

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) Prevention and Response in Washington



March 1, 2024-June 30, 2025



DOH 140-324 Month 2024

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Project Description and Activities	6
WA FGM/C Project Team	6
FGM/C Advisory Committee and Subcommittees	6
Advisory Committee Representation	6
Resource and Information Development and Dissemination	13
Online Resources	14
WA FGM/C Monthly Newsletter	14
Translated Materials	15
WA DOH FGM/C Project Impact	15
Post-Training Debriefs	17
Office Hours	17
Overall Impact	17
Final Deliverables	17
Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned	20
Successes	20
Challenges and Lessons Learned	21
Building Future Coordination to Address FGM/C in Washington	23
Acknowledgements	24

Executive Summary

Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is a deeply rooted social norm and human rights violation that causes significant physical, psychological, and social harm. FGM/C involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, for non-medical reasons.¹ Globally, FGM/C is practiced in at least 94 countries, including the United States.² In Washington, [18,000-25,000 women and girls are at risk](#).³ We don't have a more precise figure at this time due to differences in data collection methods. Coordinating prevention and response efforts is essential for understanding the true number of women and girls at risk.

This report details the work done to support the end of FGM/C in Washington from March 2024 to June 2025 as outlined in [RCW 43.70.614](#). Work was completed collaboratively by [Sahiyo](#), the [U.S. End FGM/C Network](#), [Mother Africa](#), and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). This group will be called the WA FGM/C project team or the project team.

The report highlights:

- activities
- challenges
- successes
- lessons learned
- recommendations for sustainable implementation beyond June 2025.

The project team conducted a comprehensive, multi-method evaluation to understand the current landscape of FGM/C awareness, prevention, and response in Washington. Efforts included:

- conducting a needs assessment at project launch
- a scoping review of existing educational resources
- input from the FGM/C project Advisory Committee
- community consultations
- discussions at educational events
- conducting community outreach
- focus group discussions

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). [Female genital mutilation](#). January 31, 2025.

² Equality Now. [The Time is Now: End Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting—An Urgent Need for Global Response 2025](#). New York: Equality Now. 2025.

³ Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs & Mark Mather, [Women and Girls at-risk of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in the United States](#). *Population Reference Bureau*. February 5, 2016.

- engaging in FGM/C project Advisory Committee and Subcommittees
- delivering training and technical assistance (T&TA)
- developing resources for FGM/C impacted groups

These activities provided a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in addressing FGM/C across the state.

The project produced critical deliverables, including a resource library, health, community, and sector-specific recommendations. [Online resources](#) were developed and adapted to meet Washington's specific needs to support education on ongoing prevention and response. The project also fostered partnerships among state agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations, laying a foundation for sustainable, culturally responsive strategies.

Key actions that could continue and enhance this work include:

- prioritizing outreach and engagement across sectors
- community engagement
- policy advocacy mechanisms
- comprehensive training and technical assistance
- education
- sustained funding

Project Description and Activities

In 2022, the [WA Coalition to End FGM/C](#) was formed to advocate for community-led, comprehensive state legislation to prevent and respond to FGM/C. This survivor-led group of advocates, activists, and subject matter experts collaborated to make sure laws provide community education to prevent FGM/C and protection for survivors and those at risk, enabling them to access essential support and care. The coalition’s work emphasized incorporating survivor voices and a community-driven approach. After the passage of [Substitute Senate Bill 5453](#) in April 2023, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) consulted coalition members to begin planning the implementation of its responsibilities under the new law, [RCW 43.70.614](#).

WA FGM/C Project Team

DOH released a competitive request for proposals in late 2023 to identify a contractor(s) with expertise in survivor-led and community-driven approaches to implementing FGM/C prevention and response at the state level. The successful bidder was Washington-based [Mother Africa](#) with two national coalition partners: [Sahiyo](#) and [U.S. End FGM/C Network](#). Project activities began in March 2024 with a core group of staff from each of the three organizations and DOH.

FGM/C Advisory Committee and Subcommittees

The project worked hard to make sure that community engagement and inclusivity were at the center of its work, especially when establishing its advisory committee. DOH staff found people and organizations across the state with expertise in cultural and traditional contexts of FGM/C, including:

those with lived experience and strong connections to impacted communities, to join the Advisory Committee to guide the overall project. The Washington Coalition to End FGM/C was consulted, and project team members engaged their networks to expand this recruitment initiative.

The project team prioritized building trust and fostering open dialogue with diverse sectors across the state as well, including service providers and state government entities. Candidates were recruited through a thorough application and interview process in April and May 2024, ensuring individuals chosen had alignment with the project’s goals. The resulting committee included 38 members.

Advisory Committee Representation

Advisory members represented communities, professions, and state agencies such as these:

Community Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gambia• Maasai (Kenya)• Samburu (Kenya)• Somali Bantu• Somalia
Professional Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• midwifery• pediatrics• medical interpretation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community-based roles
State Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOH • Washington State Department of Labor and Industries • Washington State Department of Commerce • Washington State Office of the Attorney General • Washington State Patrol • Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families

This advisory committee allowed the project team to ensure a well-rounded approach to FGM/C prevention and response efforts. They integrated voices from survivors, government, coalitions, healthcare, community-based organizations, and individual community leaders to foster meaningful and sustainable change.

Community members were compensated using a compensation process created to cover expenses such as time, travel, and other costs. State employees were not eligible, but this reinforced the project's commitment to equitable and inclusive engagement.

The Advisory Committee:

- Collaborated with the project team to develop culturally and linguistically responsive, trauma-informed, and strength-based best practices and final deliverable reports.
- Reviewed and gave feedback on materials and information on appropriate referrals to services.
- Ensured the project's approach was community-oriented, impactful, and reflective of all the people who live in Washington.

Advisory committee meetings were held:

- June 2024
- July 26, 2024
- October 9, 2024
- Feb. 12, 2025
- April 9, 2025
- June 25, 2025

Monthly subcommittee meetings were also held to address specific areas, including community prevention education, providers' training, and government agency prevention and response coordination. Members said which subcommittee they wanted to serve on, and co-chairs were selected to lead each group. Each Subcommittee included representatives from many sectors and community-based organizations.

Through these community-level engagement efforts, the project strengthened connections between FGM/C impacted groups and the broader network of service providers and government agencies in Washington. This foundation of trust and mutual respect will help promote culturally informed prevention, improve access to care, and empower communities to lead change in ending FGM/C throughout the state of Washington.

Community Prevention Education and Awareness and Survivor Services Subcommittee

This 13-member subcommittee focused on:

- recommendations to develop relationships with key communities
- effective community engagement approaches
- mapping of currently available services
- developing or adapting culturally and linguistically responsive materials

Meetings

- Oct. 3, 2024
- Nov. 19, 2024
- Dec. 17, 2024
- Jan. 21, 2025
- March 25, 2025
- April 29, 2025
- May 6, 2025
- June 12, 2025

Healthcare and Other Service Provider Subcommittee

The 13-member subcommittee examined how to increase provider awareness through trauma-informed care. They reviewed training materials on recognizing and supporting people who are at risk or are survivors, along with Washington and national training and technical assistance resources. They also developed a training curriculum and strategies to address the unique needs of healthcare providers and other service providers.

Meetings

- October 7, 2024
- Nov. 13, 2024
- Dec. 4, 2024
- Jan. 29, 2025
- Feb. 5, 2025
- March 3, 2025

Members of the Subcommittee split into two workgroups and continued to meet several times each month to develop the curriculum and implementation strategies.

Government Agency Response Coordination Subcommittee

This subcommittee made recommendations to help Washington state government agencies coordinate to prevent and respond to FGM/C in impacted communities, including culturally responsive policies and best practices. It had 14 members, including representatives from 6 agencies.

Meetings

- Oct. 1, 2024

- Nov. 2024
- Feb.27, 2025
- March 28, 2025
- April 30, 2025
- May 6, 2025 (in collaboration with the Community Prevention and Awareness and Survivor Services Subcommittee)
- June 5, 2025

The project team and subcommittee also hosted meetings with 6 other state agencies and one advocacy organization to ask about training and technical assistance needs for FGM/C. Meetings were held:

- Crime Victims Compensation Program (Washington State Department of Labor and Industries): Dec. 13, 2024
- Office of Crime Victims Advocacy (Washington Department of Commerce): Dec.16, 2024
- Washington Attorney General's Office: Dec. 18, 2024
- Washington State Patrol: Jan. 6, 2025
- Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families: Jan. 8, 2025
- Children's Alliance: Jan. 17, 2025
- DOH March 31, 2025

Involving Subject Matter Experts

The advisory committee and project team identified subject matter experts (SMEs) nationwide with knowledge in:

- FGM/C data collection
- culturally responsive community education
- trauma-informed, strength-based practices

The SME's work was key in:

- planning and delivering technical assistance webinars,
- providing expert consultation
- providing training information for government, nonprofit, and healthcare staff on FGM/C in service provision and delivery for final deliverable reports

Their contributions significantly enhanced knowledge around how to prevent and respond to FGM/C. By integrating SME expertise, the project ensured strategies are community-centered, evidence-based, and sustainable.

Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA)

Needs Assessment Survey Findings in Year 1

Initiated in April 2024, during Year 1 (March-June 2024) of the project, the project team conducted a

comprehensive *Needs Assessment Survey* to evaluate current awareness, knowledge, and organizational capacity related to FGM/C across Washington. The assessment aimed to identify specific T&TA needs, readiness for integrating FGM/C prevention and survivor support services, and potential implementation challenges. The findings from this survey were analyzed, and the [Needs Assessment Survey Report](#) was shared with the Advisory Committee in July 2024, providing valuable insights to guide the project's next steps. Findings from this survey underscored the need for culturally sensitive engagement, legal and medical education, trauma-informed care, and survivor-centered programming.

Structuring the T&TA offerings for Year 2

At the start of Year 2 (July 2024 to June 2025), informed by the needs assessment findings, the WA FGM/C project team developed a [T&TA Plan](#) (attached as Appendix C) for continued learning of the project in Year 2 for Advisory Committee members. This document outlined the structure and priorities for T&TA during the project year, serving as a guiding framework to ensure all T&TA offered by the project team addressed the Advisory Committee's identified needs.

The plan focused on three areas:

- Training and Technical Assistance Sessions (T&TA)
- Post-Training Debrief
- TA Office Hours

To refine the focus areas for Year 2, T&TA sessions on FGM/C, a survey listing thematic areas of need determined by the needs assessment for educational webinars was distributed to Advisory Committee members. Members were asked to prioritize the webinar topics based on their interests. The results shaped the training agenda and guided the development of webinars and other educational initiatives throughout the year.

Training and Technical Assistance Sessions: Continuing Community Education

Training and technical assistance plans focused on education for key interested partners, while remaining open to the public. There were 6 webinars hosted throughout project year 2. Sessions were hosted live and recorded. Sessions were interactive sessions featuring expert speakers, question and answer sessions, and discussions. At the end of each webinar, participants had the opportunity to answer poll questions and provide feedback about the session directly on Zoom. All session recordings are listed after the sessions on the [project website](#) for the broader community to review.

Training Sessions

[Framing FGM/C: Understanding and Engaging with Cultural Sensitivity](#)

Date: August 22, 2024

Number of Registrants: 162 (38 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 84

This session focused on ways of framing FGM/C that respect cultural contexts while advocating for the prevention of the practice and support for survivors. This session covered:

- understanding the types, prevalence, and health risks of FGM/C,
- exploring the cultural and social contexts that sustain the practice, and

- addressing misconceptions about who is impacted by FGM/C,
- emphasizing its global and local nature.

The session highlighted how FGM/C is framed in discussions and the media can significantly influence the movement to end the practice. Participants learned how framing shapes public perception, informs policy decisions, and enhances community engagement, and took away practices for sensitive, respectful conversations to support these goals.

[Principles of Survivor-Centered Programming for FGM/C](#)

Date: October 17, 2024

Number of Registrants: 117 (27 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 66

This session equipped service providers, advocates, and community leaders with knowledge, tools, and frameworks to support survivors. It gave them ways to make sure survivors' experiences, voices, and needs drive the design and implementation of programs. The training uplifted insights from survivors, highlighted their experiences across different service sectors, and offered valuable lessons and considerations for participants. The training featured speakers from organizations across the country who have successfully integrated programming strategies into their overall services.

[Prevention Efforts on FGM/C Across the Country](#)

Date: December 12, 2024

Number of Registrants: 115 (including 29 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 62

This training delved into prevention programming and efforts in FGM/C in the United States. It equipped attendees with knowledge, tools, and frameworks to engage in preventing FGM/C. The training uplifted best practices and insights on prevention programming. It also featured speakers from organizations that have successfully integrated prevention programming strategies.

[FGM/C Education in Schools](#)

Date: February 20, 2025

Number of Registrants: 121 (including 55 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 65

A training on FGM/C Education in Schools was hosted to increase understanding of how educational institutions can implement policies and structures to address FGM/C. The training addressed best practices from schools that have implemented FGM/C policies, strategies for engaging with educators and administrators, and examples of culturally relevant educational materials and resources on FGM/C.

[Navigating Relationships and Power Dynamics in FGM/C Work](#)

Date: April 17, 2025

Number of Registrants: 104 (27 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 82

Description: This training explored the complex power dynamics across multiple societal levels that impact how FGM/C is understood, addressed, and prevented. The session was facilitated by Healing Equity United, an organization specializing in power dynamics, systemic inequities, and social justice. Using case studies, storytelling, and discussion, participants gained deeper insight into how power operates within relationships, systems, and policies impacting FGM/C survivors and their communities.

[Global Nature of FGM/C and Inclusive Services](#)

Date: June 18, 2025

Number of Registrants: 92 (21 from Washington)

Number of Live Attendees: 45

Description: This webinar broadened the understanding of FGM/C's global impact and built inclusive services for all impacted communities. It delved into the global issue of FGM/C, examining its prevalence and the urgent need for inclusive, culturally sensitive services to support survivors and impacted communities. The session explored the importance of trauma-informed, inclusive services that respect the diverse nature of FGM/C while addressing the urgent need for change. By understanding the global scope of FGM/C and recognizing the necessity for culturally competent services, participants were better equipped to support individuals and communities impacted by the practice.

Post-Training Debriefs

Following each T&TA session, a one-hour post-training debrief was hosted exclusively for advisory committee members. These closed sessions provided members with a chance to reflect on the content and insights shared. Through facilitated discussions, participants explored the practical application of their learnings and considered how to integrate these strategies into their work. These debriefs served as a critical space for collaborative dialogue, ensuring that the knowledge gained during the training translates into meaningful and actionable outcomes. Committee members who couldn't attend live training sessions were required to watch the recordings.

- Post-training debriefs were held on the following dates:
- Framing FGM/C debrief on Aug. 29, 2024 (12 attendees)
- Survivor-Centered Programming debrief on Oct. 24, 2024 (18 attendees)
- Prevention Efforts debrief on Dec. 19, 2024 (8 attendees)
- FGM/C Education in Schools debrief on Feb. 27, 2025 (10 attendees)
- Navigating Relationships and Power Dynamics debrief on April 24, 2025 (11 attendees)

Office Hours

The project team held quarterly T&TA office hours open to the public. These sessions created accessible opportunities to address questions and gather input on FGM/C efforts in Washington State. This iterative process helped keep the T&TA responsive, targeted, and effective, adapting to the evolving needs of communities and agencies. Sahiyo and the U.S. Network team members rotated hosting the space for the T&TA office hours, which were held on the following dates:

- Sep. 19, 2024 - 3 attendees
- Nov. 21, 2024 - 6 attendees
- Jan. 16, 2025 - 8 attendees
- March 20, 2025 - 12 attendees
- May 15, 2025 - 5 attendees

Resource and Information Development and Dissemination

Resource and information development played a central role in the project, ensuring interested parties have access to relevant, practical, and culturally responsive materials. The team developed 13 key documents to foster FGM/C prevention and response in Washington:

- [General Talking Points for the Public](#), a document that offered clear messaging to raise awareness about FGM/C.
- [Washington FGM/C Legal Fact Sheet](#) summarizes the FGM/C law in Washington, including the key provisions.
- [Service Provider Fact Sheet](#), tailored to healthcare, social service, and legal professionals to improve awareness and support for survivors.
- [Simplified Service Provider Fact Sheet](#), a simplified version of the resource above.
- [Bill of Rights for Survivors of FGM/C](#) empowered survivors with knowledge of their rights and available protections under Washington State law.
- [FGM/C Talking Points on Engaging with Faith Leaders](#), a document that provides culturally sensitive strategies for prevention and education within faith communities.
- Resources aligned with each T&TA session, reinforcing learning and application for participants across sectors:
 - [FGM/C 101 Training Resources](#): A comprehensive reference document shared with all participants, containing general FGM/C information, mental health, clinical practice, and legal resources.
 - [Framing FGM/C Information Sheet](#): Guidance on effectively communicating FGM/C issues to diverse audiences with cultural sensitivity.
 - [Survivor-Centered Programming Information Sheet](#): Best practices for designing programs that prioritize the needs and experiences of survivors.
 - [Prevention Resources Information Sheet](#): Tools and strategies for implementing effective prevention programs within communities.
 - [Education in Schools Information Sheet](#): Recommendations for integrating FGM/C education into school curricula to raise awareness among youth.
 - [Navigating Relationships & Power Dynamics Information Sheet](#): Tips for managing power dynamics and fostering equitable partnerships in FGM/C-related work.
 - [Global Nature of FGM/C and Inclusive Services Resources](#): A curated list of resources emphasizing inclusive service provisions in the global context of FGM/C.

These materials were created in response to feedback and discussions held throughout Year 2, both within Advisory Committee meetings and Subcommittee meetings. Additionally, specific materials were mentioned that would be helpful for outreach and education purposes during one-on-one meetings with various members of the government Subcommittee. During Year 1, at events hosted by the project team, feedback was gathered and collected to help inform the creation of materials. After initial drafts of documents were created, they were sent to the full Advisory Committee for further feedback and refinement of the resources. Once resources are finalized, they will be shared on the website.

Online Resources

Online resources developed for the project were tailored for Washington State audiences and aimed at preventing and responding to FGM/C. These tools were created to ensure accessibility, relevance, and impact, equipping interested parties with essential knowledge and actionable strategies to address this critical issue effectively. These resources are listed below:

- The [FGM/C Prevention and Response in Washington](#) website was created to educate the public and share resources, including a brochure in multiple languages. Over this reporting period, the website was visited by a total of 4,404 users who were engaged in 2,096 sessions over the year. The website experienced a total of 9,369 page views with 89 total file downloads. Most users were in Washington and were geographically spread across 3 regions of the state.
- The [WA FGM/C YouTube Account](#) was created to share recordings of previous training and informational meetings to educate the public and share resources.
- The [FGM/C Public Google Drive Folder](#) is a centralized repository of all recorded meetings, FGM/C resources and trainings, and reference materials related to this project.
- The U.S. End FGM/C Network's *Changing Narratives* podcast featured an episode titled "[FGM/C: An American Problem as Much as a Global One.](#)" highlighting the Washington FGM/C project. In this episode, Absa Samba, a committee member and co-founder of the Washington Coalition to End FGM/C, and Carolyn House-Higgins, Gender-Based Violence Prevention Program Manager at the Washington Department of Health, explore the intersection of policy, community action, and survivor support. Together, they discussed the WA FGM/C project and the importance of community and state government collaboration and partnership.

WA FGM/C Monthly Newsletter

The Washington FGM/C Monthly Newsletter is a digital publication designed to inform and engage interested parties in efforts to address FGM/C in the state. With a subscriber base of 788 and an average open rate of 22.7%, the newsletter has become a key platform for sharing updates, survivor stories, and project developments. To ensure accessibility, all editions are also published on the website. Each newsletter edition and respective email performance are listed below:

- [August 2024 Newsletter](#): 67.4% open rate, 86 deliveries, 61 total clicks
- [September 2024 Newsletter](#): 44.2% open rate, 104 deliveries, 17 total clicks
- [October 2024 Newsletter](#): 22.3% open rate, 350 deliveries, 67 total clicks
- [November 2024 Newsletter](#): 14.2% open rate, 408 deliveries, 20 total clicks
- [December 2024 Newsletter](#): 17.1% open rate, 404 deliveries, 65 total clicks

- [January 2025 Newsletter](#): 21.7% open rate, 401 deliveries, 46 total clicks
- [February 2025 Newsletter](#): 17.4 % open rate, 396 deliveries, 27 total clicks
- [March 2025 Newsletter](#): 20.3% open rate, 394 deliveries, 30 total clicks
- [April 2025 Newsletter](#): 13.4% open rate, 397 deliveries, 23 total clicks
- [May 2025 Newsletter](#): 9.8% open rate, 581 deliveries, 29 total clicks
- [June 2025 Newsletter](#): 10.1% open rate, 1163 deliveries, 65 total clicks

Translated Materials

A [trifold brochure](#) was co-designed with impacted communities in English and translated into Amharic, Arabic, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Samburu, Somali, Swahili, Tigrigna, and Urdu. The brochure in each language is available for download from the project website. The brochure has been printed and shared out widely in various outreach activities, such as a Health & Wellness Fair, which Mother African hosted on Oct. 4, 2024, and the Washington Mental Health Summit on May 13, 2025, among others.

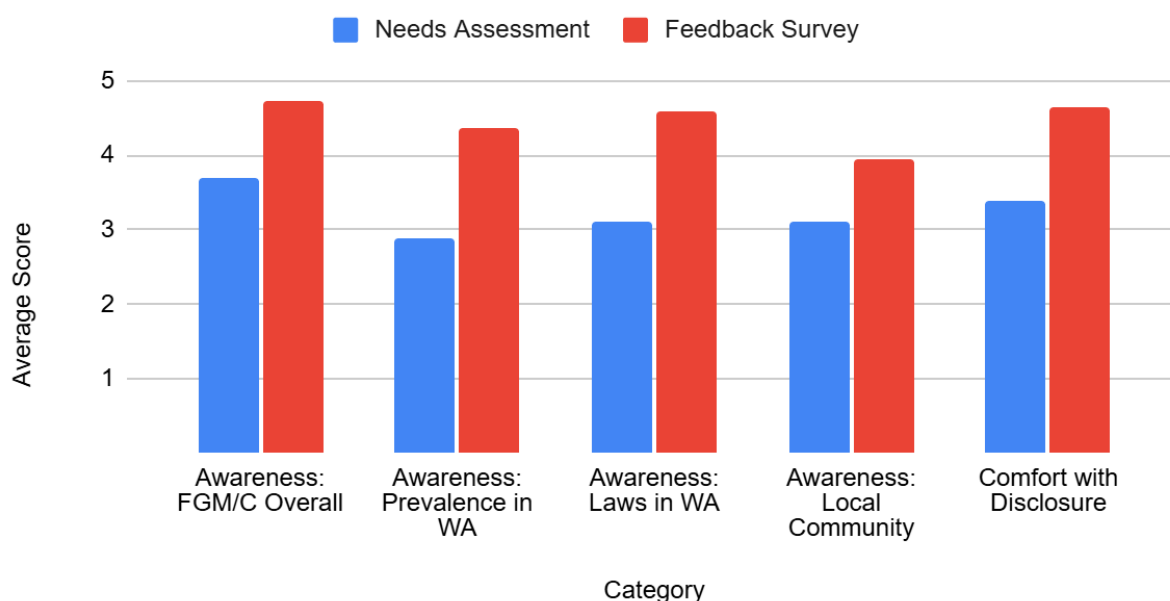
WA DOH FGM/C Project Impact

To assess the overall impact of the project, a final Feedback and Future Project Commitments Survey was distributed to the Advisory Committee in April 2025. This survey measured the committee’s awareness of FGM/C, comfort in supporting survivors, and perceptions of organizational preparedness. It also gathered feedback on key components of the WA FGM/C T&TA efforts, including webinar sessions, Advisory Committee and Subcommittee monthly meetings, and overall training content. Serving as a follow-up to the April 2024 Needs Assessment Survey, the results offered insight into progress made over the past year and helped identify evolving needs to guide ongoing efforts in FGM/C prevention and response across Washington

The initial Needs Assessment Survey engaged a broader audience, with 36 respondents not limited to Advisory Committee members, assessing awareness levels, T&TA needs, organizational readiness, and potential challenges in integrating FGM/C initiatives. The final feedback and future project commitments survey received responses from 25 advisory committee members, offering insights from a diverse group. This included key state entities, such as the Washington Attorney General's Office, the Washington Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, the Washington Crime Victims Compensation Program, and the Washington State Patrol. Contributions from non-governmental parties, including community advocates and service providers, further enriched the feedback with a wide range of perspectives.

Comparative results from the two surveys demonstrated significant growth. The [Needs Assessment Survey Report](#) showed awareness-related questions ranged from 2.9 to 3.7, with the lowest scores in understanding FGM/C prevalence in Washington (2.9) and local community awareness (3.1). In contrast, the [Feedback and Future Commitments Survey Report](#) (attached as Appendix B) showed marked improvement, with awareness scores rising to between 3.95 to 4.73. Comfort levels also increased significantly, with respondents’ confidence in handling disclosures of FGM/C rising from an average of 3.4 to 4.64, and non-government respondents reporting an even higher average of 4.78.

Comparison of Awareness and Comfort Levels: Needs Assessment vs. Feedback Survey



Nine participants emphasized the exceptional value of the project’s T&TA webinars, describing them as “informational and educational,” “supportive for survivors,” and “eye-opening,” particularly for those new to FGM/C work. One respondent noted the sessions were “enlightening,” providing fresh insights into the complexities of FGM/C. These webinars, alongside monthly subcommittee meetings and opportunities for peer learning, were consistently recognized as integral to enhancing participants’ understanding of FGM/C legislation, survivor experiences, and trauma-informed approaches tailored to the unique needs of Washington.

T&TA webinar sessions

The 6 T&TA webinars reached over 852 participants, including live attendees and those accessing recordings, encompassing community leaders, service providers, advocates, and policymakers. Across all sessions, 115 responses were collected through polls conducted during the session and surveys sent in email afterward.

The webinars had a measurable impact on attendees:

- **92%** reported increased knowledge about FGM/C.
- **96%** felt confident discussing FGM/C with others after participating.
- **69%** saw themselves applying the knowledge and skills shared in the sessions, both professionally and personally.

Feedback consistently highlighted the sessions’ engaging facilitation, expert insights, and interactive format. Attendees reported gaining practical tools to address FGM/C with survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches, leading to increased confidence in engaging with communities and advocating for policy changes. The sessions emphasized critical themes such as framing, power dynamics, and inclusivity,

inspiring participants to adopt culturally sensitive prevention strategies and rethink approaches to survivor support. The webinars fostered collaboration and critical reflection, building a robust network of informed interested parties committed to advancing FGM/C prevention and enhancing survivor support.

Post-Training Debriefs

The five post-training debriefs, attended by 26 Advisory Committee members—many of whom participated in multiple sessions—had a profound impact on enhancing understanding of FGM/C as a global issue deeply linked to gender-based violence and systemic inequities. Through the sharing of real-world case studies and survivor stories, participants developed greater empathy and insights. They also underscored the importance of intersectional approaches that balance cultural competence and bias awareness. Participants openly addressed challenges such as racial profiling, community backlash, and advocacy fatigue, and found value in adaptable tools like prevention analogies, engagement toolkits for men, and survivor support resources. The debriefs emphasized the need for multi-sector collaboration and continuous capacity-building to address barriers effectively. These sessions empowered participants to implement survivor-centered, culturally competent, and systemic strategies, equipping them to create meaningful change within their roles and communities.

Office Hours

The 6 open Office Hours, attended by 21 participants including survivors, advocates, and clinicians, underscored the urgent need for mental health resources and culturally sensitive support structures. Discussions illuminated critical systemic gaps, such as the shortage of trained mental health professionals and the lack of tailored curricula for survivor support. Participants greatly valued the collaborative exchange of practical resources and actionable strategies, such as developing clinician networks, integrating FGM/C-specific screening questions into practice, and combating stigma through targeted community education. These sessions reinforced the importance of building partnerships and maintaining sustained advocacy efforts. By providing valuable tools and fostering collective engagement, Office Hours equipped participants to strengthen survivor support systems and advance FGM/C prevention initiatives with greater impact.

Overall Impact

Collectively, these initiatives enhanced understanding, fostered critical dialogue, and equipped participants to address FGM/C through survivor-centered, inclusive, and trauma-informed practices.

Challenges identified included systemic gaps in state-level preparedness and the need for comprehensive institutional training, particularly in trauma-informed care. Findings emphasized the importance of engaging culturally sensitive practices, building trust through community collaboration, and integrating survivor voices into future programming.

The project's final survey findings underscored both progress and the ongoing need for systemic improvements. Continued collaboration, focused education, and culturally responsive practices will be essential to sustaining and expanding these efforts across Washington State.

Final Deliverables

The following deliverables were finalized in response to the work carried out during the project.

FGM/C Training and Technical Assistance Implementation Plan: This plan provided a structured approach to delivering training, technical assistance, outreach, and services to individuals and service providers to effectively address FGM/C in Washington in 16 months. Grounded in the findings from the needs assessment, the plan aligned with community priorities and needs, committee needs, impacted communities, healthcare, and other service providers. The plan prioritized providing knowledge on inclusive strategies, fostering equitable collaboration, and integrating culturally responsive practices into all outreach and T&TA efforts.

FGM/C Legislative Implementation Report: This report compiled key information and best practices related to FGM/C legislative implementation in other states and existing state-level FGM/C policies, practices, and coordination strategies. Throughout this project, a total of 9 one-on-one interviews were conducted with legislative and policy advocates in various states to gather insights on how different states are implementing components of their FGM/C law.

Recommendations on Education and Awareness Programs: This deliverable involved developing recommendations for best practices to host education and awareness programs to prevent and respond to FGM/C in Washington State. The recommendations are informed by the Advisory Committee, in particular the Community Education and Awareness Subcommittee, other local interested parties, contractor and subcontractor expertise, and adapted resource materials or policies. An initial community education program for Washington was also developed to address critical topics such as the impacts of trauma, health risks, civil and criminal penalties, and best practices. Target audiences included:

- communities that may support or be unaware of FGM/C laws,
- individuals who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing FGM/C,
- organizational staff engaging with at-risk populations,
- All people in Washington

The goal of the program is to have a plan in place for DOH to implement after the project planning phase to continue prevention work for FGM/C and support those impacted by FGM/C.

Recommendations on Healthcare Provider Training: This training recommended strategies for training healthcare providers to recognize and address FGM/C. SMEs and other key parties identified training curricula covering essential topics, including:

- an overview of the forms of FGM/C
- its cultural contexts and traditions
- recognizing risk factors and signs of survivorship
- delivering culturally responsive and trauma-informed care
- and referring survivors to appropriate resources

The finalized strategies aim to equip healthcare and other providers with the knowledge and tools necessary to support survivors effectively and sensitively.

During Year 2 of the project, the subcommittee focused on training for healthcare and other providers, reviewed FGM/C training resources that incorporated lived experiences and trauma-informed care

principles, and recommended a comprehensive training curriculum for Washington providers. Following the review of existing FGM/C materials, the Subcommittee determined that no single resource fully addressed the specific needs of Washington, particularly concerning local referral systems.

To address this, they developed a customized PowerPoint training curriculum that covers essential topics like:

- forms of FGM/C
- cultural contexts
- risk indicators
- signs of survivorship
- culturally responsive and trauma-informed care
- local referral pathways.

The curriculum was compiled and reviewed by:

- survivors
- subcommittee members
- school district representatives
- hospital representatives
- mental health clinics
- sexual assault and domestic violence program representatives
- other providers who interact with FGM/C impacted communities

The target audience of the training curriculum is:

- healthcare providers
- behavioral health providers
- legal and emergency responders
- professionals in education and human services who interact with at-risk individuals and survivors.

A communication plan for the curriculum was also developed and includes engaging leadership at various Washington-based medical societies, training institutions, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), professional associations, and legal, education, social, and advocacy organizations.

Recommendations on Government Agency Response Coordination Policies and Procedures to Promote Partnerships: This deliverable included a set of recommended policies and procedures to foster partnerships among key entities like community-based organizations, survivors, and SMEs, alongside state agencies such as:

- DOH
- Washington State Department of Labor and Industries' Crime Victim Compensation Program

- Washington State Department of Commerce's Office of Crime Victims Advocacy
- Washington State Office of the Attorney General
- Washington State Patrol
- Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families

These recommendations focused on how state agencies can respond to FGM/C within their own organizations and how to build interagency coordination with civil society partners to address both the prevention of and response to FGM/C in a culturally sensitive manner. The report emphasized partnerships in U.S. FGM/C work, highlighting models that could benefit Washington.

The recommendations are informed by Sahiyo's two-year [Critical Intersections](#) study, and the U.S. End FGM/C Network's Empowered Narratives: Reflections from Survivor Listening Sessions [final report](#).

Additionally, it was recognized that recommendations were needed to create sector and state-agency-specific recommendations to address FGM/C. As a result, one-on-one meetings were held to determine what was feasible for state agencies within the confines of their roles to address FGM/C and work in partnership with community-based organizations. The final report was developed with these conversations in mind, and with input from individuals with lived experience and community-based organizations to ensure the recommendations are inclusive, practical, and responsive to the needs of impacted communities.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

This section primarily reflects what happened during the project's implementation. It details specific achievements, obstacles encountered, and insights gained directly from the project's execution.

Successes

The project laid a strong foundation for future work to address FGM/C in Washington. Insights from participants from the *Feedback and Future Project Commitments Survey* showed increased awareness, greater confidence, and practical application of new skills in their work. The project also fostered meaningful cross-sector collaborations and centered diverse voices, helping to build a more educated and informed network dedicated to addressing FGM/C in Washington even after the project's end.

Operational Set-Up

In Year 1 (March to June 2024), project team established a solid operational foundation, encompassing finances, budgets, contracts, and subcontracting processes. This preparation during the first few months set up the team for continued efforts throughout Year 2 (July 2024 to June 2025).

Efforts Built on Groundwork laid by the Washington Coalition to End FGM/C

Efforts for this project were built upon the groundwork laid by the Washington Coalition in 2022-2023, leveraging the foundation and relationships established during that time. The coalition's work emphasized incorporating survivor voices and a community-driven approach. This informed and guided the project's development and ongoing progress. This foundation and the continued involvement of coalition members were crucial in making sure the project was responsive to impacted communities and grounded in collaboration.

Advisory Committee Member Commitment to Engage and Contribute:

The Advisory Committee demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the project. This diverse group played a central role in guiding the work and shaping the deliverables. Of note was the willingness of many survivors to actively participate in committees and subcommittees, dedicating their time and expertise to the project. Their involvement was instrumental in co-creating a project culture that remained deeply grounded in lived experiences and community-driven principles.

Extensive Outreach Efforts

Throughout Year 2, the project team continued essential communication systems, including a website, calendar, Zoom account, email, WhatsApp group, and an Advisory Committee Listserv, streamlining communication operations and enhancing the project team's outreach methods.

Collaborative Development of Tailored Trainings and Resources

Another notable success was the development and delivery of impactful training sessions and resources. These were created through a highly collaborative process with the Advisory Committee's input. These trainings were tailored to address the unique needs identified by the committee, ensuring they were both relevant and actionable. Participants praised the sessions for their engaging content and practical applications, while the resources provided served as valuable tools for parties across sectors. The collaborative approach not only strengthened the quality of the training but also fostered a sense of shared ownership and commitment among committee members, amplifying the project's overall impact and sustainability.

Contracting with Subject Matter Experts

The project included 18 subject matter experts—Sean Callaghan, Absa Samba, Dr. Muna Osman, Severina Lemachokoti, Dr. Nicole Warren, Katharine Conroy, Natasha Johnson, Arrizu Sirjani, Athia Carrim, Micaela Schuneman, Angela Peabody, Aissata M.B. Camara, Fiona Oliphant, Jess Ayden Li, Cassie Whitebread, Umme Kulsoom Arif, Charity Resian, and Shivangi Misra.

They have been invaluable. Their commitment and support have continued to motivate and build momentum. These subject matter experts have provided expertise on a wide variety of topics, including:

- data on FGM/C in the U.S. and Washington
- providing culturally responsive services to FGM/C survivors
- survivor-centered programming
- community engagement
- prevention efforts in the U.S
- training education sector professionals on FGM/C in the U.S.
- power dynamics in FGM/C-impacted communities
- global impact of FGM/C
- inclusive services for FGM/C survivors

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The project team's experiences during this project highlighted several key lessons learned that strengthen

the overall project:

Time for Relationship Building

One of the significant challenges faced, particularly in Year 1 (March 2024 to June 2024), was the lack of sufficient time for building relationships with project partners, state agencies, and communities. With only four months to implement the activities, there was minimal opportunity to establish trust and foster meaningful connections. This gap can hinder collaboration, create barriers, and limit the effectiveness of engagement efforts. For future initiatives, dedicating time to relationship-building prior to project implementation is essential to lay a strong foundation for trust and partnership.

Global Perspective

FGM/C is a global issue, and it is vital to emphasize this by involving diverse participation of interested parties and those from FGM/C-impacted communities. At the same time, recognizing and addressing local components is equally important. A key lesson learned is that it takes a culturally sensitive approach when connecting with some communities and individuals who may not be aware that FGM/C is a global issue, impacting Asian and other populations in addition to the African diaspora, non-migrant individuals, and non-binary survivors in the U.S. This understanding helps build trust and foster effective collaboration and promotes greater awareness.

Need for Expansive, Foundational Education

Much more time must be dedicated to foundational education for advisors, interested parties, and state agencies before individuals and organizations can realistically expect service providers to incorporate FGM/C prevention and response into their programming. Many participants required more time and context to fully understand the different sociocultural, legal, and clinical contexts of FGM/C.

Schedule Conflicts

Coordinating meetings was a big hurdle because of the schedules of people who wanted to work on this project, including medical providers, students, and professionals with demanding schedules. It was also difficult to schedule meetings because of too busy schedules of needed state employees who had to attend per state statute. These scheduling challenges underscored the importance of flexible, adaptive engagement strategies that accommodated interested parties' capacities without compromising participation.

Advisor Capacity

While the Advisory Committee was full of people with expertise and experience, many of them had limited bandwidth. This impacted meeting attendance and follow-up. Insights from the *Feedback and Future Commitments Survey* indicated a need for more flexible engagement models to allow for meaningful participation while being mindful of advisors' varying schedules.

Gathering Feedback

The project team also encountered challenges with gathering feedback outside of live sessions. When materials were shared asynchronously, few participants had the capacity to review and respond. As a result, the project team learned the importance of building in time for review and discussion directly into live meetings to maximize engagement and input.

Navigating Political Climate and Community Trust

The broader political climate leading up to the inauguration and during the Trump administration created an additional layer of complexity and challenges. Many community members, especially from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, felt fear or apprehension about engaging in state-led or law-enforcement-affiliated initiatives. This emphasizes the importance of building community trust using transparent,

community-centered approaches while navigating a rapidly changing political climate.

Building Future Coordination to Address FGM/C in Washington

This section builds upon the insights and lessons derived from the project to present future considerations. It outlines proposals and recommendations to enhance future FGM/C prevention and responses in a holistic, collaborative, and sustainable way.

Outreach and Engagement Across Sectors

Meaningful engagement across sectors is key to addressing FGM/C. Efforts for the project implementation should include finding avenues to build bridges between various sectors. This includes finding ways to have survivors and FGM/C impacted communities connect with and work alongside service providers and state government officials. Ensuring accessibility, trust, and cultural competency between the various entities is critical to success.

Equitable Engagement with FGM/C Survivors and Communities

Finding ways to empower FGM/C survivors and impacted communities as leaders and reduce barriers to participation is key. Tailoring recruitment methods to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations, fairly compensating individuals, including survivors with lived experience, strengthens trust and ensures all are valued, and supports this work.

Developing Mechanisms for Policy Advocacy to Improve Systems Coordination to Address FGM/C

State agency staff are not permitted to advocate for state-level policy changes in the legislative process. Future coordination around FGM/C could focus on engaging the public to support and encourage policy advancements led by individuals or groups in positions to effect change. There are roles for policy advocacy to change structures legislatively from community-based organizations, statewide coalitions focused on gender-based violence prevention and response, and individual community members if they choose to pursue those routes. Some examples of where policy advocacy could be beneficial that have been identified include mandating FGM/C education for various state agencies, funding and resources for survivor services, requiring a report on the actions performed by state agencies to address FGM/C, and not making it a requirement to file a police report to access benefits from the victim's compensation program.

Effective Training and Technical Assistance for FGM/C Prevention and Response

Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) requires enough time for both delivery and integration of the learned material. To effectively address FGM/C in Washington, a multifaceted approach to T&TA is valuable. This includes offering T&TA sessions for general audiences, as well as more direct, one-on-one T&TA tailored to individual organizations and service providers working directly with FGM/C survivors and impacted communities. Providing T&TA to direct service programs for survivors provides continuing education to individual professionals and gives a better understanding of this issue to organizations. Ultimately, a variety of T&TA options, accommodating diverse learning styles of individuals and organizations, will strengthen FGM/C prevention and response efforts across the state.

Long-Term Strategy Development

Strategic, long-term planning supported by consistent funding is essential for continuity and scalability. Regularly assessing progress can identify successes and areas for improvement that guide future efforts. By emphasizing systemic collaboration, education, and survivor-informed strategies, these initiatives can

build lasting change that uplifts survivors and strengthens prevention responses.

Prioritizing outreach and engagement across sectors, community engagement, policy advocacy mechanisms, comprehensive training and technical assistance, education, and sustained funding, these efforts can create lasting change that uplifts survivors and strengthens prevention initiatives statewide.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who have supported the creation of this report by providing ideas, drafting, providing feedback, and more. Special thanks to the Washington Department of Health for providing funding for the creation of this report.

Washington Advisory Committee

- Rachael Gathoni
- Absa Samba
- Dr. Pam Kohlmeier
- Anni-Michele Jean-Pierre
- Jodine Honeysett
- Kaily Daly
- Jonathan Stanbery
- Sandy McCool
- Brittany Lenihan
- Manveer Sandhu
- Kimberly Mathis
- Sukai Gaye
- Risho Sapano
- Carolyn House Higgins
- Emily Rosa Lerosion
- Severina Lemachokoti
- Musu Bakoto Sawo
- Neelam Khaki
- Caroline Gicheru
- Esther Kenesoi Lekuraru
- Momodou Jobe
- Violet H. Mwandenga
- Ubah Aden
- Suad Farole
- Sawsen Mohammed
- Jessie Spinney
- Faisa Farole
- Emily Georges
- Muna Osman
- Ahado Abdi

- Joanna P. Stephens
- Mustafa Mohammed
- Emily Huebner
- Jacinta Silakan
- Mahlet Zeru
- Becky McElhiney
- Dr Megan Guffey
- Sameera Pochiraju

Washington FGM/C Prevention and Response Project Partner Organizations

- Washington Coalition to End FGM/C
- Washington State Department of Health
- Sahiyo
- The U.S. End FGM/C Network
- Mother Africa



DOH 140-324 Month 2024

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.