

D.S. v. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

What is this lawsuit about?

The Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is getting sued for the way it treats youth in foster care. DCYF has been making a lot of foster children in Washington, especially young people with behavioral health needs (such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD) and developmental disabilities (such as autism), stay in hotels or offices or even go to large facilities out of state, far from their homes. This lawsuit is about making DCYF do a better job ensuring foster children have a safe and stable place to live, and the support and services they need to go back home.

What are the lawsuit's goals?

First, youth in foster care should not have to sleep in hotels, offices, one-night foster stays, or cars because DCYF does not have a safe home for them. They should not have to live in another state. They should have stable homes, instead of moving from place to place.

Second, we don't want DCYF to build more big group facilities or hire more social workers who don't listen or provide children and families with what they really need.

Third, we want DCYF to pay attention to the specific needs of each youth and their family. We want DCYF to listen to each youth and their family to figure out individualized solutions that will work.

Fourth, we want DCYF to provide resources and opportunities for foster youth to quickly either return to their families or go to another home where youth feel safe and cared for.

Who filed this case?

Three young people in foster care in Washington are suing DCYF. They are using the initials **D.S., D.Y., and H.A.**, and are called the "Plaintiffs." Their lawyers are from **Disability Rights Washington (DRW)**, the **National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)**, and **Carney Gillespie PLLP**. All of these lawyers are working with the Plaintiffs to fight for the rights of foster youth.

What legal arguments are we making?

The lawsuit says that Washington is violating four different laws that protect foster youth:

The **Americans with Disabilities Act** and the **Rehabilitation Act**: because DCYF's practices especially harm and isolate youth who have disabilities.

The **14th Amendment** of the United States Constitution: because DCYF is interfering in foster youth's relationships with their families, and because when DCYF takes youth into its care and custody, it is failing to protect them from being harmed.

The **Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act**: because there are problems with DCYF's case planning. For example, case plans don't make sure that foster youth have the right care and services to return to their parents or go to another permanent home. Case plans also don't make sure that foster youth stay in school or can transfer quickly if they need to.

How can I learn more?

You can contact Plaintiffs' lawyers for more information:

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