

# FOSTER CARE DATA EXCHANGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES: Washington



Students in foster care<sup>1</sup>

**4,452**



Graduation rate

**48%** students in foster care

**83%** students not in foster care



Academic achievement<sup>2</sup>

Meeting or exceeding academic standard

Students in foster care

Students not in foster care

**English/language arts**

**23%**

**48%**

**Mathematics**

**9%**

**30%**

## Data Exchange at a Glance

**Formal agreement<sup>3</sup> established between SEA and CWA:**  
Yes, in 2017

**Frequency of data exchange:**  
Daily

**Direction of exchange:<sup>4</sup>**  
Bidirectional between SEA and CWA and from SEA to LEAs



**Data categories shared:**  
Demographic, education, and welfare service information

## Data Exchange Process

Washington’s data-sharing agreement is between the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction as the State educational agency (SEA) and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families as the child welfare agency (CWA). The data-sharing agreement was created in 2017 and was fully operational by 2018. The data-sharing agreement renews approximately every 3 years and has been amended several times over the past 5 years to include additional information in the exchange.

**The Washington data exchange is a highly automated process that occurs nightly. Time spent implementing the agreement varies but is not significant due to the automation involved. The SEA spends no more than three hours a month implementing the exchange. The current exchange process occurs as follows:**



**The CWA prepares the data.** CWA prepares a data file of student data containing the full name, date of birth, and State Student Identification number (SSID; a unique number assigned to each student in Washington).



**The SEA and CWA exchange data.** Upon receiving the data file, the SEA performs data matches using the name, date of birth, and SSID variables. If data match on all three variables, SEA sends education data back to the CWA, which it uses to populate the student information system that the CWA caseworkers use. If a student’s data does not match on all three variables, the data get sent back to the CWA. Because the CWA has access to SEA’s data system, the CWA can investigate and troubleshoot potential issues; for example, it is not uncommon for misspelled names to complicate the matching process.



**The SEA shares data with local educational agencies (LEAs).** After the data are matched, the SEA uses the data to create longitudinal data reports, which it stores on the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), a data warehouse of education data. District foster care liaisons can run longitudinal data reports to determine which of their students are in foster care. The SEA also shares data with Treehouse, a community-based nongovernmental organization contracted with the SEA to support students in foster care.

---

## Drivers of Success

Some key facilitators that support the implementation of Washington's data-sharing agreement include:

1. The main drivers of the data-sharing agreement were changes in federal law that required reporting on outcomes for students in foster care.
2. Because the exchange involves sharing the contact information of caseworkers and caseworker supervisors, it is a highly transparent process. Districts can reach out to the CWA, as well as locate students in foster care within their own districts, which allows for quick issue resolution and clear lines of communication.
3. Additionally, because a large part of the exchange is automated, upholding the agreement does not significantly impact the SEA or the CWA staff hours during the year.

---

## Future Opportunities

Several opportunities related to the implementation of the data-sharing agreement include:

1. Currently, the SEA's IT department and the CWA's IT department meet regularly to discuss improvements to the formal data-sharing agreement. When improvements are agreed upon, the data-sharing agreement is amended. However, drafting amendments can be a time-consuming process because it requires input from various parties. In the future, efforts can focus on streamlining communication to reduce implementation delays.
2. Additionally, the timing of district submissions can be optimized so that data can be more accurate. If students change districts, for example, there may be a delay in reporting if the district that the foster care students are leaving has not submitted its enrollment file.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The number of students in foster care in the 2021-2022 school year, available at <https://washingtonstaterreportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>.

<sup>2</sup> Graduation rate and academic achievement data for all grades for the 2020-2021 school year, available at <https://washingtonstaterreportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>.

<sup>3</sup> An MOU or other formal agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Data in the exchange can flow from one agency to another or be bidirectional.

## Additional Information

### Data provided by the CWA to the SEA:

- full name
- date of birth
- SSID (a unique number assigned to students in foster care)
- assigned social worker and their supervisor contact information
- type of placement
- date of entry into care

### Data provided by the SEA to the CWA:

- full name gender
- race/ethnicity
- date of birth
- school name and location
- enrollment span (e.g., date of enrollment, exit)
- student absences file
- student discipline file
- academic progress (e.g., grade level, expected graduation, GPA)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about students in foster care, please visit:

**U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education:**

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/students-foster-care/>

**Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:**

<https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/foster-care>

**Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Report Card:**

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

The State snapshot is developed based on publicly available information and information provided by the State.

