

# Justice on Call: Supporting Parents Navigating Voluntary Placement Agreements

Children's Justice Conference

May 2026



Washington State  
Office of  
Public  
Defense

# What is a Voluntary Placement Agreement?

**Voluntary Placement Agreement:**  
an agreement between a parent/guardian/ legal custodian and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to place a child out of the home for a determined period of time.

# What's the Problem?

“Providing attorneys to parents can help make bargaining situations much more fair...[A]n agency and a parent negotiate ‘in the shadow of the law,’ so having a lawyer advise a parent as to their rights and the agency's rights under the law provides essential information about the law's shadow.”

“Exercising a parent's leverage requires a lawyer to understand the case and advise the parent accordingly. Otherwise, the agency has a tremendous information advantage--they are repeat players negotiating with parents who, in the aggregate, are of a low socioeconomic status and likely do not understand the nuances of child protection law, but certainly understand that the agency is threatening their relationships with their children.”

# How Did We Get a VPA Hotline?

2023 BUDGET PROVISIO:

(7) \$1,000,000 of the general fund – state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$1,000,000 of the general fund – state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office of public defense to establish and operate a **telephone consultation line to provide contracted legal counsel for parents, guardians, or legal custodians** when the department of children, youth, and families proposes a **voluntary placement agreement when there is no pending dependency proceeding** under chapter 13.34 RCW pursuant to 13.34.090(4).

2025 PARENTS REPRESENTATION PROGRAM OPERATING  
BUDGET:

\$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and \$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2027 (no longer provisoed)

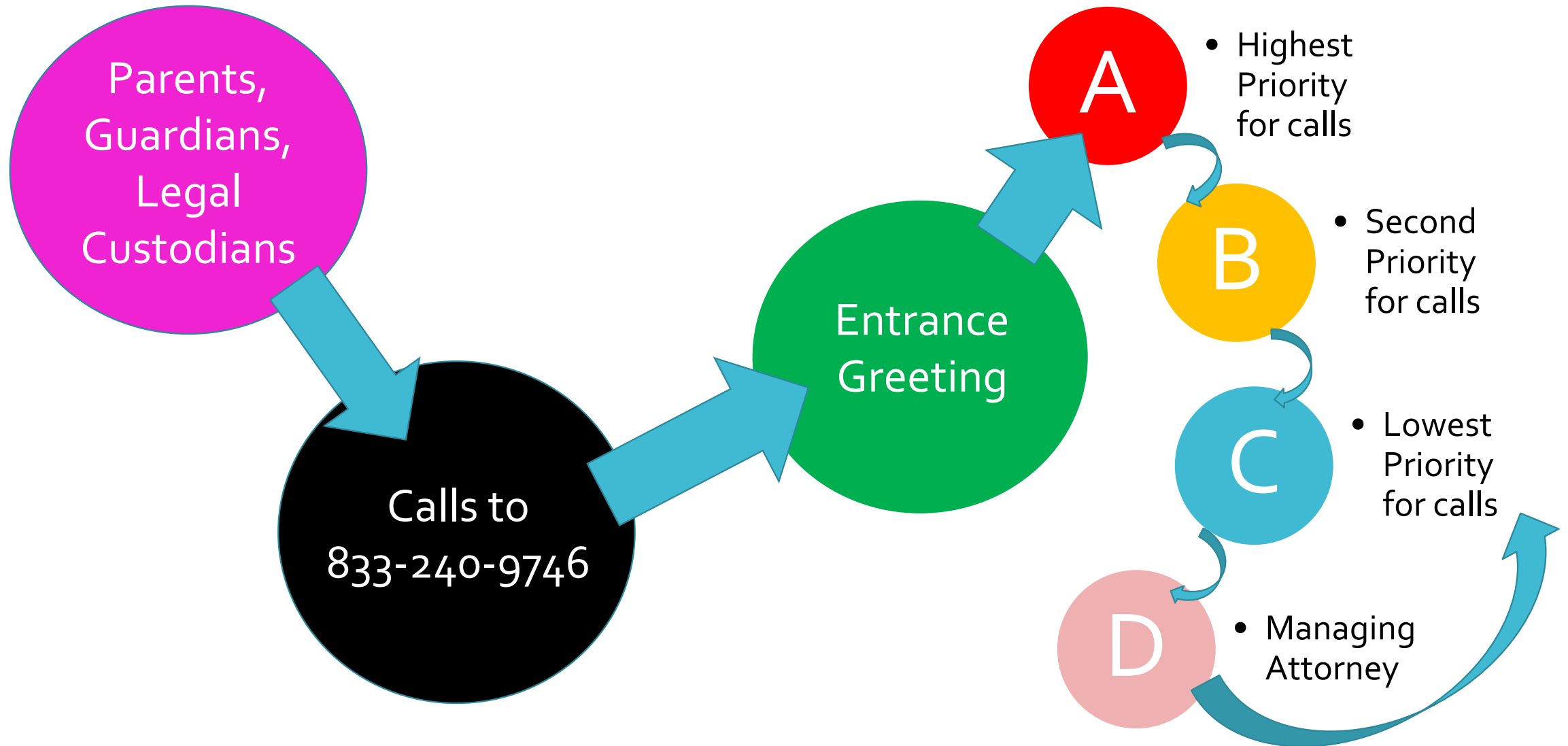
# Why a VPA Hotline?

- Parents face an imbalance of power in the room with DCYF.
- Parents overpromise when signing VPAs and Family Voluntary Service Agreements.
- Parents need an advocate and an ally in the room when faced with decision to agree or disagree to child removal.
- Attorneys can help explain parents' options in clear, neutral, and plain language.

# How does the Hotline work?

- 10 Contractors: Solo contractors or law firms
- Assigned 3 at a time for 1 week, 24 hours a day
- Managing attorney assigned as a back-up
- Calls come in to a primary (833) telephone number, which is directed to each contractor's phone
- Contractors receive initial and ongoing training
- Contractors meet monthly during "VPA Office Hours"
- Contractors have access to interpreter services
- Contractors submit demographic and other de-identified data on a monthly basis

# What's the Process When a Parent Calls the VPA Hotline?



# How are Parents Notified?

- Department
- Posters and handouts
- Initial email campaign
- Parent/child attorneys
- Public-facing website
- Legal aid website
- Court partners
- Service providers

TALK TO A PARENT ATTORNEY ABOUT OPTIONS FOR  
YOUR FAMILY BEFORE SIGNING A VPA!



## Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA)

**FREE LEGAL CONSULTATION HOTLINE**

**(833)240-9746**

*DCYF Offering a VPA? Know Your Rights  
and Speak to an Attorney! 24/7 legal  
consultation available.*

For more information on  
Voluntary Placement  
Agreements, please  
scan the QR code:

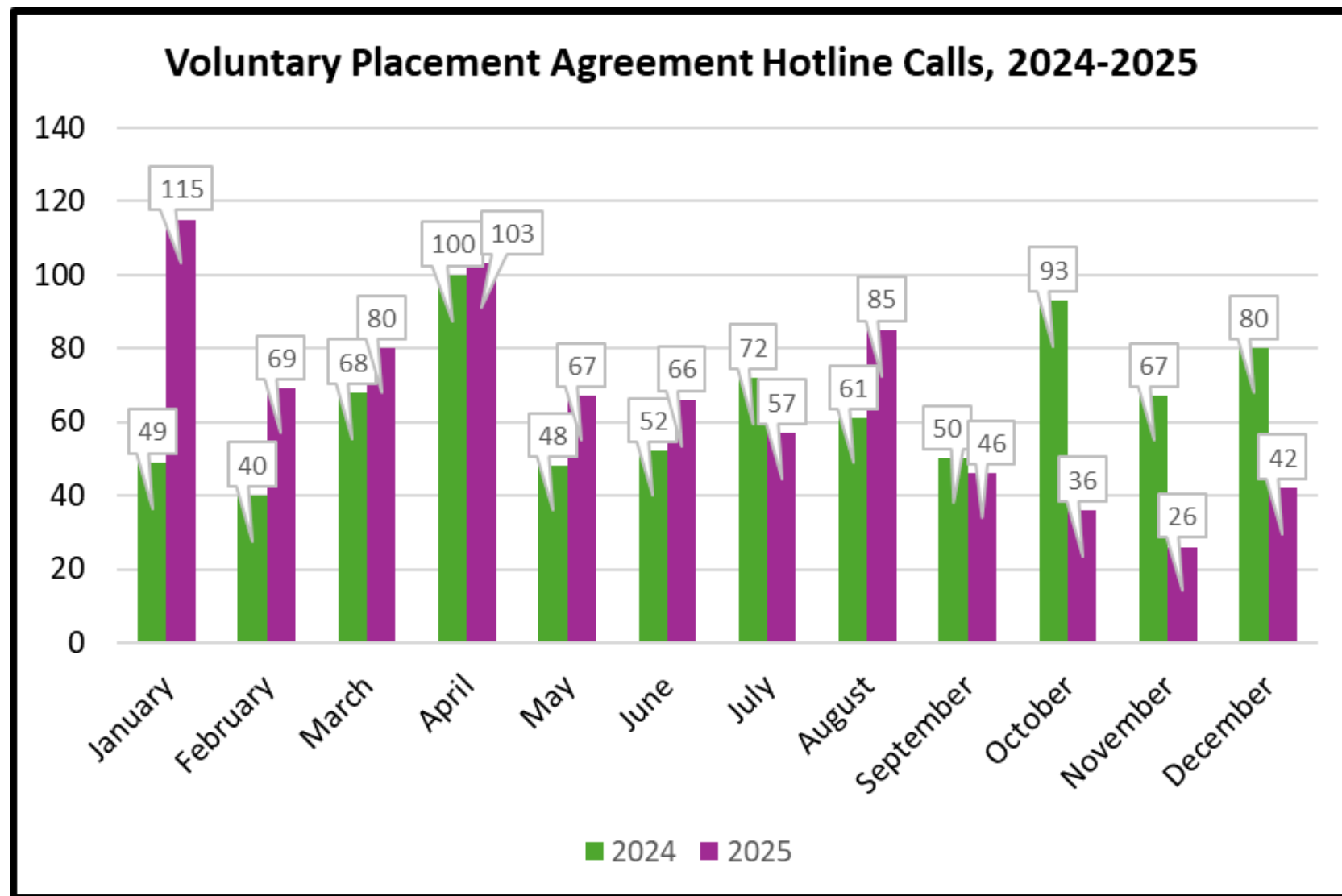


*Or visit our website: <https://opd.wa.gov/vpa>*

# VPA Hotline Outcomes

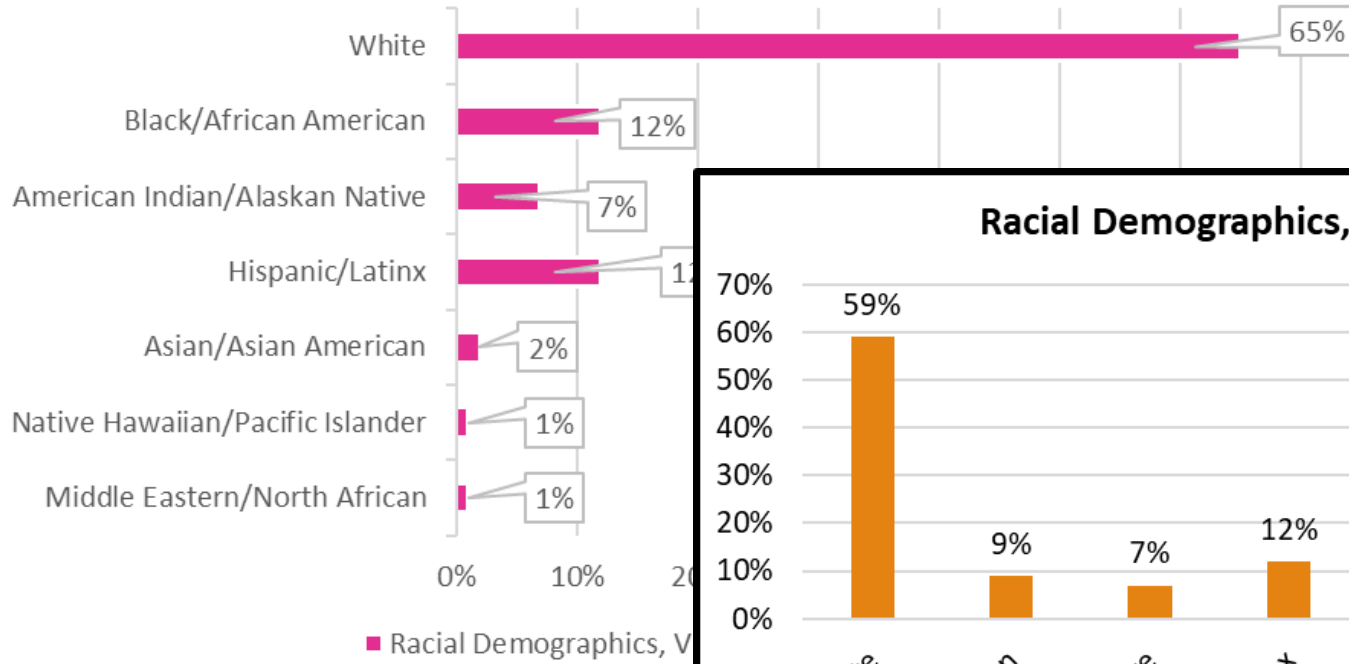
Total VPA Hotline  
Calls, 2024-2025:

# 1,572

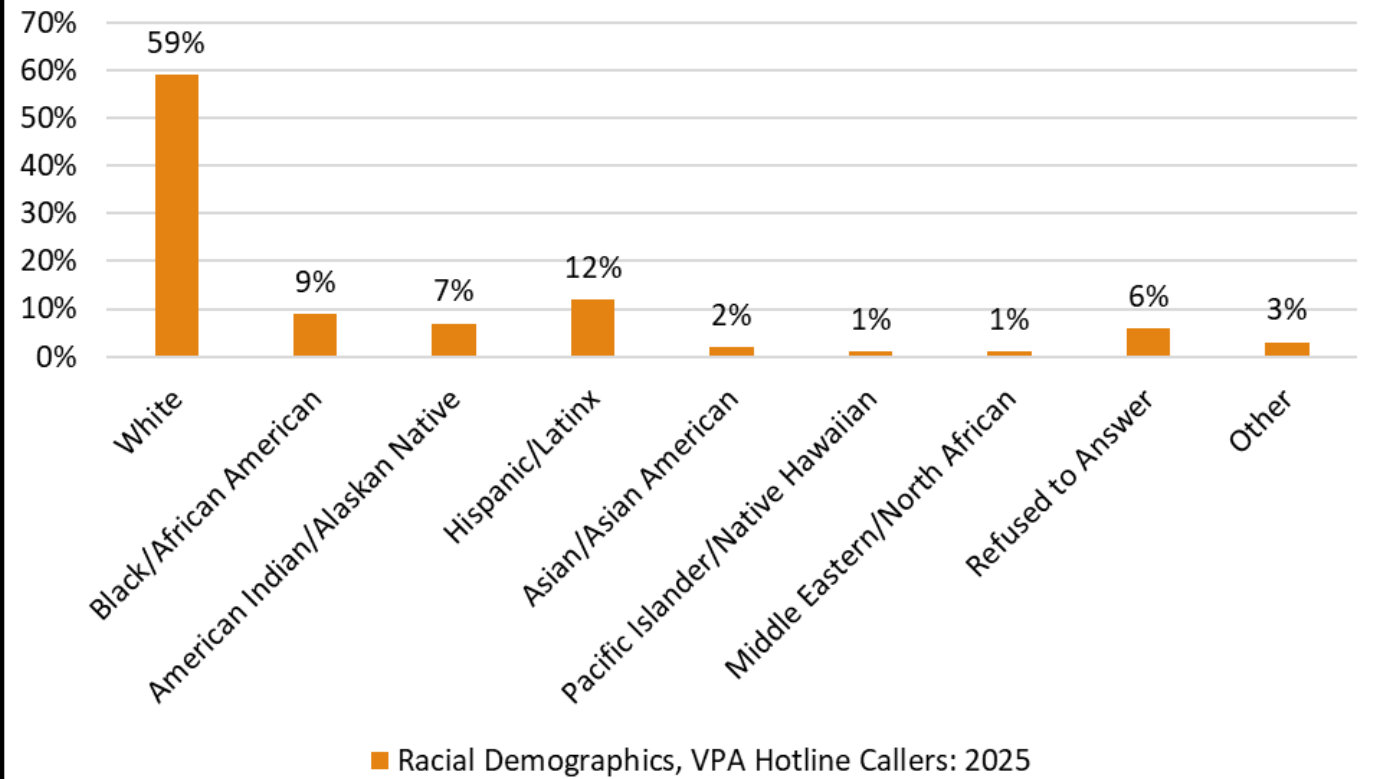


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VPA  
Racial  
Demographics

**Racial Demographics, VPA Hotline Callers, 2024**

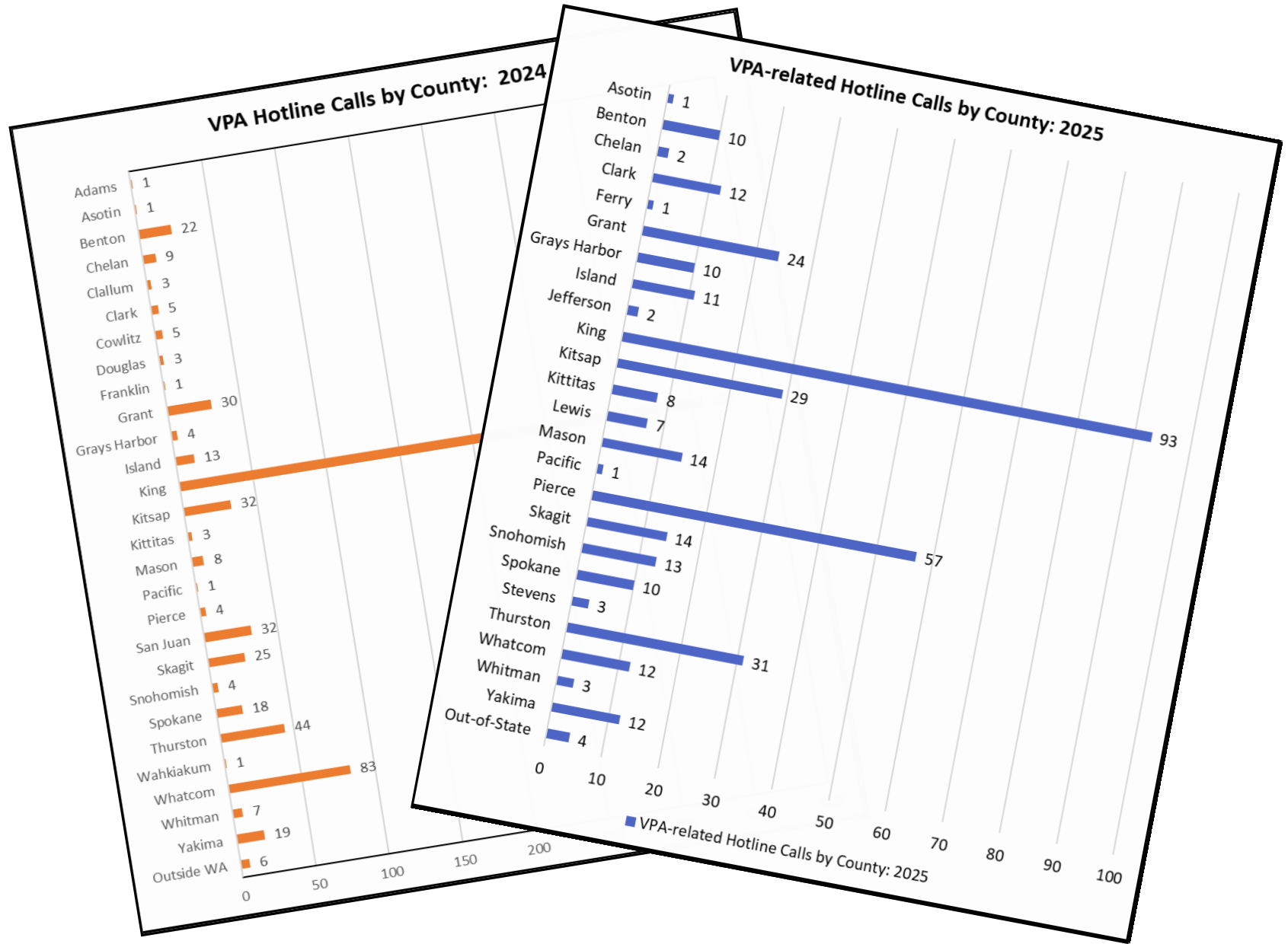


**Racial Demographics, VPA Hotline Callers: 2025**



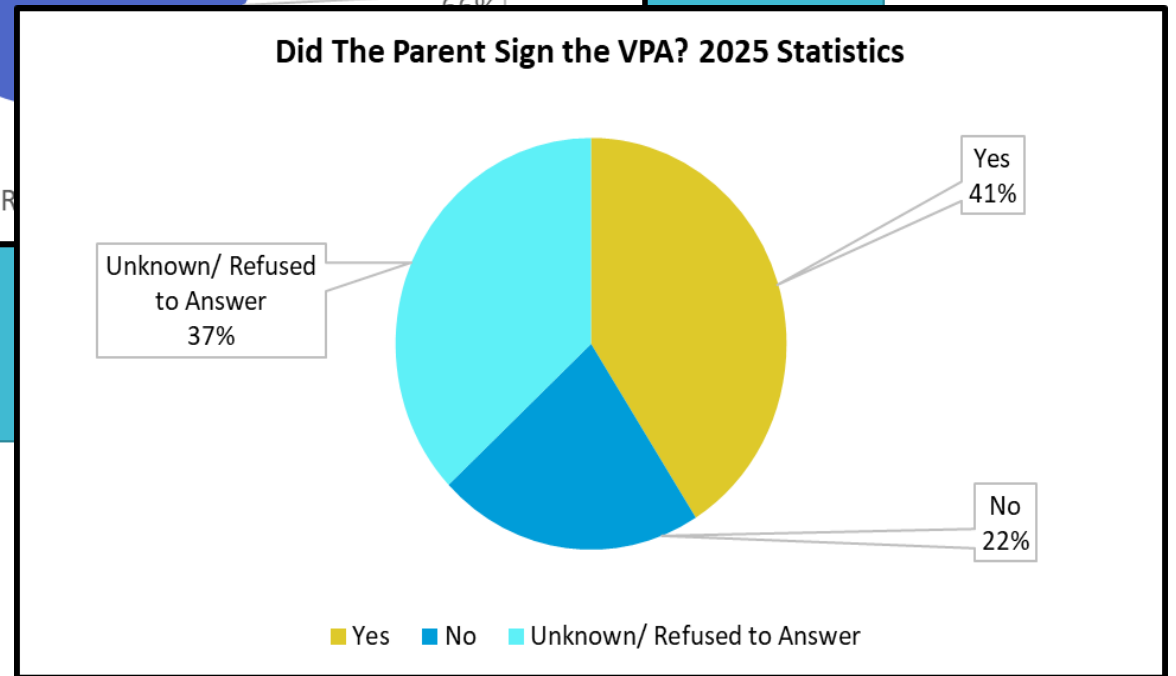
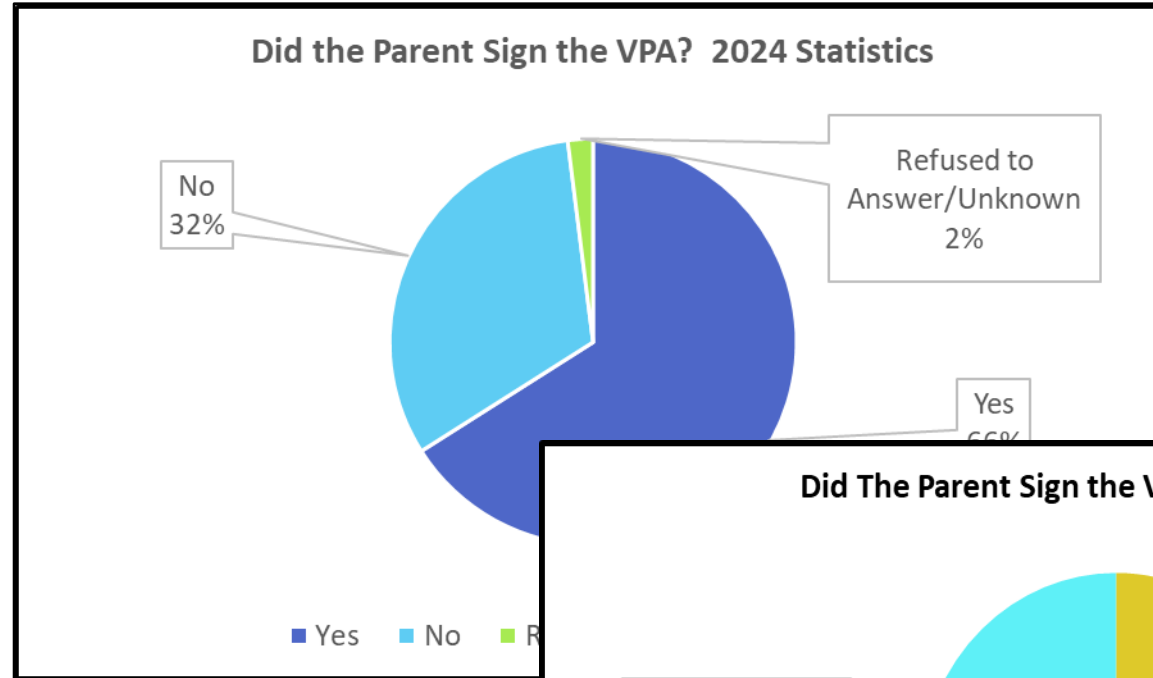
# VPA Hotline Outcomes

## VPA Hotline Calls By County



# VPA Hotline Outcomes

## Did the Parent Sign the VPA?



## VPA Hotline: What's Your Experience?

- Who's in the room?
- Have you called the VPA Hotline?
- Have you referred anyone to the VPA Hotline?
- What has your experience been like?



# QUESTIONS FOR VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT HOTLINE CONTRACTOR PANEL

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Christopher Desmond, Esq.  
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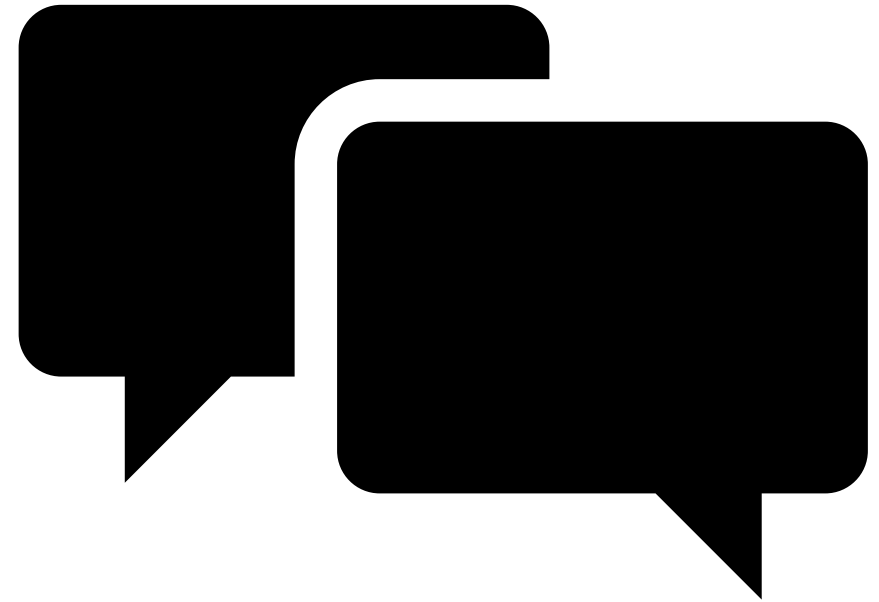
Justine Olimene  
Olimene Law Group

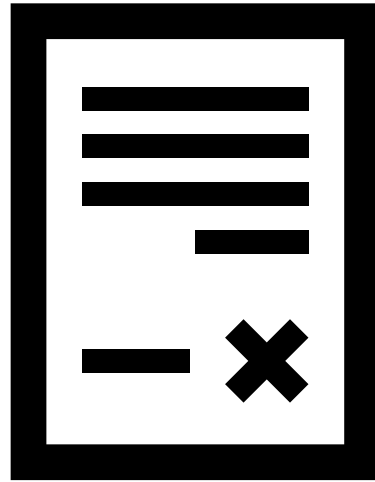




PANEL QUESTION #1:  
Why should someone  
refer a parent to the  
Voluntary Placement  
Hotline?

PANEL QUESTION #2: How do you approach building rapport, obtaining demographics, and collecting information to provide effective consultation?





PANEL QUESTION #3: Are the terms of Voluntary Placement Agreements ever negotiated? If so, how?

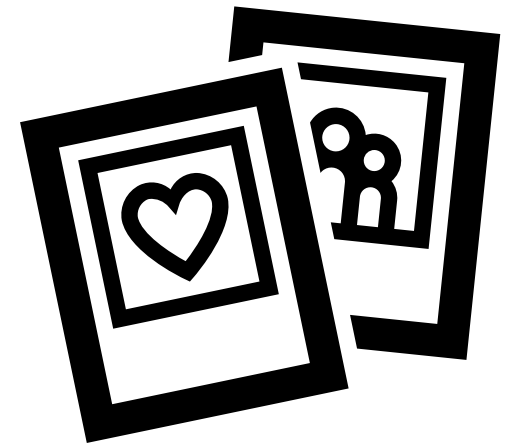
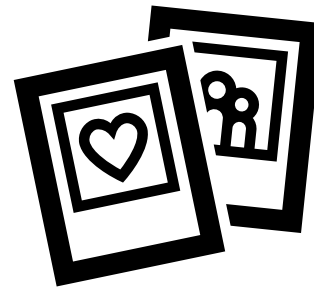
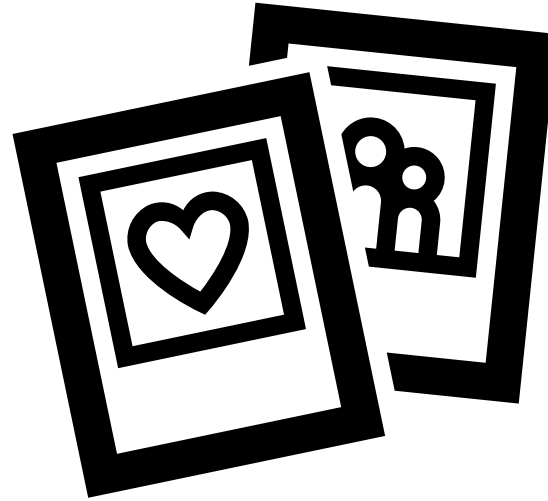
PANEL QUESTION #4:  
Based on your  
experience, how often  
do calls you answer end  
up in the filing of  
dependency petitions?

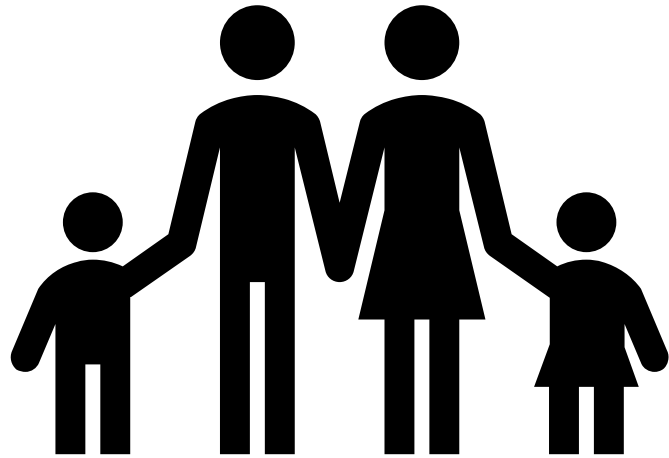




PANEL QUESTION #5:  
What barriers have you  
faced in providing  
consultation to parents  
on the Hotline?

PANEL QUESTION  
#6: What do you  
think has been the  
impact of the  
Hotline on parents  
who have called?





PANEL QUESTION #7:  
How do you see the  
Hotline growing and  
expanding in the future?

INTERESTED IN  
FURTHER  
INFORMATION?  
REACH OUT!



**Voluntary Placement Agreement Hotline:**

(833) 240-9746

Additional information: <https://opd.wa.gov/find-legal-help-and-information/parents-representation-program/voluntary-placement-agreement-vpa-hotline>