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**Childhaven and Children’s Home Society of Washington merge, announce new organization, Akin**  
*Innovative nonprofit union can now exponentially help families before they fall into crisis*

**SEATTLE (JANUARY 3, 2024)** – Today, two of Washington state's most influential children and family support organizations combine resources and expertise under a new name, [Akin](#), to innovate and improve social services for a lifetime of family well-being. The merger between Childhaven and Children’s Home Society of Washington (CHSW) represents a fresh and urgent approach to support crisis prevention, and help families remain together. The newly created entity exists to transform population-level health by providing and advocating for relationship-based supports to positively impact children and families.

“This merger allows us to grow and evolve as one organization, not for the sake of size but for the scope of direct impact in how Akin can partner with parents, caregivers, children and communities, *together*, to strengthen families,” said Akin CEO Dave Newell. “Our connection to families is foundational, yet the existing child well-being system ultimately leads to often unnecessary and harmful family separation through crisis intervention. Instead, we aim to understand the unique stressors and needs of each family to provide more concrete support and ideally prevent that crisis from occurring in the first place.”

By harnessing the combined strengths of both organizations, Akin serves as a first line of support to families, offering a wider range of resources in more locations across Washington state. By partnering with children, families, and communities, the new organization seeks to disrupt systemic and multi-generational cycles of inequity and bolster everyone’s health and well-being.

As part of the merger, current CHSW CEO Dave Newell was named as the new CEO of Akin. Newell has over thirty years of experience in the child well-being and social services field and has served as CEO of CHSW for four years. Earlier this year, Childhaven’s CEO, Jon Botten, announced his plan to focus on nonprofit strategy and merger consulting. Botten is assisting Akin in a consultative role.

Akin’s broad continuum of care ranges from birth to adulthood, leveraging the best of both organizations to advance child and family well-being, strengthen parent-child relationships, and develop a skilled child and family support workforce. Akin will scale its impact through an innovative, community-based approach that partners with local organizations, schools, healthcare settings, and community leaders to provide comprehensive services to families.

"Research supports that children and their families do better when they are able to stay together with the right supports in place to meet their needs," said Jody Levison-Johnson, PhD, LCSW, president and CEO of Social Current. Levison-Johnson added, "Akin brings together the skills and knowledge of two purpose-driven organizations to partner with families and offer an array of supports and services that will help them to achieve their goals."

Both CHSW and Childhaven were founded around the turn of the twentieth century for the purpose of stepping in when families needed support. CHSW contributed to the creation of America’s adoption system while Childhaven helped respond to the nation’s child protective services system. Each organization focused on expanding resources with good intentions and acknowledges their historical approach has had unintended consequences, with a disproportionately negative impact on non-white children. Moving forward, Akin will address the systems that caused this unintended harm.

“We know that families receiving concrete support like rental assistance, utilities, food, or other financial help are less likely to be reported to child welfare authorities and *more* likely to have greater well-being<sup>1</sup>,” said Newell. “We’re sending a message with our new name, that kinship care – care of children by their families – is key to success. At Akin, we believe that there is no right way to be a family, but there is a right way to stand with them. When families can access the support they need, when they need it, both children and caregivers will thrive.”

Akin offers the combined services of both organizations for families, with programs including: behavioral health and child and family counseling services; early learning and developmental support for infants and toddlers; parenting education and developing family support networks; workforce development initiatives to help grow, diversify and better support the child and family-serving workforce; and mentorship for parents with children temporarily in the foster care system, strengthening families so they can move toward reunification.

CHSW employs more than 350 people across Washington state, providing services and resources to families from King County to Spokane. It serves more than 20,000 families and children per year, through eight family resource centers, more than 20 locations and local community partnerships. Childhaven employs more than 110 team members in four locations around the Puget Sound area and serves upwards of 3,000 children and families each year.

Employees of both organizations will remain in their current positions in the new organization, continuing to provide services to Washington state’s children and families. The newly created entity, Akin, will rank among the top 25 largest human services organizations in Washington with a starting operating budget of nearly \$50M<sup>2</sup>.

### **About Childhaven**

Since 1909, [Childhaven](#) has been a safe and caring place for young children and families in the Puget Sound. Childhaven’s healing-centered framework embeds relational health, trauma-informed care, racial equity, and social justice in all places in which children and families live, learn, and play. Childhaven’s mission is to partner with parents and the community to strengthen families, prevent childhood trauma, and prepare children for a lifetime of well-being.

### **About Children’s Home Society of Washington**

Founded in 1896, Children’s Home Society of Washington is the oldest and largest statewide nonprofit children’s organization—serving more than 20,000 children and their families. Its mission is to develop healthy children, create strong families, build engaged communities, and speak and advocate for children.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, C., Grewal-Kök, Y., Cusick, G., Weiner, D., & Thomas, K. (2021, 2023). Family and child well-being system: Economic and concrete supports as a core component. [Power Point slides]. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> [Organization search](#) | [Cause IQ](#)

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