

Alliance CaRES

**QUARTERLY
REPORT 2021**

Q2

A MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM

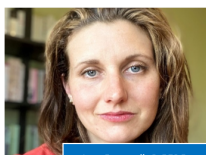
The CaRES program team is thrilled to be here in our second quarter of running a program that makes a real difference to caregivers across the state. By offering genuine and robust support opportunities we impact caregiver satisfaction and retention, and improve outcomes for children in care. We see our first 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. We are building this program to be responsive to the needs of Washington's caregivers and are always ready to adjust our plans to better serve our stakeholders. We look forward to our next quarter and we hope you do too!

Alliance CaRES Program

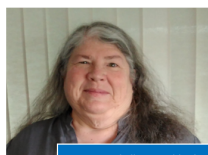
Vision Statement

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

Alliance
CaRES



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SUMMARY

When the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence was formed nearly a decade ago, providing training and education to caregivers in support of positive outcomes for families was central to our mission. As we have grown, so has our capacity to support the caregiving community, which is why we are so excited to have been selected to lead Caregiver Retention, Education and Support (CaRES) in partnership with DCYF. We launched the program on March 15, 2021.

The CaRES team walks alongside caregivers at all points of their journey, from inquiring about the program, to the first time a child is placed in their home, and beyond. Even a seasoned caregiver needs help with a new situation. The vision for this program is grounded in our values of inclusivity and cooperation. Cultural responsiveness is a priority. We will work to evolve through caregiver feedback, listening to where caregivers report finding challenges either with in-home circumstances or within the system.

This report is our chance to share the second quarter of the CaRES program's updates on the scope and impact of the program including successes, challenges, recommendations, and details of our support of caregivers.

The second quarter was spent in refining infrastructure including: the Alliance CaRES website, social media, communications documents, and our operating practices. We have settled into some routines and standards, though we continue to adjust in order to be responsive to caregivers. We are proud to have a nimble program that adapts and pivots based on data, requests, and the reception to the elements we create. We also continued to build new offerings and expand our reach.

Summary Continued

In this second quarter, the CaRES program has continued to focus on spreading the word about the program to caregivers and staff across the state. This new contract brings many changes and that has been an adjustment for caregivers and staff. We will continue to focus on this during the third quarter. We have seen increasing connections with prospective and newly licensed caregivers but are still challenged by connecting to veteran caregivers and DCYF staff.

Much of the CaRES program's support is based on the engagement strategy developed with DCYF to provide outreach to caregivers and prospective caregivers at specific points and from targeted locations. During Quarter Two, CaRES staff made all contact calls within our required timeframes, and most within two days. In addition, we made many supportive calls not required in our contract as caregivers who felt supported by the program continued to reach back out for more help.

We were able to expand our topic-based support group offerings based on the *Communities of Practice* model to include 12 topics across a wide variety of subjects to meet caregivers' needs.

During the second quarter we began to pilot community-based support groups, trying a few iterations before settling on Park Playdates. The impact of Covid is very visible here. Despite the constant requests for in-person options for community building, we have had very few participants attend.

In Quarter Two we settled into our sub-contract with Amara, providing additional focused support for kinship caregivers, LGBTQIA+ caregivers and caregivers caring for LGBTQIA+ youth. In Quarter Three we will continue to expand our support to diverse communities through additional contracted Specialist positions.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Support through the licensure process:

Prospective caregivers can find the licensure process confusing and intimidating. 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 zipcodes. 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.

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, and at the time of first placement of a child into a home. These calls provide community resources, advice, and emotional support to build an ongoing connection.

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.

Program Elements Continued

Three kinds of support groups:

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

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 for Child Welfare Excellence.

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!

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Over **1,748** supportive calls were made this quarter by CaRES Program staff to prospective caregivers, licensed caregivers, and kinship caregivers across the state. The total number of supportive calls conducted since April is **2,564**.



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

978 welcome emails were sent this quarter by the CaRES team to prospective caregivers providing guidance and offering resources. The total number of welcome emails sent since April is **1,701**.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

The CaRES team has done **15** FIRST program related calls to support caregivers undergoing an investigation this quarter, bringing the total to **28** FIRST calls since April.

437 caregivers have participated in CaRES' new topic-based support groups this quarter. The total number of caregivers participating since April is **622**.



FIRST PROGRAM

Foster Intervention and Retention Support Team

The FIRST Program provides neutral advice and support to foster parents statewide.

Licensed foster parents may experience an investigation when someone makes an allegation against them. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Licensing Division (LD) has a responsibility to look into these concerns.

Most investigations do not result in a finding of abuse or neglect against a foster parent. However, these investigations can be a stressful time for you or

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**WE'RE GLAD
YOU'RE
HERE!**

We're so grateful you're part of the caregiver community!

[Learn more](#)



The CaRES website has had more than **62,546** unique visits this quarter from people learning about the program or finding resources.

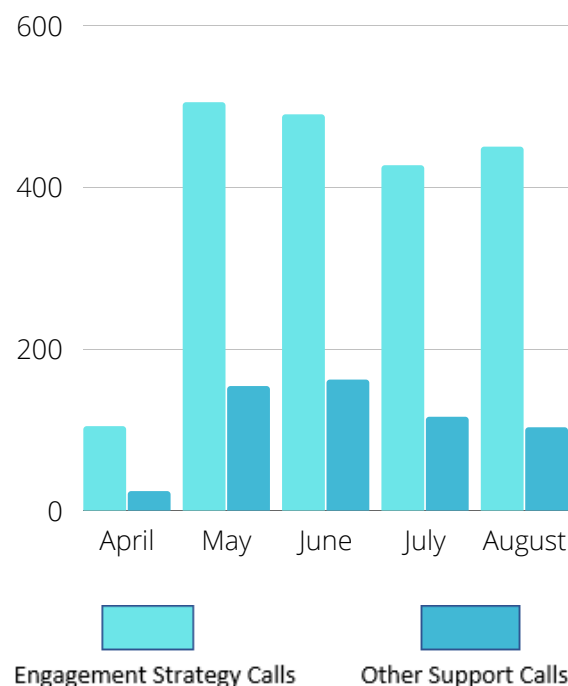
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NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the last quarter a total of **1,367** calls based on our engagement strategy occurred (to prospective foster parents, newly licensed caregivers, caregivers with their first placement, and kinship caregivers). There have been a total of **1,976** calls since April that are part of the engagement strategy.

We think it is important to highlight that there have also been **381** additional calls to support parents in the last quarter, bringing the total calls to parents outside the engagement strategy to **559** since April. These calls show that we are successfully building ongoing relationships with caregivers so that they call back for more support when issues arise. These calls are one way we measure our program's success. It is important to note a slight decrease in July and August, which is consistent across the multiple areas of engagement due to summer slow-down.



Testimonials from Support Group Participants During Quarter Two

The response from attendees has been extremely positive. All support group attendees who completed the evaluation survey shared positive experiences with the support group they attended, sharing comments such as:

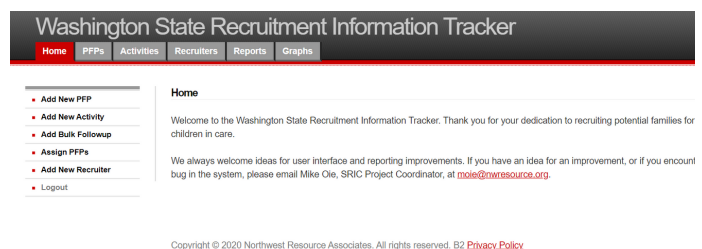
- "Hearing stories from other parents facing similar challenges" was most useful.
- "I really found the training to be very appropriate and very supportive."
- "This class was so enjoyable for me that I felt uplifted afterwards. The facilitator was so engaging and easy to talk to as well as the other parent, it was a great class."
- "It was a caring environment that I felt safe and comfortable sharing."
- "I appreciated the relaxed structure with specific goals and questions but enough time for the group to thoroughly discuss how it relates to everyone's personal situation and brainstorm helpful ideas."
- "Sherry provided an open and safe forum for everyone to share ideas, and have an open discussion. "
- "Angela was an excellent facilitator and sent additional resources and connections to our group after each session."
- "Connection with the book we read and the other parents to validate and normalize the experiences in fostering" was the best part.

Success Stories from Quarter Two

- One Mentor call involved a new placement who had a medical issue after business hours. The caregivers did not have the medical voucher and could not collect the child's prescriptions because the pharmacist saw the father's insurance as primary and would not release medication to them. Because the caregivers had a trusting relationship with the Mentor from previous support calls, they reached out and the Mentor was able to advise them to pay out of pocket, get documentation for reimbursement from DCYF, as well as connect them with Coordinated Care and Afterhours for help. The caregivers were very frustrated because they could not get answers and felt they should have received the medical voucher at the time of placement. The intervention from the Mentor helped ensure that the situation did not become a crisis.
- As a result of a relationship built during a call related to a first placement, one Mentor was able to engage in ongoing support of brand new foster parents during a crisis with a suicidal teenager in their home. Over the course of several days as the youth was stabilized and services were put in place, the Mentor spoke frequently to the caregivers about their trauma, anxiety, and feelings of being unprepared. The Mentor continually went above and beyond including offering to meet the caregivers at the hospital where they were with the youth. As a result, the home will remain open despite the initial impulse of the caregivers to close their home.

NOTEWORTHY CHALLENGES

Limitations in the data available from the SRIC database have led to challenges in measuring whether our pre-licensure calls are leading to an increase in licensure rates. We hope to have information for our next Quarterly Report through alternate means.



Across the state, we continue to see low caregiver morale, feelings of distrust, and resistance to changes in the contract.



CaRES lacks the resource capacity to provide the robust social media engagement opportunities caregivers want without jeopardizing confidentiality requirements. This continues to generate comments from some veteran caregivers.

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. The majority of their questions are about how to reach a licensor to proceed with the process or how to access or complete online orientation. In addition, we hear specific barriers repeatedly: the requirement for caregivers to sleep on the same floor as the child in their care and the requirements for purchasing supplies in advance of placement.

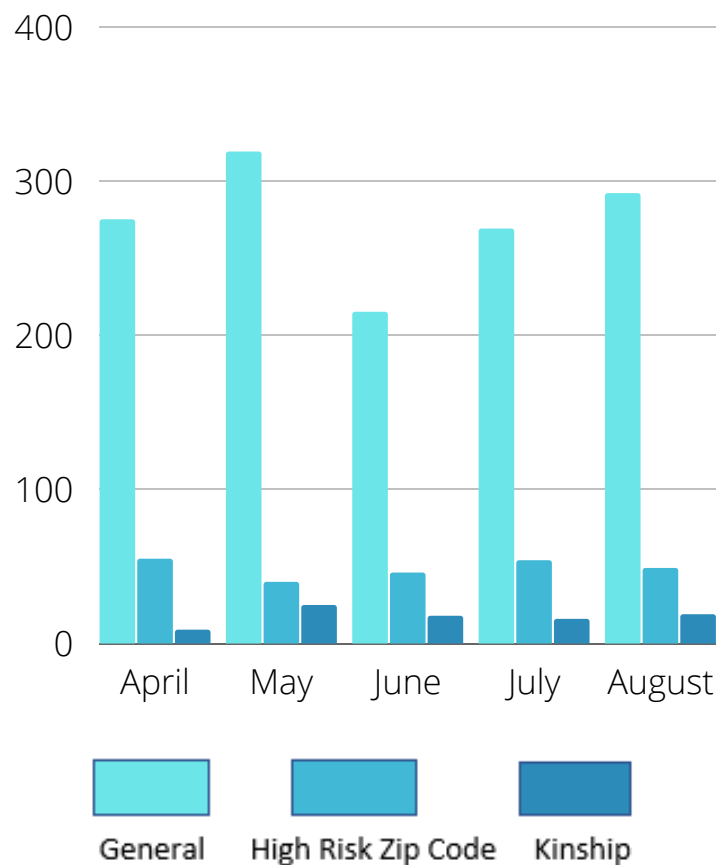
New caregivers are enthusiastic about the challenges and rewards of caregiving and are demonstrating high levels of thoughtfulness around maintaining cultural connections for children in care, and an impressive awareness of the impacts of trauma. They are eager to participate in topic-based support groups and have been providing very positive feedback about the new program.

Veteran caregivers are the most challenging for CaRES staff to reach. Those who do connect are reporting high levels of frustration with DCYF and a continuing distrust of the new CaRES program. Their distress is concerningly high and CaRES staff are having frequent conversations with caregivers who report planning to quit. The majority of complaints can be traced back to lack of communication between workers and caregivers. We are working to gain trust and provide useful support.

Kinship caregivers have been very responsive to the outreach from Amara. They are expressing gratitude at the connection to resources and local support, and especially relief at learning about non-needy TANF.

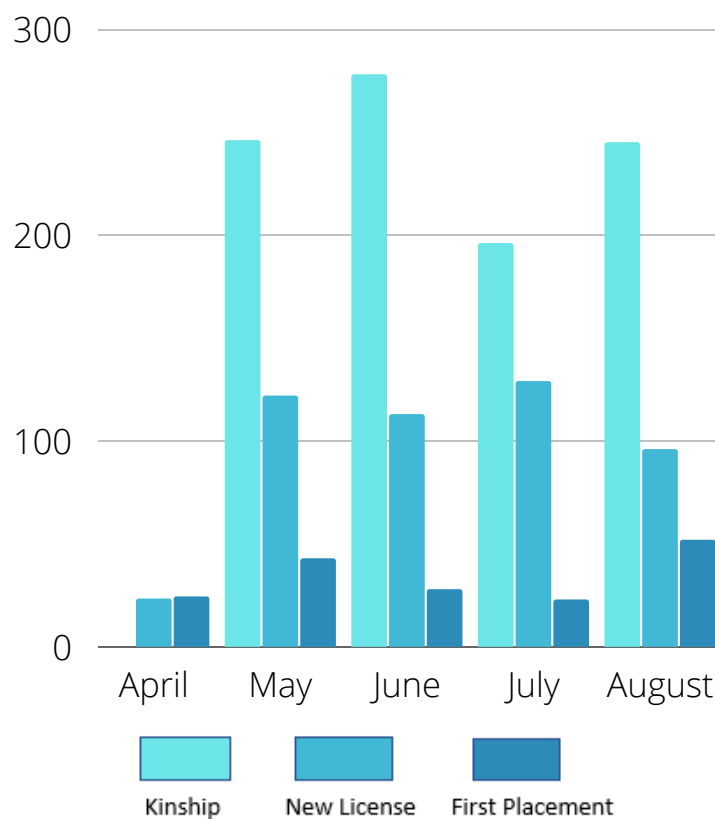
TRENDS CONT.

During the second quarter a total of 978 prospective foster parents received a welcome email detailing next steps. Of those, 776 received a general welcome email, while the 149 from high removal zip code areas and the 53 who identified as prospective kinship caregivers received emails and a phone call. Over the last two quarters a total of 1,701 welcome emails have been delivered.



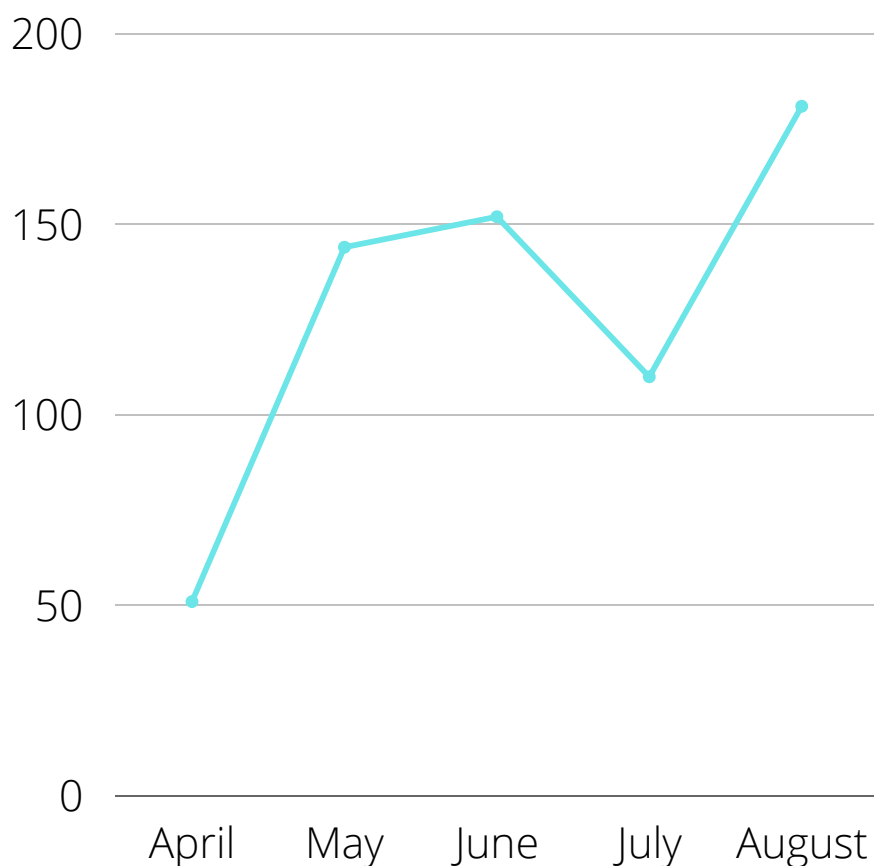
TRENDS CONT.

Over the last quarter a total of 1,164 calls have been completed to kinship, newly licensed, and first placement caregivers. Of those calls, 62% were to kinship caregivers, 29% were to newly licensed caregivers, and 9% were to caregivers with their first placement. Caregivers with a first placement appears to drop slightly in June and July, however, first placements almost doubled in August (average of 25 in June and July up to 52 in August). Kinship parent contacts decreased noticeably in July and then trended back up in August. Newly licensed experienced little variation across the time-points.



TRENDS CONT.

Over the last two quarters CaRES has increased the types of support groups offered, as well as the range of topics, with an accompanying increase from 51 attendees in April to 181 attendees in August. There was a slight decline in attendance in July, which may have been due to summer slow-down. The attendance numbers rebounded in August.



LOOKING AHEAD

In the third quarter, the CaRES program will continue to expand and grow. Elements we look forward to introducing in the next quarter include:

- Adding a Spanish page to the CaRES website
- Hiring Specialists around specific topic areas to provide additional support to caregivers
- Launching more new support group topics requested by caregivers
- Increasing representation of diverse voices and cultures among the Mentors and Specialists in order to provide more effective support for all caregivers
- Continuing to publicize CaRES so that caregivers and DCYF staff are aware of the program

