

The logo features the text "Alliance CaRES" centered within a light blue circle. The circle is defined by two concentric teal lines. The word "Alliance" is in a dark blue, sans-serif font, and "CaRES" is in a teal, sans-serif font.

Alliance CaRES

QUARTERLY REPORT 2022
THIRD QUARTER

SUMMARY

The Alliance CaRES team walks alongside caregivers at all points of their journey: from inquiring about licensure, to achieving it, from the first time a child is placed in their home, to the ongoing joys and challenges of caring for children in their homes. 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 Quarter 3 of 2022.

The CaRES program's support is based on the engagement strategy developed with DCYF to provide individual outreach to caregivers and prospective caregivers at specific points. In addition, we offer topic-based support groups including 24 facilitated discussion topics across a wide variety of subjects (see Appendix B). We also host innovative events and community-based support groups with remote and in-person options, often with community partners.

The CaRES program team is thrilled to have completed the third quarter of our second year running 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 see our small steps leading to big changes and we are grateful to all the partners, stakeholders, and team members who are helping guide and inform our work.



Alliance CaRES

3rd Quarter Snapshot

Notable Achievements

Across the state, **1,487** caregivers received supportive contacts from CaRES program staff.



257 caregivers participated in community events, special events, and drop-in groups.



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



8 Community Connectors were hired. This new role expands our local connections and increases opportunities for in-person support.



There were **12** Community Groups and **17** in-person community partnerships representing every region in the state.



*See appendix A for a detailed list of the Alliance CaRES program elements that led to these achievements.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Across the state, over **706** licensed caregivers, kinship caregivers, and caregivers with their first placement received individualized contacts this quarter from CaRES program staff as part of our engagement strategy. In addition, **538** more supportive contacts (individual emails and calls) were made in the quarter. This number includes calling caregivers at the 1 year licensure mark during the November pilot of an expanded outreach strategy.

As part of our prospective caregiver engagement strategy, over **108** prospective caregivers in high-removal zip codes and with kinship care inquiries received contacts this quarter, with an additional **135** prospective foster parent support contacts made.



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

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

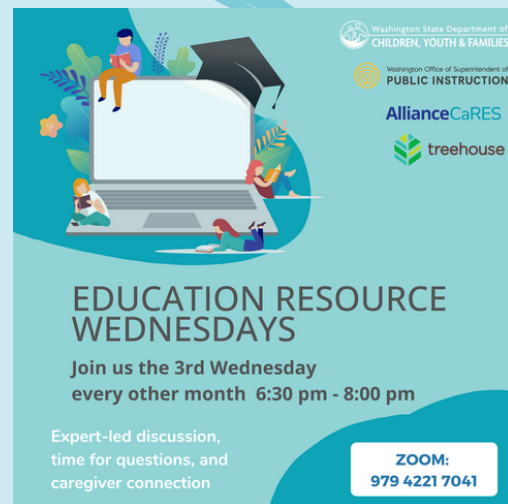
Hello!

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



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

243 caregivers have participated in CaRES' topic-based support groups this quarter. CaRES now offers **24** different supportive facilitated discussion groups on a range of topics. These include book clubs, and focused topics to meet specific caregiver needs. Some examples are shown below. A complete list with descriptions is included later in the report.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

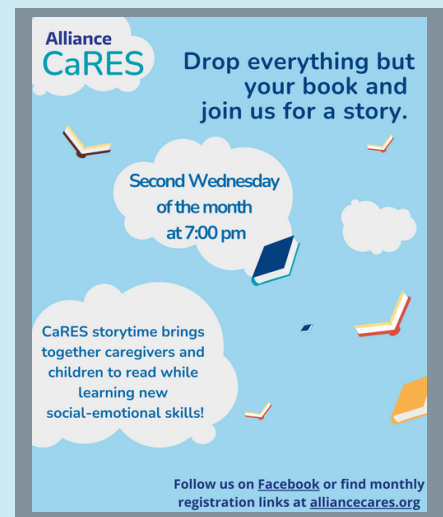
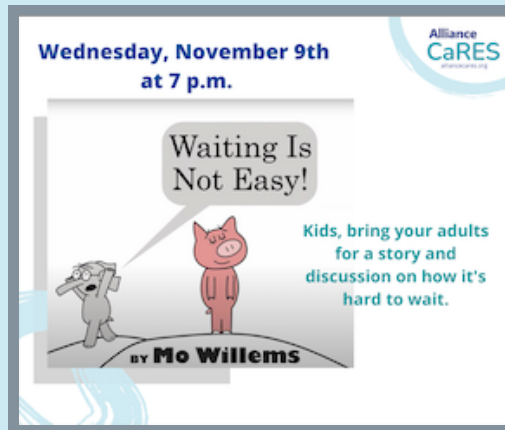
In addition, **257** caregivers have participated in CaRES' other support groups (which are not for training credit) this quarter. These include community events (both in-person and remote), special events, and drop-in groups.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

Book Clubs

The Book Club portion of the program continues to grow, now with four books: "Dancing With a Porcupine," "The Connected Child", "The Connected Parent", and "Trying Differently Rather Than Harder". These groups are consistently well attended and are now considered a flagship of our program.



Story Time

CaRES launched one of our favorite special events, Story Time, in the 3rd quarter of 2021. It was successful enough that we have continued to offer it monthly. This quarter we had **34** participants in total, including 13 adults and 21 children. These live events feature activities around a book read by a CaRES Mentor who facilitates conversation between children and their caregivers. The books chosen offer social-emotional learnings, and stories that hold additional benefits for children in care. The program is a great opportunity for caregivers to see in real-time the benefits of reading together to build attachment and help guide challenging conversations.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

In-Person Connections

CaRES responded to ongoing caregiver requests for in-person connections with an expanded summer series of Park Plays Dates along with Caregiver Coffee meet ups, and local support groups. In-person caregiver connections were held in **9** 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. Along with the CaRES facilitated caregiver connections, we partnered with local organizations such as Embrace WA, FPAWS, Foster Champs, and United Indians of All Tribes on **17** other local events.

Expanding our program

This quarter we hired **1** new Spanish-speaking Specialist and **8** Community Connectors. We are excited to increase our ability to support monolingual Spanish-speaking caregivers and to expand our community-based connections for caregivers. The additions to our contracted support teams improves our statewide presence and representation for the caregiving community.



NOTEWORTHY CHALLENGES

Caregiver Dissatisfaction

Across the state, caregiver morale is extremely low. We hear many reports of challenging communication between workers and caregivers including increasing reports from caregivers who are unable to get responses to significant requests related to the child's medical or educational needs. We have been reporting trends and specific incidents that need DCYF intervention to DCYF directly in order to facilitate resolutions and build awareness of caregiver challenges.

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.

NOTEWORTHY CHALLENGES CONTINUED

Kinship Contacts

We are seeing significant problems with DCYF's kinship caregiver data that allows our Mentors to contact kin to offer support. Phone numbers and email addresses are often incorrect or missing. In those cases, we mail a welcome packet via USPS but kinship caregivers rarely contact CaRES as a result of these. We consider this a challenge because many kinship caregivers express gratitude for the support and resources CaRES can offer and incorrect contact information is a barrier to providing the same level of support to those kinship caregivers.

Under-Utilized FIRST Line

The CaRES team received only **3** 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 from caregivers that they would be interested in more direct contact with DCYF to discuss their questions.



TRENDS

Prospective caregivers have reported high levels of satisfaction and relief in finding that CaRES can offer assistance in navigating the licensing process, which they report is confusing and daunting.

New caregivers are enthusiastic about the challenges and rewards of caregiving. They are eager to participate in topic-based support groups and have been providing very positive feedback about the program. We are seeing ever-increasing engagement with the Mentors as new caregivers build trusting relationships with their local Mentors. Often, new caregivers are contacting their Mentor with placement challenges such as missing or inaccurate paperwork, high behavioral needs, and feelings of pressure to take poor-fit placements. Mentors provide clarification on appropriate expectations for placement information, guidance on trainings that can help with behavioral challenges, and advice on improving teaming with workers and birth families.

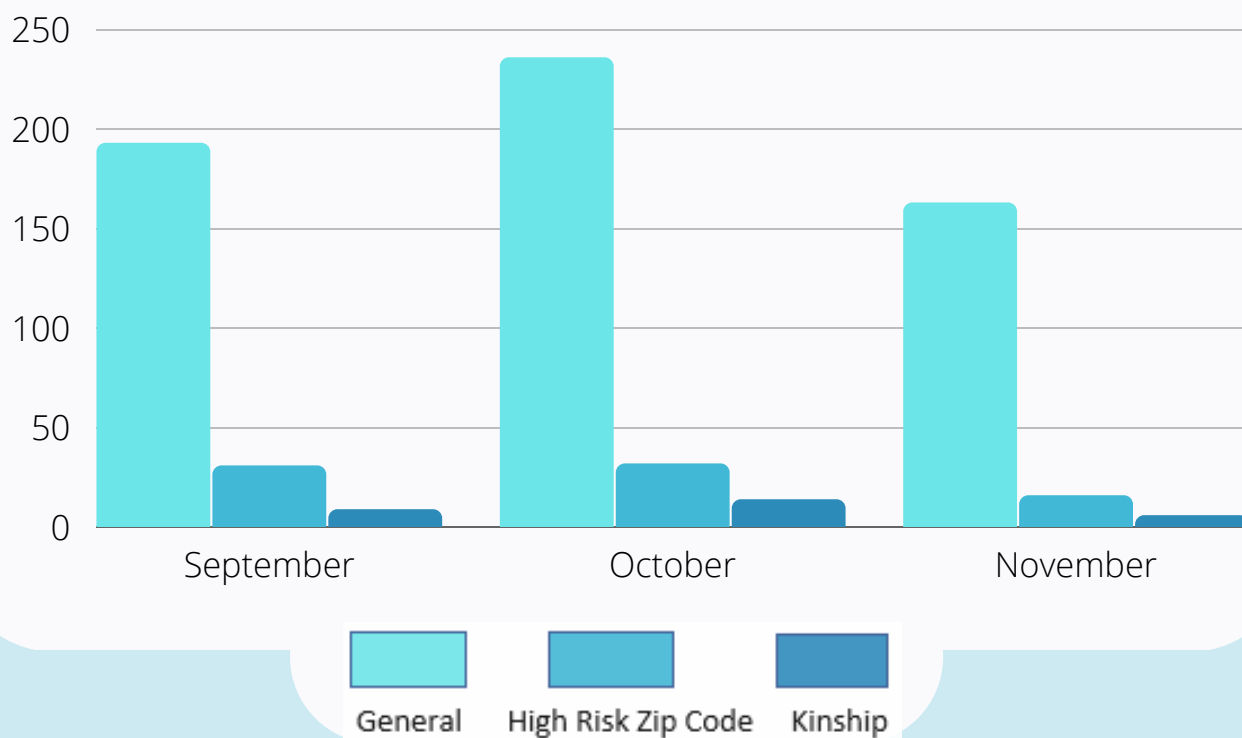
Veteran caregivers are the most challenging for CaRES staff to reach. Those who do connect are reporting high levels of frustration with DCYF. Their distress is concerning and CaRES staff are having frequent conversations with caregivers who report planning to quit or no longer accepting placements. The majority of complaints can be traced back to lack of effective communication between workers and caregivers. We are working to gain trust and provide useful support so that caregivers feel refreshed and ready to continue fostering.

Kinship caregivers have been very responsive to outreach. They are expressing gratitude at the connection to resources and local support, and especially relief at learning about non-needy TANF and information about how to navigate the system. They continue to be under-informed about resources that can make a difference to them.



PROSPECTIVE CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

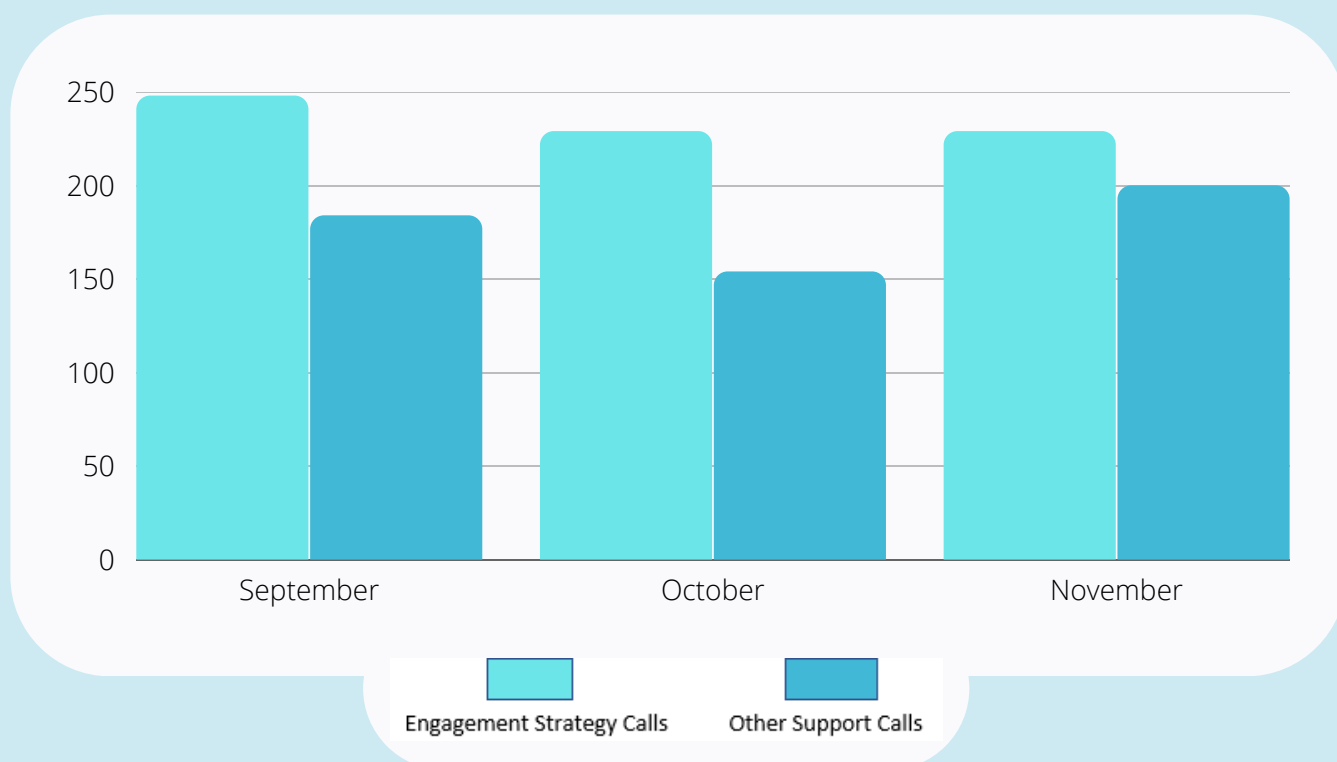
During the third quarter, a total of **700** prospective foster parents received a welcome email detailing next steps. Of those, **592** received a general welcome email, while **108** (**79** from high removal ZIP code areas and **29** who identified as prospective kinship caregivers) received emails as well as a personal phone call in the third quarter. These individual contacts were based on our contracted engagement requirements. There were an additional **135** supportive contacts to prospective caregivers in the third quarter.



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

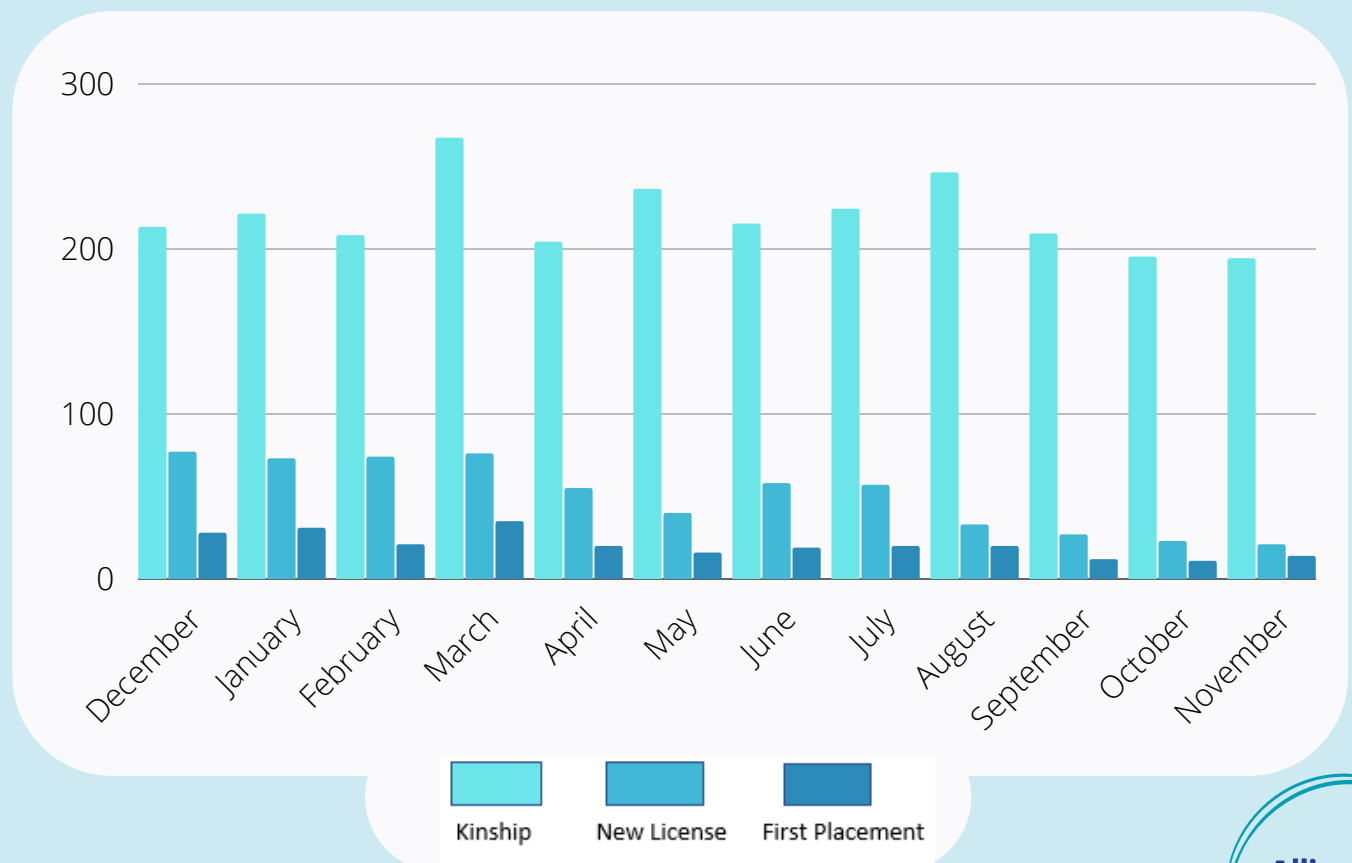
Over the last quarter, a total of **706** calls based on our caregiver engagement strategy occurred (to newly licensed caregivers, caregivers with their first placement, and kinship caregivers).

We think it is important to highlight that there have also been **538** additional contacts (individual emails, calls, and texts) to support current caregivers in the last quarter (including calls to caregivers at six months and one year post licensure). 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.



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

Over the last quarter, a total of **706** individuals received calls as they had a kinship placement, were newly licensed, or had a first placement. Of those calls, **85%** were to kinship caregivers, **10%** were to newly licensed caregivers, and **5%** were to caregivers with their first placement. Contacts with kinship caregivers have gone down slightly this quarter compared to the previous three quarters. Contacts with both newly licensed caregivers and caregivers with a first placement have also gone down this quarter. We believe this decline is likely due to both the decision made by DCYF to have the CaRES team focus the engagement strategy on state foster home placements only and the licensing pause put in place this fall in preparation for the transition to WA CAP.



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT SUCCESS STORIES

Every month we report on examples of caregiver support by sharing comments, testimonials, notes from Mentor calls, or 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 calls:

- *"Spoke this afternoon with S. at length. She brought her newborn nephew home from the hospital...and was laid off from her job the same day and money is very tight. She is applying for the non needy relative grant but feels she needs more support than that. We talked a lot about getting licensed. She worked for a day care center and already has some of the things she needs to be licensed done. I gave her all of the contact information and we discussed the process. Also, gave her information on resources and told her to call the social worker for a \$200 clothing voucher. She was worried about how she would pay for child care after she goes back to work, I let her know that it is the Department's responsibility to pay for childcare while [child] is in a dependency. She had lots of questions and said she would be getting back to me." (A kinship contact)*
- *"Texted and sent personal email with kinship placement brochure. V called me back, we had a good chat, she was very excited to hear about CaRES. 'This is perfect timing. I'm so glad to hear about CaRES! It's great that there's something like this out there!'" (A kinship contact)*



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT SUCCESS STORIES, CONTINUED

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

- *" (1/2) Texted and emailed back and forth with C. to address the following issues: she has completed KCT and some other tasks such as background check, but she said she doesn't know what to do next. Suggested she take CPR/First Aid/BBP, link was not working for her, sent her more links, if she can't get one to work will refer to tech support; she is also concerned about filling out the financial forms...encouraged her to just go ahead and fill out forms, sounds like children's SW's are helping her with FMLA application. We will talk again tomorrow if she still has questions. Thanked her for her patience." "(2/2) Texted with C. to answer more questions about what the licensing packet comprises and making contact with a licensor." (An ongoing kinship licensing contact)*
- *"Spoke with B. and she does not have a placement yet. She was called about taking a baby from the 12th thru the 17th of November, which she said she would do, but the placement desk called back and said that it didn't work out. She is still awaiting her first placement. She had other questions particularly about when I thought she would get a placement, etc. and where she could get diapers, baby clothes and formula. Referred her to the foster care closet and discussed the WIC program with her." (A newly licensed contact)*
- *"[Caregiver] took placement of 7 month old medically fragile baby. Medical appointments are in Seattle. I shared info on how to request DCYF arrange and pay for accommodations, submitting receipts for meals purchased during medical travel and submitting mileage. I shared general tips and tricks for taping ng tubes." (A first placement contact)*



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT SUCCESS STORIES, CONTINUED

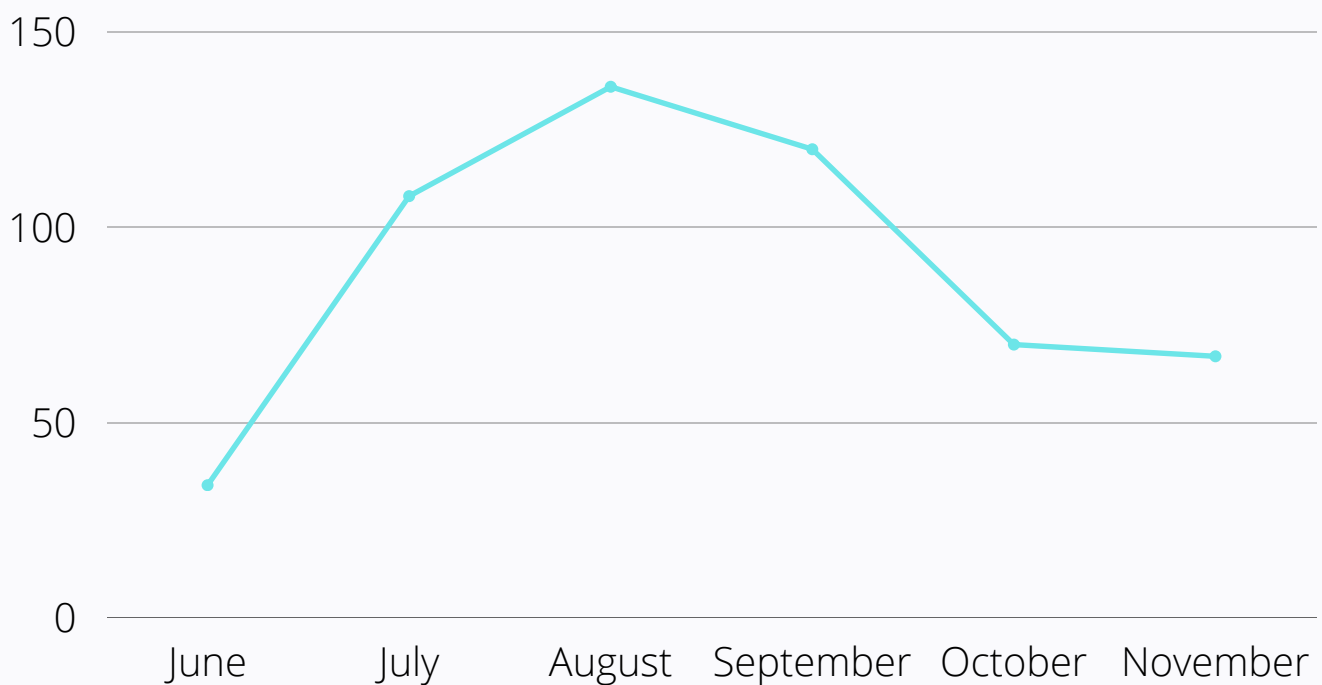
The following are pulled from Mentors' notes describing successful calls:

- *"S. is doing well so far, has already had seven placements (!), including respite, sibling groups, longer term and short term. 'I love it,' she says. 'Things are going well.' She can't think of any issues -- SW had to cancel/postpone health and safety visit today for the three kids she has right now, so that was a little frustrating 'but I definitely understand they're busy.' S. attends the CaRES single foster parent group and has found that really beneficial."* (A 6 month contact)
- *Lengthy conversation with C. and T. about their struggles and growth in preparing to foster all children, including LGBTQ. Gave them opportunity to process and acknowledge parts of the licensing journey around this topic that were difficult or painful. Made practical suggestions for parenting such youth even if their faith teaches against LGBTQ "lifestyle." We talked about love and acceptance, nurturing a child who may have experienced rejection and bullying in addition to neglect and abuse... Talked about rules and structure and their importance in fostering, regardless of children's SOGIE, and talked about being equal and fair in our rules. At the end C. stated that 'this was a very healing conversation, I really appreciated it.' T. agreed and we discussed keeping in touch as their fostering journey continues. (A worker referral requesting a Mentor's assistance in helping a prospective family work through their challenges around caring for LGBTQIA+ youth)*



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY MENTORSHIP GROUPS

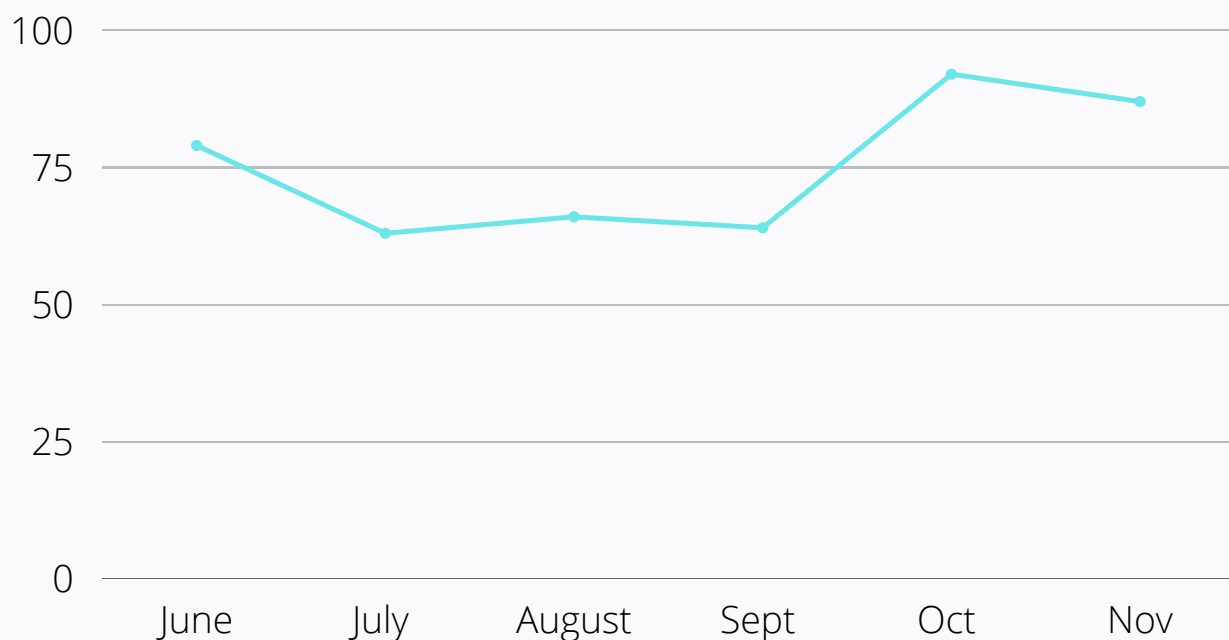
Over the last quarter CaRES has offered, on average, **13** Community Mentorship Groups per month, including Drop-In Discussion Groups, In-person Support Groups and Park Play Dates, Online Support Groups, and the Story Time. This quarter, Community Groups were attended by a total of **257** people, which is slightly lower than last quarter's attendance. Some of our park play dates in July and August had good attendance. As the weather turned cooler outdoor options for gathering lessened, which may have impacted attendance numbers this quarter. We continue to experiment with options in this category of support to see what caregivers will respond to.



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUPS

Over the last quarter CaRES has, on average, offered **25** Supportive Facilitated Discussion Groups (SFDGs) per month, covering a range of topics. In the last quarter support groups were attended by a total of **243** people. (As a reminder, these are not necessarily **243** unique participants as caregivers may take multiple sessions of a group or engage with multiple groups.) Attendance remained fairly stable over the summer, and has shifted upward slightly over the fall.



*See appendix B for a detailed list of the current Supportive Facilitated Discussion Groups.

CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

TESTIMONIALS FROM SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUPS

The response from attendees has been extremely positive. Attendees were asked what was most useful about the support group they attended.

Comments included:

- *I thought the format was perfect. I, personally, learn through my own reading, but it was very beneficial to hear insights about the readings from others. The discussion was intentional but also flexible enough to attend to each person's unique experience and needs.*
- *The ability to ask questions and go in depth.*
- *How knowledgeable these two trainers are, and the additional resources through each discussion. When we would touch on a subject they would have a resource and would follow up in an email with those resources.*
- *The on-the-ground perspectives of others, especially the seasoned caregivers*
- *Presenter was so gracious with her time and a well paced and informative session.*
- *The different ideas shared about preparing ahead by bringing comfort items to events/gatherings and being sure to leave the schedule open between big events.*
- *I learned how to better handle stress during this sometimes stressful season and this was very helpful.*
- *Interaction with leader who is also caregiver. She was wonderful.*



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

TESTIMONIALS FROM SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUPS, CONTINUED

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

- *I have always felt included and felt that my comments were well received. You do an excellent job in inclusion and equity would love to see more organizations do as well.*
- *Really appreciate the commitment to equity and inclusion.*
- *They are trying to diversify their offerings which is nice.*
- *Trainers did a great job hearing our spiritual needs and responding with appropriate resources.*

Attendees this quarter were also asked what improvements could be made to the support group they attended, and comments included:

- *I felt like a little more concrete detail (e.g., forms and visuals) around the process, timelines, and rules would have been helpful.*
- *The only thing that I really missed was additional foster parents walking through this journey. We have not had enough interaction with other caregivers and I thought this would be a nice way to get our feet wet. Obviously, this is hard to predict.*
- *No it was great, just small. But we had a fruitful conversation and if it was too much bigger some of the personal narrative might have been lost.*
- *In person more fun for kids.*



CURRENT CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

TESTIMONIALS FROM SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUPS, CONTINUED

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

- *Very supportive with great resources.*
- *Really appreciate the time, support, and commitment.*
- *Thank you for all you do!*
- *The trainers were great. I do wish that we could have in person interactions with other foster parents in our area as this work is super difficult and emotional. We always feel alone in being foster parents and that we are up against the state (not partnering), it would be nice to have other people that understand that feeling. As we know if we state our feeling they get to be announced in court.:)*
- *Great training and book clubs. Looking forward to taking more trainings.*
- *So helpful to connect.*
- *I really like the classes on zoom and the engagement with other families.*
- *Wish all moms knew of [these] classes.*
- *CaRES is fantastic. I have attended some very good sessions and the facilitator is always very good. I have enjoyed every class I've taken.*



LOOKING AHEAD

In the third quarter of our second 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. These local caregivers will expand CaRES reach for in-person groups, events, and community partnerships.
- Identifying and responding to the critical caregiver connection points. The CaRES response may include additional supportive contacts, new support group topics, continued partnership with other community groups, and a growing in-person presence across the state.
- Expanding CaRES communication reach and social media presence with the addition of a social media communications partner in the Alliance.
- Building and expanding upon the successes of the program through increasing our culturally-focused special events and direct individual connections.



APPENDIX A:

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The CaRES Program is made up of seven 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 to build an ongoing connection.

3) 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.

4) Different kinds of support groups:

CaRES offers online topic-based support groups for facilitated discussion, problem solving with other caregivers, and training credit. Community-based groups offer the opportunity for local supportive connections with other caregivers. Drop-In groups are online informal groups that give caregivers the chance to connect as the need arises. We also offer special events, which vary.



PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Program Elements Continued:

5) Supportive resources and training:

We offer a wealth of resources through Facebook, Instagram, and the CaRES website. We also connect caregivers to free and extensive training and coaching opportunities through the Alliance.

6) Anytime support:

While caregivers are doing the important work of supporting children and families, we are here to support the caregivers. CaRES is working to build even more availability to provide empathetic, experienced support. We measure this success in the calls that come from caregivers reaching out directly to Mentors for ongoing support, to get additional questions answered, and for advice. We are seeing these calls increase!

7) Special events:

CaRES aims to reach caregivers at every level of need and interest. Beyond the six core program elements, we also offer special events that build awareness of CaRES support or connects caregiver around unique areas of interest. Special events are sometimes statewide, like our PRIDE event, Single Parent Drop-in Discussion, and Storytime. 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.

Vision Statement

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



APPENDIX B:

SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION 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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION 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.

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.

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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

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.

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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

PARENTING, Continued

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.

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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH, Continued

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!

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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM, *Continued*

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.

While You Wait, Fostering Considerations: 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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION GROUP OFFERINGS CONTINUED

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM, Continued

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.

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.



SUPPORTIVE FACILITATED DISCUSSION 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.

