails, Facebook, Instagram, and the CaRES website. We were thrilled to launch a redesigned website this quarter with an interactive map, regional calendars, improved navigation, and easier referral process.

We also connect caregivers to free and extensive training and coaching opportunities through the Alliance. While caregivers are doing the important work of supporting children and families, we are here to support the caregivers. Workers can refer caregivers who need mentorship and caregivers can reach out directly to Mentors for ongoing support, to get additional questions answered, and for advice.



ANYTIME SUPPORT, INCLUDING RESOURCES AND TRAINING CONTINUED

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Referrals as a Sign of Program Success

As a result of many presentations across DCYF units, at events, and with partner organizations like CASA/GAL, we continue to grow the number of referrals from workers seeking information about resources to support kinship and foster caregivers on their caseloads. Requests for resources and support came from across DCYF. We are always grateful that people are turning to CaRES to support caregivers on their caseloads. We take the growing number of caregiver referrals and partnership contacts as an indication of our ability to be a resource for caregivers directly and indirectly. We continue developing resource partnership and grow awareness of CaRES supports.

6) SUPPORT DURING INVESTIGATIONS

FIRST PROGRAM

There were **6** FIRST calls made during the fourth quarter.

Event Date	Number of Calls	Reason for Call
4/12/2023	1	FIRST Line
5/3/2023	1	Founded; Questions on Appeal
5/4/2023	1	Follow Up First Line Call
5/19/2023	1	FIRST Call
5/24/2023	1	FIRST
5/26/2023	1	Follow up First Line Call

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Under Utilization of FIRST Line

The CaRES team received only 6 initial FIRST program calls this quarter, and no additional follow-up calls from caregivers. The FIRST Program has not been a well-utilized element of the program, despite requiring staffing. It is more common for caregivers to reach out to a Mentor or CaRES staff member directly with questions. Some callers are looking for advocacy help for disputing with DCYF. CaRES does not provide this service and we direct caregivers to Constituent Relations. We also hear frequently from caregivers that they would be interested in direct contact with DCYF to discuss their questions rather than speaking to CaRES staff.



LOOKING AHEAD

In the first quarter of our third year, the Alliance CaRES program continued to expand and grow. Elements we look forward to introducing in the next quarter include:

- Growing our in-person presence across the state through our team of CaRES Community Connectors who will be focusing on a wide variety of in-person events for the summer.
- Building and expanding upon the successes of the program through increasing our culturally-focused special events and direct individual connections.



Vision Statement

We believe caregivers thrive
when **connected** to each
other, practical resources,
and the broader community.



APPENDIX A:

CARES

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The CaRES Program is made up of six elements

1) Support through the licensure process:

Prospective caregivers can find the licensure process confusing and intimidating. We send clarifying information to all those who inquire about licensure. CaRES staff call all prospective kinship caregivers for individual support. CaRES staff also call all those who inquire about foster care who live within the top 25 highest removal ZIP codes. We also offer weekly virtual lunchtime sessions to answer frequent questions around paperwork and the licensing process, as well as "While You Wait" support groups for those who are preparing to welcome their first placed child.

2) Support at key points:

CaRES Mentors reach out to all caregivers at those moments when we know support is most needed, including at the time of licensure, at the time of first placement of a child into a home, kinship placements, and six months after licensure. These calls provide community resources, advice, and emotional support. We work to ensure that caregivers will build an ongoing connection with their local Mentor so they have someone to call as issues arise.

3) Different kinds of support groups:

CaRES now offers 26 online topic-based support groups for facilitated discussion and problem solving with other caregivers. These confer training credit. Community-based groups offer the opportunity for local in-person supportive connections with other caregivers. Some of these include trainings for credit, depending on the interest of the group. Our community-based groups include "walk and talks", coffee meet-ups, park playdates, a craft circle, and more. Our drop-In groups are online informal groups that give caregivers the chance to connect as the need arises.

4) Special events:

CaRES aims to reach caregivers at every level of need and interest. Beyond our standard offerings, we also offer special events around unique areas of interest. Special events are sometimes statewide, like our PRIDE event, Single Parent Drop-in Discussion, and Storytime with crafts or our Gntle Yoga for caregivers. Other times, special events are in-person like our partnership on the TBRI Hope for the Journey Conference and DCYF We Are Family Day. Special events give caregivers the opportunity to connect with CaRES and fellow caregivers outside of traditional or formal program elements. They are a unique way CaRES is caring for the caregivers.

5) Anytime support, including resources and training:

We offer a wealth of resources through emails, Facebook, Instagram, and the CaRES website. We also connect caregivers to free and extensive training and coaching opportunities through the Alliance. While caregivers are doing the important work of supporting children and families, we are here to support the caregivers. Workers can refer caregivers who need mentorship and caregivers can reach out directly to Mentors for ongoing support, to get additional questions answered, and for advice. We are seeing these calls increase!

6) Support during investigations:

Through the FIRST program, CaRES offers neutral, confidential support for caregivers with an allegation or licensing violation. We offer information about what to expect during the investigation process, and a listening ear during a challenging time.



APPENDIX B:

TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS

SELF-CARE

Self Care for Caregivers: This group will engage in conversations around how to make sure you see how valuable your contribution is, as well as also how demanding it can be. You can talk about challenges you're facing when thinking about self-care, because real life does sometimes make it hard to prioritize. You'll work toward developing an action plan that takes into account your unique circumstances and proactively addresses things that might derail your self-supporting activities. (Formerly "Who Is Taking Care of the Caregiver?")

Boundaries As Self-Care: This group is an extension of the supportive facilitated discussion group "Who Is Taking Care of the Caregiver?" In this group, you will engage in conversations around how to make sure you see how setting and keeping healthy boundaries allows you to continue doing the valuable work you do while protecting your important relationships. You can talk about challenges you're facing when thinking about boundaries, because real life sometimes makes it hard to say no or hold to your priorities. You'll work toward developing an action plan that proactively addresses things that might make it hard to maintain your identified healthy boundaries.

Grief and Loss in Your Foster Care Journey: As a caregiver for a child in the foster care system, grief and loss are an inherent part of your journey. You may be grieving a placement that isn't going as expected or hoped. Even as you celebrate a child's return home or to an adoptive placement, your family may be experiencing the loss of the child. We will talk about the realities of grief and loss, and share strategies for walking through the grieving process. You will engage in discussions about how to experience loss and yet continue to provide a loving environment for children placed with you in the future.

CONSIDERING ADOPTION

Foster-to-Adopt Journey: As a prospective adoptive foster parent, your journey from placement to adoptions is different from other adoption experiences. The goal of concurrent planning leads to unique challenges and beautiful opportunities. During the three sessions, you will consider some of the challenges of the foster-to-adopt process and develop strategies to help you fulfil your role in the adoption triad.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

BOOK CLUBS

The Connected Child: The CaRES team will be leading a group through reading and discussion of “The Connected Child,” by Karyn Purvis. “The Connected Child” lays out the foundational principles for Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), a therapeutic model that trains caregivers to provide effective support and treatment for at-risk children. Discussion at the five weekly book club meetings will dive into what TBRI is, and discussion will include a look at new strategies for building connection and managing behaviors.

The Connected Parent: “The Connected Parent” by Karyn Purvis and Lisa Qualls is the focus of this book club. Discussion will review TBRI principles and dive into practical parenting applications and real life strategies for understanding attachment, teaching respect, understanding sensory needs, adapting strategies for teens, and taking care of yourself.

The Connected Therapist: Connecting through the senses: "This 3-week book club is an extension of the Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) modules or the TBRI book clubs: The Connected Child and The Connected Parent. Based on selections from “The Connected Therapist” by Marti Smith, discussions during the three sessions will focus on understanding sensory processing challenges, developing sensory processing strategies, and the practical application of those strategies in everyday caregiving."

Trying Differently Rather Than Harder: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: The CaRES team leads you through a reading and discussion of “Trying Differently Rather Than Harder: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders” by Diane Malbin. This book is a readable, narrative discussion of the neurobehavioral approach to working with children and youth with FASD. The book focuses on understanding behaviors differently through case studies and examples of how FASD impacts everyday life. During four sessions, you will be discussing themes including: adaptations, common challenges, cognitive changes and strategies to address them, working with memory disruptions, and talking about FASD in a supportive informative manner.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

BOOK CLUBS, Continued

Dancing with a Porcupine: The CaRES team leads you through a reading and discussion of “Dancing with a Porcupine” by Jennie Owens. This book shares the compelling story of the author’s struggle to save her own life while caring for three children she and her husband adopted from foster care. In three sessions across six weeks, you will discuss themes including: self-care; trauma-informed care; expectations and hurt feelings; compassion fatigue; and balancing real life with the outside pressure to look like you are doing it all well.

PARENTING

Caring for Drug Impacted Infants and Children: In this group, we will share experiences, resources, and best practices for caring for infants and children who have been exposed to chemicals in utero. We will discuss signs of withdrawal; what works best in caring for an impacted infant including therapeutic handling techniques and share parenting experiences. We will also discuss issues, behaviors, interventions, effective parenting techniques, and resources for the children in your care.

Littlest Lives and Their Big Needs – Parenting 0 to 2: The earliest years are among the most critical to a child’s long-term development. Children under 2 who are in foster care often require supports and approaches that are not so typical for their peers. You will talk through their needs, develop strategies to address those needs, and identify the resources available to help you support the littlest lives in care. You will also be able to build community with other caregivers of kids under 2 to share resources, experiences and problem-solving strategies.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

PARENTING, Continued

Parenting Teens: This facilitated discussion group is a continuation of the seven-part “Parenting Teens” webinar. This group will continue to explore strategies for parenting teens with a history of trauma, developing healthy and supportive relationships with your teen, nurturing their identity, and understanding their challenging behaviors. You’ll work with other parents of teens to develop an action plan that takes into account your and your teen’s unique circumstances and proactively addresses the challenges you face.

Parenting in the Digital Age: Ready access to smart phones, tables, and computers has created a whole new world of challenges for caregivers. Youth do not need to leave their bedrooms be introduced to risky situations. During this supportive discussion group, you will talk with fellow caregivers about the challenges of parenting in the digital age, learn some warning signs of when a child’s internet usage has become unsafe, and practice having a conversation about internet safety with your pre-teen or teen. We will also discuss basic internet programs, apps, geo tracking data, dangers in sharing pictures, videos, and personal information online.

Practical Parenting Skills for Caregivers: It isn’t always easy to meet the complex needs of a child while navigating a new parental role. Foster parenting calls for a trauma-informed, mindful, and positive response to a wide variety of behaviors. You will work with fellow caregivers to develop practical parenting strategies that are trauma-informed, appropriate for the child, and suited to your home.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

Caregiver Strategies for Holidays and Celebrations: Holidays and celebrations can be a time of family togetherness, but they can also be a time of stress and heightened expectations. It takes intentional planning to give the children in your care a wonderful experience that includes the things that make the holiday or celebration special for everyone. In this 2-hour supportive facilitated discussion, kinship and foster caregivers will talk with each other about ways to manage the expectations of the child, their family, and your family. You will also talk about how to plan ahead to minimize the emotional challenges that sometimes come with family celebrations. Lastly, you will have an opportunity to create a celebration action-plan that is specific to your family and the child in your home

Fostering While Parenting, Supporting Our Biological and Adopted Children: When you have children who live at home with you, becoming a foster parent also means becoming a foster family. Growing up with foster siblings comes with unique challenges but there are strategies you can use to help your bio and adopted kids adapt and thrive!

During both sessions of this supportive facilitated discussion, you will collaborate with fellow caregivers to identify some of the unique challenges bio and adopted kids face, consider the impact fostering may have on your children, and share strategies you can use to nurture strength and resilience as a family unit.

Using Storytime for Connection and Support: Reading with your children can do much more than support their academic growth! During this supportive facilitated discussion caregivers will discuss strategies they can use before, during, and after reading to build social-emotional learning with the children in their care. Caregivers will also collaborate to identify techniques they can use to increase attachment with their child through reading and story time. Whether it is picture books, a chapter book or a series, reading with the children in your home can lead to deeper attachment and improved social-emotional skills!



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS

CONTINUED

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

Wellness Resource Wednesday: Dive into health topics with local experts to best support children in care. We're excited to announce an amazing new group focused on building your awareness of wellness resources that can support you and the children in your care.

Wellness Resource Wednesdays is a free drop-in group meeting 6:30-8 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. In partnership with UW Harborview and Coordinated Care, these sessions will offer opportunities to learn directly from expert doctors and connect with caregivers sharing your experiences. The meetings start with a 45-minute presentation by Harborview doctors and conclude with 45 minutes of Q&A around services of CaRES, Coordinated Care and Harborview. The medical topics were selected based on common areas foster parents would like more support around, and training credit will be available. On alternating months, sessions will be a chance to simply share perspectives and resources around navigating health systems as a caregiver.

Education Resource Wednesday: Dive into education topics with local experts as they provide tools, resources, and support to help foster parents and kinship caregivers guide their youth to academic success. In partnership with Treehouse, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), these sessions will provide you with the opportunity to learn directly from educational experts and connect with foster parents and kinship caregivers by sharing your experiences. The meetings will start with a 45-minute presentation by Treehouse and OSPI and conclude with a 45-minute Q&A around services of CaRES, Treehouse and OSPI. The educational topics were selected based on common areas foster parents and kinship caregivers would like more support around, and training credit will be provided.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS

CONTINUED

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM, Continued

While You Wait: You've thought long and hard about what it means for you to be a foster parent. While you wait for your license or first placement to arrive, this facilitated discussion will help you consider some of the needs in the fostering community and how you are suited to meet them. You'll work toward developing parameters for accepting your first placements to promote a good fit for both you and child(ren) in your care.

Fostering as Part of a Team: As a caregiver for a child in the foster care system, you are part of a parenting team. The courts, the social worker, CASA, GAL, medical team, therapists and the child's biological family all have a role to play. Knowing what your role is and how to partner with the other members of the child's team improves the child's care, your experience as a foster parent, and the long-term outcomes of the placement. During this group, we will talk about who the members of the team are and their roles, and identify ways to promote positive relationships with them. This will include a look at how to support family time and partnership with the biological/first family, and understanding the role of DCYF staff and how to positively partner for success.

Navigating Fostering as an LGBTQIA+ Caregiver: As an LGBTQIA+ caregiver have you felt that your Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) impacts your fostering journey? In this supportive facilitated discussion group, you will get a chance to talk with other LGBTQIA+ kinship and foster caregivers about their experiences and share your own. As a group, you will talk about useful tools and techniques for navigating common issues and use these to develop strategies specifically for your family. This single session facilitated discussion is specifically for kinship and foster caregivers who identify as LGBTQIA+ caring for children with any SOGIE.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS

CONTINUED

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM, Continued

Navegando el cuidado de Crianza Como un Cuidador de Habla Hispana: ¿Alguna vez ha sentido que su cultura latino/a/x e idioma impacta su experiencia como padre de crianza? En este grupo de discusión facilitada de apoyo solo para hispanohablantes, tendrá la oportunidad de hablar con otros padres de crianza y parientes como proveedores de cuidados sobre sus experiencias y compartir las suyas. Como grupo, hablarán sobre herramientas y técnicas útiles para navegar por los problemas comunes que enfrentan los cuidadores de habla hispana y utilizarlas para desarrollar estrategias específicamente para su familia.

SUPPORTING YOUTH & CHILDREN'S IDENTITIES

Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth in Foster Care: Understanding your child's identity is critical to providing them the care and support they need to navigate the development years. Children with an LGBTQIA+ identity may need additional support as they navigate social and cultural factors. In this supportive facilitated discussion group, you will have an opportunity to talk through LGBTQIA+ terminology and identify concrete tools you can use to support a child's LGBTQIA+ identity. During the sessions, you can ask questions about support resources, share ways you have supported a child in your care, and hear how other caregivers have navigated situations related to a child's LGBTQIA+ identity.

Fostering Across Race, Ethnicity and Culture: Welcoming a child into your home, even temporarily, means accepting and affirming their whole selves. When a child has a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background than yours, it can be challenging to know the best ways to properly care for their unique physical, spiritual, and cultural needs. During this facilitated discussion, caregivers will share their racial, ethnic, or cultural perspective and develop strategies for meeting the needs of a child who has a different background or perspective. Facilitated by caregivers with lived experience in transracial and multi-cultural caregiving, this group aims to discuss the full scope of multi-racial, ethnic, and cultural foster families.



TOPIC SUPPORT GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

SUPPORTING YOUTH & CHILDREN'S IDENTITIES, Continued

Supporting the Culture of Native American Children in Your Care: Each of these 1-hour culturally focused sessions help caregivers of Native American children incorporate indigenous cultural elements into your home for the benefit of the child. Led by the Alliance CaRES Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Specialist, these sessions will introduce the historical foundation of specific activities and why they are important in Native American culture. You will be introduced to embedded cultural aspects particular to Washington State Tribes, including appropriate attire and behavior during events and activities in the community. You will leave better prepared to integrate these activities into your home and role as a caregiver.