

9/26/2016 DRAFT

OFFICE OF HOMELESS YOUTH 2016 REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Acknowledgements
II.	Terminology
III.	Introduction
IV.	Background
V.	How this plan was developed
VI.	Scope of this plan
VII.	Causes and Characteristics
VIII.	Gaps
IX.	Vision & Guiding Principles
X.	Data Dashboard
XI.	Recommendations
	A. Near-term action agenda
	B. Cross-Cutting Strategies
	C. Strategies by goal
	1. Stable Housing
	2. Family Reconciliation
	3. Permanent Connections
	4. Education & Employment
	5. Social & Emotional Well-Being
XII.	APPENDIX
	a. Federal definitions of homelessness
	b. Office of Homeless Youth program overview
	c. Youth Advocate Recommendations
	d. A Way Home Washington report

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following organizations and individuals were involved in the report development. Involvement includes editing, document review, lending content expertise, providing input and feedback, and making recommendations.

[insert chart]

II. TERMINOLOGY

Homeless Youth: Throughout this report, “homeless youth” is used to refer to the population age 12 through 24, who are living on their own, without a parent or guardian, and are without a safe, stable living arrangement. Implementation of programs and strategies often requires segregation between age

groups. When relevant, the distinction is made between minor youth (under 18) and young adults (18 through 24).

Homelessness: Consistent with the authorizing legislation (2SSB 5404), this plan assumes the definition of homelessness set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as it pertains to the education of homeless children and youth. According to that definition, youth are homeless if they “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This includes youth sleeping in emergency or transitional shelters, on the streets, in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or other unsafe, unstable places. Also included are youth who are “couch-surfing” or “doubled-up.” Couch surfing occurs when a youth finds temporary shelter with friends or other family members, but lacks a permanent or stable home. Doubled-up scenarios involve situations where a youth is sharing housing with others due to loss of housing. Couch-surfing is a doubled-up experience, as well as any experience where a youth has no legal right to stay. (Federal definitions of homelessness are included in the Appendix X)

Unaccompanied youth: Used interchangeably with “homeless youth,” unaccompanied means a youth or young adult experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

III. INTRODUCTION

Homeless Youth. These two words do not belong together. And yet, at least 13,000 young people in Washington state are without a safe and stable place to call home. They have run from dysfunctional and sometimes violent homes, been kicked out for being gay, or separated from their family due to poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, or mental health issues. Yet they all have one thing in common—they are our future. They should grow up to be our next business owners, teachers, and leaders. They have immense potential but face significant barriers in realizing their dreams. We must give them the support they need to grow into healthy adulthood and live fulfilling lives.

Washington state is at a pivotal moment in our efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. The creation of a state Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) put us on the national map as leaders in this movement. Alongside the OHY are committed advocates, service providers, and philanthropists, who have joined together as A Way Home Washington to raise awareness and support solutions to end youth homelessness.

This movement would be hollow without the involvement of young people themselves. That’s why youth are at the center of this effort—not just as the object of our efforts, but as key contributors. Our work is stronger when it is informed by the experiences and ideas of young people who have experienced homelessness. They have a right to be involved in decisions that impact their own lives and those of their peers.

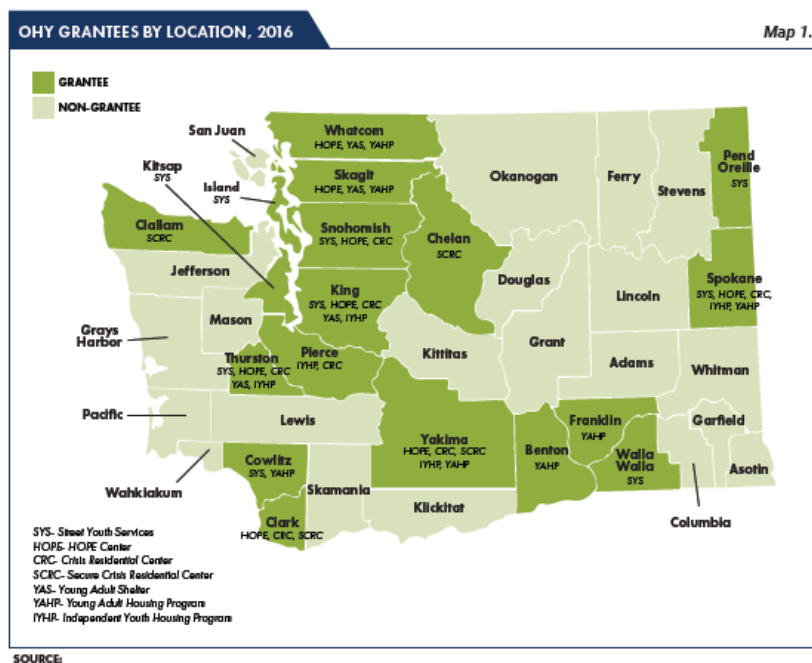
This report lays out our best collective thinking on ways the state can make the biggest difference in preventing and ending youth homelessness. There is no silver bullet to solving such a complex issue, but we can leverage what experience and research tell us to make the best decisions today. We must make progress without delay. And we must remain open to continually learning from our experience and adjusting accordingly. Our future depends on it.

IV. BACKGROUND

Created in [2015](#) through the *Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act (2SSB 5404)*, the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) leads statewide efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness for youth and young adults.

The measurable goals of the OHY are to 1) decrease the number of homeless youth and young adults by identifying programs that address the initial causes of homelessness, and 2) measurably increase permanency rates among homeless youth by decreasing the length and occurrences of youth homelessness caused by a youth's separation from family or a legal guardian.

To accomplish its goals, the Office of Homeless Youth gathers data through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This data is used to track information on the characteristics of homeless youth and evaluate program effectiveness. This year (state fiscal year 2017), the Office of Homeless Youth is responsible for managing \$12.5 million to support emergency housing and crisis intervention services, outreach to identify homeless youth and connect them to services, and assistance to young adults age 18 through 24 in communities throughout Washington (see map). Program descriptions are provided below.



Office of Homeless Youth programs and services:

Crisis Residential Centers provide temporary residence, assessment, referrals, and permanency planning services in semi-secure and secure facilities for youth ages 12 through 17 who are in conflict with their family, have run away from home, or whose health and safety is at risk.

HOPE Centers provide temporary residence, assessment, referrals, and permanency planning services for street youth under the age of 18.

Independent Youth Housing Program provides rental assistance and case management for young adults between 18 and 23 years old, who have aged out of the state foster care system.

Street Youth Services focus on identification and engagement with youth under the age of 18 who are living on the street. Programs provide needed services directly or link the youth to appropriate community resources. Services can include drug/alcohol abuse intervention, counseling, emergency housing, prevention and education activities, employment skill building, advocacy, family focused services, and follow-up support.

Young Adult Shelters provides emergency, temporary shelter, assessment, referrals, and permanency planning services for young adults ages 18 through 24.

Young Adult Housing Program provides resources for rent assistance, transitional housing, and case management for young adults ages 18 through 24.

The funding and administration of programs that serve homeless youth have evolved since the creation of the Office of Homeless Youth:

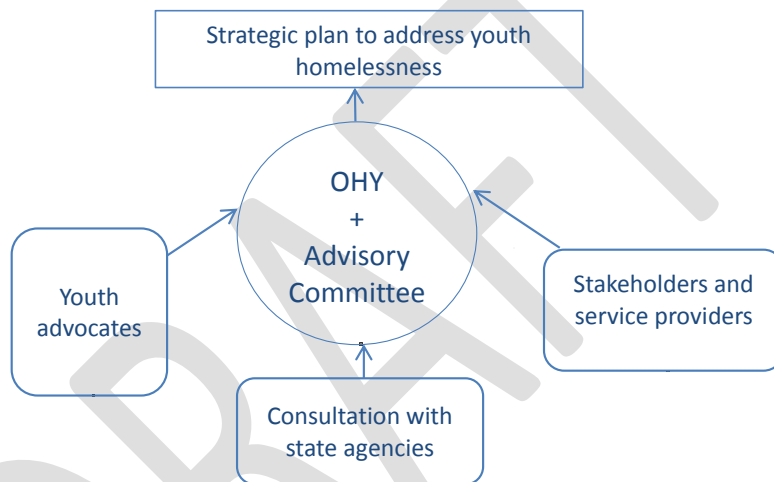
- **Independent Youth Housing Program.** Since it began in 2009, the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP) has been administered by the Department of Commerce. This program seamlessly moved under the oversight of the OHY. It is funded at \$1.8 million per biennium.
- **Transfer of HOPE Centers, Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs), and Street Youth Services.** *The Homeless Youth Act* transferred management responsibilities and approximately \$12 million per biennium in funding for HOPE Centers, CRCs, and Street Youth Services from Children's Administration to the Office of Homeless Youth. Transfer of program management was achieved through a phased-in approach that began with joint oversight by both the OHY and Children's Administration for a six-month period. The OHY took on full oversight of these programs on July 1, 2016.
- **Increased funding in 2016.** A few months after the launch of the OHY, the Legislature increased funding by \$3.7 million in the 2016 Supplemental Budget. The increase expanded Street Youth Services, HOPE beds, and CRCs, and funded new shelter and housing programs for 18 to 24 year olds (Young Adult Shelter and Young Adult Housing Program).

Details on the OHY budget and programs can be found in Appendix X.

V. HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

State law instructs the Office of Homeless Youth to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2016 on recommendations for funding, policy, and practice solutions across five priority areas: stable housing, family reconciliation, permanent connection, education & employment, social & emotional well-being (RCW 43.330.706).

This report was developed through a collaborative process that engaged multiple stakeholders including the Office of Homeless Youth Advisory Committee, youth advocates who have experienced homelessness, a coalition of statewide youth service providers and advocates, and involved consultation with representatives from state agencies.



Advisory Committee

The OHY Advisory Committee is comprised of a diverse set of leaders who bring valuable expertise to guide the efforts of the Office of Homeless Youth. Committee members include legislators, educators, philanthropists, service providers, law enforcement, a young person who has experienced homelessness, and others (see full committee membership in Acknowledgments section).

Six publicly-open meetings were convened by the Committee over the course of 2016, the primary focus of which was shaping the content of the plan. The Committee formulated a shared vision and set of guiding principles, and contributed its expertise to define outcomes and develop the recommendations. The Committee reviewed recommendations from other stakeholders and provided guidance on identifying priorities.

Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness

It is a core value of the Office of Homeless Youth to engage young people who have experienced homelessness. We believe we will be most effective in our efforts if young people's ideas and voices are involved.

The Mockingbird Society's Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH) gives young people who have experienced homelessness a chance to speak up, tell their stories, and advocate for programs and services they think will improve the lives of young people who do not have a stable home. The Office of Homeless Youth meets quarterly with YAEH to engage young people as important advisors in its work.

On August 3, 2016, the Office of Homeless Youth and its Advisory Committee participated in the Youth Leadership Summit to hear proposals directly from youth advocates. The Youth Leadership Summit is an annual event that is in its 11th year. It has previously involved presentations by the Mockingbird Youth Network (MYN), the State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care. The MYN is a powerful statewide coalition of young people who have experienced the child-welfare system first-hand and want to share their stories so tomorrow's foster youth will not have to face the same challenges.

This is the first year that YAEH and the Office of Homeless Youth have participated in this event, providing a valuable platform for young people to present their recommendations on ending youth homelessness and raise awareness of the intersections between experiences with foster care and homelessness. The recommendations of the youth advocates are included throughout this report. A summary of the 2016 Youth Advocacy Proposals can be found in Appendix X.

Washington Coalition of Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA)

The Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA) is a partnership of over 40 organizations dedicated to improving the lives of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. Together, WACHYA speaks with one voice to elected leaders across Washington state, raising awareness for homeless youth issues and urging support for much needed reforms.

In June of 2016, WACHYA hosted a convening of its members to identify recommendations and set priorities to address youth homelessness. The coalition utilized the same framework as this plan to align the recommendations with the OHY planning process. Issues identified as priorities by WACHYA are included in this report.

State Agencies

During the course of the plan development, OHY consulted with staff from other state agencies to receive input on recommendations. Agencies that were engaged include Juvenile Rehabilitative Administration, Employment Security Department, and Children's Administration. While these interactions provided valuable input, a formal and thorough process to include state agencies in the development of this report was absent. Additionally, relevant state agencies other than those listed above were not involved.

The recommendations in this report provide an important roadmap and starting point for further action and development. Relevant state departments and agencies should be engaged as partners in refining or advancing strategies.

A recommendation included in this report is the establishment of an interagency workgroup focused on creating a shared agenda to prevent and end youth homelessness. A platform of this kind would foster much-needed system-wide participation.

A Way Home Washington

A Way Home Washington is a movement that brings together diverse voices from across the state to raise awareness and build partnerships to end youth homelessness.

To support the work of the Office of Homeless Youth and strengthen knowledge in the field, A Way Home Washington commissioned a comprehensive report, “Youth Homelessness in Washington, Landscape Scan,” Courtney Noble, August 2016. This resource played an important role in the development of the Office of Homeless Youth report and continues to shape the thinking of the OHY. The A Way Home Washington report offers up recommendations and includes a spotlight on model practices throughout the state. The OHY report draws heavily on the information in the A Way Home Washington report and is reflected throughout these pages.

VI. SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

This plan initiates a strategic approach to prevent and end youth homelessness in Washington state. It defines the results we are aiming for, the strategies to achieve them, and the outcome measures to tell us if it’s working. The recommendations serve as a roadmap for the Governor, Legislature, and state leaders.

Housing is a fundamental component of stability for a young person, yet housing alone will not support the transition to a healthy, productive adulthood. A more holistic and coordinated approach is needed to provide young people with the educational, emotional, and safety supports to develop into healthy adulthood.

This plan outlines strategies across a broad framework to address youth homelessness. As prescribed by the *Homeless Youth Act*, it addresses the following five key components, which dovetail with the [Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness](#) :

1. **Stable Housing** - Every youth has a safe and healthy place to sleep at night.
2. **Family Reconciliation** - Families are reunited when safe and appropriate.
3. **Permanent Connections** - Youth have opportunities to establish positive, healthy relationships with adults.
4. **Education and Employment** - Youth have opportunities to advance in their education or training and obtain employment.
5. **Social and Emotional Well-Being** - Youth have access to behavioral and physical health care; services nurture each youth's individual strengths and abilities.

While the Office of Homeless Youth serves as the strategic director and system-level owner for addressing youth homelessness, this plan touches on the policy, practice and funding changes needed from all corners of state government. Success in these efforts will require shared leadership and action from multiple public systems such as child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and behavioral health.

What does it mean to end youth homelessness?

This plan outlines the strategies necessary to ensure that no young person has to spend a single night without a safe and stable place to call home. Preventing homelessness is essential to this effort. Multiple strategies confront the risk factors and pathways that lead to homelessness; however, this plan does not propose to eradicate all of the underlying factors that may lead to homelessness, such as family conflict, poverty, or mental illness. Rather, the strategies are aimed at providing both interventions to families

and youth who are at risk of experiencing homelessness as well as a response system for those currently experiencing homelessness. We anticipate the need for an ongoing community response system to intervene when family conflict occurs, when a youth runs away or is rejected from their home, or experiences any kind of housing instability.

VII. CAUSES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Until recently, there have been few sources of information on the demographics and data regarding homeless youth in Washington state. A surge in commitment to understanding and solving youth homelessness has brought about new research and data. Supported by the Raikes Foundation, [A Way Home Washington](#) commissioned a report to help better understand what we know about the issue of youth homelessness in Washington State. The report outlines current capacity, as well as assets and gaps in policy, program, and practices. Unless otherwise noted, Washington state-specific data in this section is derived from that report, “Youth Homelessness in Washington, Landscape Scan,” Prepared for A Way Home Washington and the Washington State Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection, Courtney Noble, August 2016.

There are homeless youth in every community in Washington state

Homelessness is a problem facing young people across the state (see map). Nearly 13,000 youth age 12 through 24 experience homelessness on their own over the course of a year, enough to fill 260 school buses.

Over 5,500 *unaccompanied youth* in our public K-12 schools experience homelessness. And on a given night, more than 1,300 young people can be found sleeping on the streets, in shelters, or in other unstable situations.¹

Many more youth experience homelessness but go unaccounted for because they hide their homelessness or never access a public system.

These young people can be found in every area of the state. While the majority reside in more populated areas of the state—King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Spokane, Yakima and Thurston Counties—youth in smaller regions may be at greater risk. Benton-Franklin, Okanogan, Skagit, and Clallam counties have higher rates of high school disengagement, adolescent pregnancy, and juvenile arrests—risk factors associated with homelessness.

GRAPHIC:

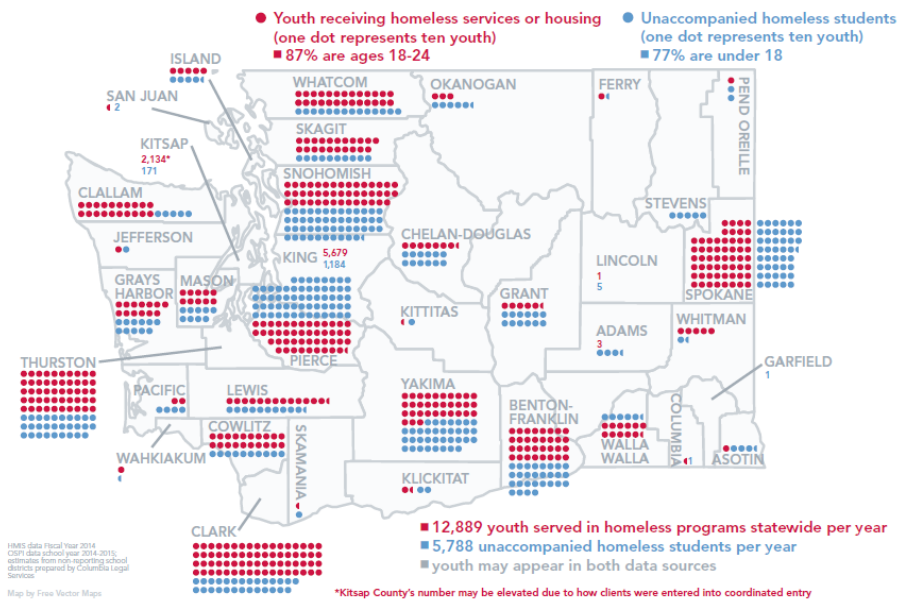
- Youth experiencing homelessness over the course of a year- **12,889**²
- Unaccompanied homeless youth in schools -**5,788**³
- Homeless youth on a single night- **1,341**⁴

¹ Young people may appear in multiple data sources

² Number of unaccompanied homeless youth ages XXXXX counted through HMIS, 2013-2014.

³ Analysis of OSPI data conducted by Columbia Legal Services, 2014-15 school year

⁴ Number of unaccompanied youth under age 25 counted on one night in January, “The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress,” November, 2015.



Family conflict is a major driver of youth homelessness

Contrary to stereotypes, most young people do not choose homelessness but are forced into it because home is not a safe place to be. Family dysfunction, rejection, and conflict are common experiences that drive youth from their home before they reach adulthood. This can include abuse, neglect, a parent's drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, as well as rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity. Ninety percent of youth accessing shelter claim that they experienced conflict at home.⁵

Youth of color and those who identify as LGBTQ are at greater risk of homelessness

Youth of color experience homelessness at much higher rates than the rest of the youth population. In Washington state, Black youth make up 24 percent of youth accessing housing services, yet only make up six percent of the state's population. They are three times more likely to experience homelessness than their peers.

In rural areas, American Indian youth are over-represented among homeless youth. In Yakima County, American Indian youth represent 10 percent of youth accessing services, but only five percent of the population.

While we lack adequate state-level data on homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth (LGBTQ), national research indicates that up to 40 percent of all homeless youth identifies as

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011. Washington DC: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

LGBTQ.⁶ This figure is especially startling given that three to five percent of the US population identifies as LGBTQ.

The data highlight a need to address root causes of homelessness for youth at greater risk, as well as the need to target interventions and provide services that are accessible and responsive to the unique needs of youth marginalized due to their race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

Many youth experience homelessness after exiting a public system

There is a strong intersection between youth who experience homelessness and those who have had some form of institutional placement—in foster care, the juvenile justice system, or a substance abuse or mental health treatment facility.

There is a strong link between youth homelessness and our child welfare system. In a national study, 51 percent of homeless youth between the ages of 14 and 21 reported involvement in foster care.⁷ Once youth are no longer eligible for foster care upon aging out, they often struggle to maintain stability due to a lack of job experience, financial support, and the skills to live independently. Of youth who aged out of foster care at age 18 in State Fiscal Year 2011 or 2012, approximately 1 in 4 experienced homelessness.⁸

Exiting a juvenile justice system is a vulnerable time that can pose an increased risk of homelessness for young people. Youth who have spent time in county detention or jail, a state institution, or a residential facility may find that upon release, they lack support from family, are inhibited from obtaining employment and housing due to criminal records, and don't have the financial support to live on their own. Twenty-six percent of youth who exited a state institution or residential facility in State Fiscal Year 2010 or 2011 experienced homelessness.⁹

While we do not have statewide data on youth released from county juvenile detention centers, there is strong evidence to suggest that the number of youth exiting detention into homelessness is significant. In Pierce County in 2014, parents refused to pick up over 400 youth exiting detention and, for another 146, no parent could be located.¹⁰

Youth released from the juvenile justice system into homelessness have higher recidivism rates and are at greater risk of mental illness, substance abuse, or poor health status.¹¹

Less is known about the circumstances of youth who experience homelessness after exiting chemical dependency treatment, but the data is alarming. Nearly *half* of the clients discharged from a residential chemical dependency treatment facility experienced homelessness within 12 months. In a study of

⁶ Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). Street Outreach Program: Data Collection Project Executive Summary.

⁸ Shah, Melissa, et al. Youth at Risk of Homelessness (RDA Report 7.106), 2015. Among the 1,213 youth in the study who aged out of foster care, 335 experienced homelessness (broadly defined) at some point over the next 12 months. The study period is prior to full implementation of Extended Foster Care.

⁹ Shah, Melissa, et al. Impact of Homelessness on Youth Recently Released from Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities (RDA Report 11.191), 2013. Among the 962 individuals in the study population, 253 were found to have an indication of homelessness at some point in the 12-month follow-up period.

¹⁰ Columbia Legal Services, "Falling Through the Gaps, How a Stay in Detention Can Lead to Youth Homelessness," December 2015.

¹¹ Ibid.

individuals exiting institutions and out-of-home care, those leaving a chemical dependency treatment facility were more likely than any other group to experience homelessness.¹²

[Graphic/ pull-out]

Youth experiencing homelessness within 12 months after exiting a public system:

~ 1,488 youth exiting a **chemical dependency treatment** facility (48% of clients discharged)

~ 168 youth aging out of **foster care** (28% of youth aging out)

~ 125 youth exiting a **state juvenile rehabilitation** institution or residential program (26% of youth exiting)

Economic instability contributes to youth homelessness

For some unaccompanied youth, the experience of homelessness began while they were with their family. A family's financial situation can put stable housing out of reach, resulting in homelessness. Lack of affordable housing, unemployment, and jobs that don't pay enough are just some of the barriers to housing faced by families. Youth may detach from their family to lessen the financial burden or become separated because many shelters do not allow older youth.

Risk factors are well-documented

In addition to the causes and characteristics mentioned above, research by DSHS' Research and Data Analysis Division identified the factors that increase the chances a youth aging out of foster care will experience homelessness.

Five factors that most increase the risk of experiencing homelessness are¹³:

- 1 Youth is a parent
- 2 Homeless or receiving housing assistance in prior year
- 3 Youth is African American
- 4 Four or more congregate foster care placements
- 5 Four or more school moves in the prior three years

In addition, a failed adoption is highly predictive of homelessness.¹⁴ These important insights should be applied broadly to identify youth at risk of homelessness in other systems—schools, juvenile justice, child welfare, treatment facilities.

Given the research, we have ample information on the factors that can put a young person at risk of experiencing homelessness. This information can be used to develop assessment tools that identify youth with risk factors and target interventions to prevent youth from experiencing homelessness.

¹² Shah, Melissa, et al. The Housing Status of Individuals Leaving Institutions and Out-of-Home Care (RDA Report 11.200), 2013.

¹³ Shah, Melissa, et al. Youth at Risk of Homelessness (RDA Report 7.106), 2015.

¹⁴ Ibid. Those with a failed adoption were over three times as likely to experience homelessness; however, the prevalence is extremely low because it requires a reentry into foster care after the adoption. Advocates report that there are a meaningful number of youth whose adoptions fail but they do not reenter care.

VIII. GAPS

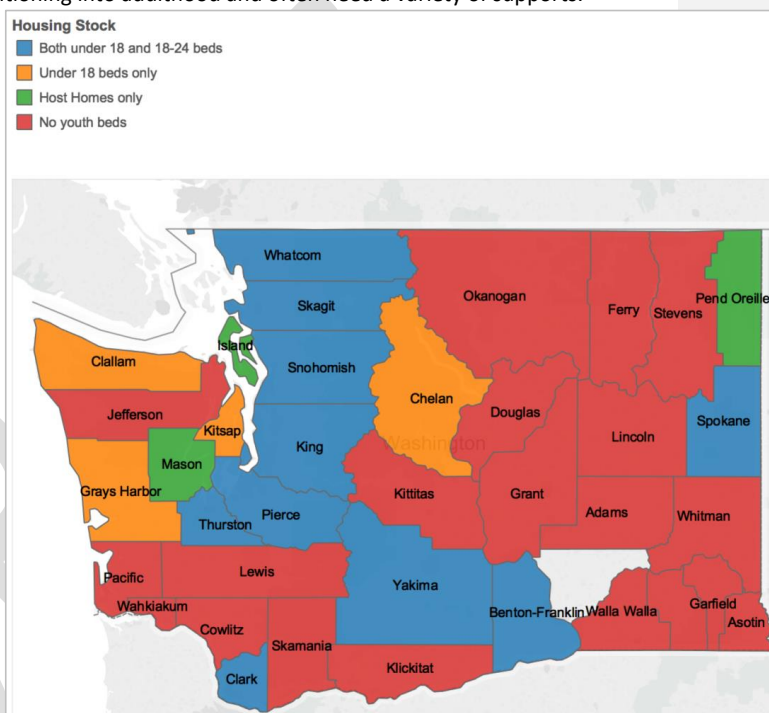
Shortage of shelters and housing for homeless youth

While there are homeless youth in all regions of the state, the resources to help them are not. There are no beds for homeless youth in over half of the 39 counties in Washington state (see map).

A significant number of homeless youth (over 9,000) are between the ages of 18 and 24, yet the state spends very little on housing tailored to this population. Forty-four percent of young adults are served in the adult homeless system.¹⁵ However, the adult system is not equipped to meet the developmental needs of young adults who are transitioning into adulthood and often need a variety of supports.

In the 2016 Supplemental Budget, the legislature provided \$1.2 million to serve homeless young adults—the first time state dollars have been dedicated specifically to serving this population. Through this funding, young adults in 8 communities will have access to housing support in the form of emergency shelter or rental assistance. This is a small but important start to meeting the need.

Rural communities are especially in need of resources. A challenge for these regions is finding the capacity to secure and maintain a facility and make it accessible to youth who are spread out over many miles. Host homes and other home-based housing stand out as potential models that may fit the needs of smaller communities and rural areas.



Gaps limit prevention and pathways out of homelessness for youth

There are common pathways into homelessness for youth and a variety of options that serve as pathways out of homelessness. We can prevent youth from ending up on a path into homelessness and we can more easily get them out, but in order to do so, we need to address significant gaps in our system.

¹⁵ Noble, Courtney, "Youth Homelessness in Washington, Landscape Scan," Prepared for A Way Home Washington and the Washington State Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection, June 2016.

Comment [KJ1]:

GAPS

Upstream prevention

Crisis intervention, respite, family counseling and reconciliation, access to mental health services

Assist families in accessing public benefits, obtaining stable housing

Risk assessment & referral; transition planning from public systems of care

Diversion from juvenile justice and child welfare

Absence of emergency shelter in many communities; lack of intervention services, schools unable to intervene early, underfunded reconciliation services

Lack of access to supports, lack of affordable housing

No systematic assessment & referral process or comprehensive transition planning, insufficient early warning and referral process in schools

Limited alternatives to detention and supports to prevent removal of youth from home; punitive status offense laws

Common paths INTO homelessness for youth

Family conflict or dysfunction

Family economic instability

Exit from behavioral health treatment

Exit from child welfare

Exit from Juvenile Justice

GAPS

Lack of family reconciliation services; reconciliation not always appropriate or possible

Lack of information for parent to understand options, advocacy to make it happen, support for the other home.

Youth not eligible for foster care, not enough placements, limited options for older adolescents

Homeless youth programs not available consistently statewide; legal barriers to receiving support

Extended Foster Care not available to all youth; enrollment limitations prevent full access

Lack of rental assistance/ congregate housing to support transition to independent living; lack of services to teach independent living skills

Pathways OUT of homelessness for youth

Under 18

Youth returns home

Youth goes to another home (including relative) with parental consent

Youth goes to another home (including relative) by court order¹

Youth goes to into foster care

Youth is supported through homeless youth programs

Over 18

Extended Foster Care

Independent Living

1. Court orders could include: non-parental custody order, change in parenting plan, protection order, or guardianship.

IX. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

VISION

Every family and youth in Washington State has the individualized support they need so that no young person has to spend a single night without a safe and stable home. Every community has services that are equitable, accessible, effective, responsive, and coordinated.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Advance approaches that are data-driven and evidence-based
- Identify and eliminate gaps in services and funding
- Involve youth voice
- Value experiences of youth and families
- Promote accountability in all policies and programs
- Be responsive to wherever a young person is at in their experience of homelessness
- Be locally-focused and support the ability of youth to remain in their community
- Recognize that not all parents reject their kids and that not all kids can return home safely
- Promote services that are youth-centered and individualized
- Be culturally responsive and reflect the needs of local communities
- Foster coordination between funding and systems
- Support an approach that is hopeful and believes in possibility

X. Data Dashboard

In order to be effective in preventing and ending youth homelessness, we must know where things currently stand and be able to measure our progress along the way. This data dashboard provides system-wide benchmarks to tell us if our efforts are moving the needle in the right direction. These outcome measures will be updated on an annual basis and will help us be data-driven in our decisions and approaches. In addition to these high-level data indicators, additional data measures can be found for each goal area in section C.

[data dashboard- to be added]

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan contains comprehensive information and recommendations to prevent and end youth homelessness. The recommendations are organized in the following way:

1. **Near-term Action Agenda:** X# areas of highest impact and immediate need that the state should undertake immediately.
2. **Cross-Cutting Approaches:** Six approaches that need to be part of any issue-specific strategy.
3. **Strategies by goal:** Sixteen strategies, organized by the five components the Legislature identified as necessary in order to reduce and prevent youth homelessness.

A. NEAR-TERM ACTION AGENDA

1. Near-Term Action:

ENSURE THAT YOUTH EXITING PUBLIC SYSTEMS HAVE A SAFE, STABLE PLACE TO GO

A common pathway into homelessness occurs when youth exit a public system without a stable home. In a single year, more than 1,700 youth experienced homelessness after aging out of foster care, exiting a juvenile justice facility, or leaving a chemical dependency treatment facility. Strategies to ensure youth have a safe and stable place to go upon leaving a public system include:

- a. Establish an **interagency workgroup** or **Governor's Cabinet on Youth Homelessness** with representatives from agencies such as Children's Administration, Juvenile Rehabilitative Administration, OSPI, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Employment Security Department, etc. The work group would establish a set of shared goals and accountability across state government to prevent and end youth homelessness. (D)
- b. Implement a **risk assessment and referral process** for youth in public systems of care. Institute a standardized assessment tool to identify youth at risk of homelessness and a streamlined process to connect them to services. (D)
- c. Require **transition plans** for youth under the care of public systems that include a housing plan, an education/employment plan with meaningful steps for achieving goals, contacts for the youth for relatives and other individuals in the community who have been identified as adult resources for the youth, referrals for services such as counseling, and a completed independence check-list (addressing issues such as a clean credit report, legal documents in-hand, including identification and birth certificate, and a bank account has been established). (D)
- d. Expand options to enroll in **Extended Foster Care (EFC)**. Allow participants to opt-in and out of EFC any time up to age 21, and allow youth to qualify if they were formerly a state dependent but not a dependent at the time of enrollment. [WACHYA recommendation] (L)
- e. **Target outreach efforts** to identify system-involved youth who are at risk of homelessness and formalize connections between youth service providers and public systems. (P)

2. Near-Term Action:

INVEST IN CRISIS INTERVENTION AND DIVERSION

Conflict within families and involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice create instability that can often lead to homelessness for young people. Early interventions help families remain together

Legend:

\$- Funding solution. Primary need is funding. Policies and practices are in place, but additional resources are needed to expand capacity.

L- Policy solution. A change in law is required, or the outcome can best be achieved through legislative directive.

P- Practice solution. Requires a change in the way services are delivered or the way agencies operate. Does not require a change in law.

D- Does not require a change in law, but **legislative directive** may be needed to ensure implementation.

in healthy relationship and tackle underlying causes of homelessness. Supportive interventions include:

- a. Provide **crisis intervention services** to families in conflict. Establish a **crisis hotline and support groups** for families in conflict to address underlying issues and keep youth off the streets. (\$,P)
- b. Utilize **Crisis Residential Centers** to serve families who need respite and support to reconcile. (P)
- c. Improve and expand **family reconciliation services** [Tacoma Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter Recommendation]. An evaluation of the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of the Family Reconciliation Services program is warranted to ensure we are providing adequate services to families in crisis. Other models of delivering reconciliation services should be considered, such as having a licensed family therapist on staff or on contract with youth service providers so that services are more directly available. Reconciliation services should include a mental health evaluation as part of the assessment of needs, and be proficient in helping youth with unique needs reconcile with family. (\$,L,P)
- d. Expand **diversion interventions** to prevent youth from entering juvenile detention for status offenses. Community truancy boards and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative create alternative interventions for youth, but access is limited. [Tacoma Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter Recommendation] (\$,L,P)
- e. **Reform status offense laws** to reduce the number of youth detained for actions like violating curfew and running away. [Youth Advocates Recommendation] (L)

3. Near-Term Action:

LEVERAGE THE FEDERAL MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT TO IMPROVE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

The role of education and employment are instrumental in giving young people the skills they will need to be successful as adults. Connection to school and work also provides stability, valuable exposure to healthy adult relationships, and the chance for young people to discover their own abilities and develop a positive sense of self. The re-authorization of the federal Mc-Kinney-Vento Act, known as "Every Student Succeeds Act", strengthens requirements for schools to identify homeless students and provide the support they need to attend school, complete their high school education, and pursue higher education. Washington state can leverage this federal opportunity to prevent and end youth homelessness through the following strategies:

- a. Designate a trained **homeless student liaison in every K-12 public school** that can build relationships with young people, identify homeless students, connect them with services, and create individualized support plans for their educational success. [Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness Recommendation] (\$,L)
- b. Expand housing options available through the **Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)** to connect older youth and unaccompanied youth with services and housing (such as host homes). (\$,P)
- c. Increase **work-based learning and training** opportunities for youth. Expand YouthWorks to strengthen connections between schools, employers, service providers, and the workforce system to help more youth gain job experience. A portion of funding should be targeted to serve unaccompanied homeless youth. (\$)

B. CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

Cross-cutting strategies represent a set of core components to a successful community response system to prevent and end youth homelessness. Implementation of any recommendation within this report should consider these elements.

1. Cross-Cutting Approach:

EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

Access to services and positive outcomes should not differ depending on a young person's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or geography. Any policy, funding, or practice change should be considered through an equity lens. Specific strategies to ensure equitable outcomes include:

- Increase the **cultural competency** of state agencies and service providers in responding to homelessness. (D)
- Adopt an **equity impact tool** to evaluate policy and fiscal proposals. (L)
- Allocate **designated funding** for services and interventions targeted to LGBTQ youth and youth of color. (\$,L)
- Adopt and implement a set of protocols and best practices for **serving youth of color and LGBTQ youth**. Look to models currently being developed: The Center for Children and Youth Justice is developing protocols to guide youth-serving professionals to better identify, engage, and serve LGBTQ youth. The Northwest Youth Network is conducting an assessment on the needs of youth of color to understand how best to serve the population. (P)
- **Expand housing and services to all counties of the state** so that youth do not have to leave their own community to get help. Develop a shelter and crisis intervention model for rural communities who don't have the capacity to obtain and staff a facility. (P)
- Provide **technical assistance** to smaller communities to equip them with the skills and resources needed to effectively serve homeless youth in their community. (\$)

2. Cross-Cutting Approach:

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Recommendations contained throughout this report should be viewed as building upon the foundation of services and programs that currently exist. It's important to **maintain existing levels of funding** to achieve consistency and stability for who youth who rely on these services.

Increasing the sustainability and effectiveness of funding can also be supported by the following:

- Move OHY funding to **Commerce's base budget**, rather than as individual provisos with funding limited to specific programs. This achieves predictability and stability in funding year over year, and allows for flexibility in allocating funds to best meet emerging needs. (L)
- Increase funding for existing homeless youth programs to implement incentive payments for providers who exceed performance standards and providers who serve higher-needs youth such as those who struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, or have criminal records.
- **Remove the requirement that 45 percent** of funding from the Home Security Fund be spent on rental or leasing payments to for-profit entities. This is especially difficult to achieve for funding that serves homeless youth, much of which is spent on emergency shelter and crisis intervention services. (L)

- Renew the **document recording fee** without adding a future sunset date. The document recording fee is the state's most significant funding tool to prevent and end homelessness. [WACHYA recommendation] (L)

3. Cross-Cutting Approach:

DATA QUALITY

Data collection and quality is essential to our ability to measure outcomes, understand causes and characteristics of youth homelessness, identify gaps in services, and target resources. Many of the recommendations contained in this report rely upon access to data through the following strategies:

- Allow minors to provide **written consent** to share their personally identifying information in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The absence of personally identifying information leads to duplication in the data and prevents both longitudinal data analysis as well as integration with other data systems. This limits the OHY's ability to accurately measure performance and track outcomes. [WACHYA recommendation] (L)
- Develop **performance measures** for homeless youth programs and incorporate into funding contracts. (P)
- Improve access to **county detention data** to understand the prevalence of youth discharged from detention into homelessness. (L)
- Explore real-time **data sharing options** for youth involved in the juvenile justice, child welfare, and education systems to increase case coordination. This could include joint assessment and services planning for cross-over youth.¹⁶ (\$,L)
- Standardize and publish an **annual statewide count** of unaccompanied homeless youth. (P)
- Publish comprehensive OSPI **data on homeless students** annually, rather than biannually, and allow integration of homeless student data with HMIS and the Integrated Client Database at DSHS to allow for comprehensive analysis on homeless youth. (D)

4. Cross-Cutting Approach:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A strong, skilled, and supported workforce is needed to provide the best care, continuity, and services for homeless youth. Enhancements to services and supports for homeless youth should ensure that the proper workforce is in place to carry out the work. Strategies that support a healthy workforce include:

- Increase **wages, salaries, and benefits** of direct service staff to meet regional costs-of-living and be competitive with other professions. Increased state funding and payment rates to youth-service providers is needed to accomplish this. (\$)
- Provide **training to staff** on best practices of care including harm reduction, trauma informed care, and positive youth development. (P)
- Increase the number of **behavioral health specialists** trained to work with adolescents. (\$)

5. Cross-Cutting Approach:

SHARED STATEWIDE GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Achieving the vision that all youth and young adults have a safe, stable place to call home will require shared goals and accountability across state systems. Implementation of any strategy in this report

¹⁶ Recommendation from "Youth Homelessness in Washington, Landscape Scan," Prepared for A Way Home Washington and the Washington State Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection, Courtney Noble, June 2016.

should ensure that the proper public systems are engaged. Strategies to strengthen commitment and collaboration among state partners include:

- Centralize the strategy and funding to end youth homelessness within the OHY and provide authority and **funding to the OHY to grant resources to other public entities** to prevent exits to homelessness. (\$)
- **Adopt and measure a shared goal** in Results Washington that no state system discharge youth into homelessness. (P)
- Establish a **Governor's Cabinet on Youth Homelessness** or **Interagency work group** to promote accountability, improve efficiency, and establish strategic collaboration in the effort to end youth homelessness across state government. (D)
- Use a wrap-around and **integrated service delivery system** that includes case managers across the different domains of behavioral health, education, housing, and employment. (D)

6. Cross-Cutting Approach:

REMOVE BARRIERS TO SERVICES

Even when housing, jobs, and services are available, young people often face barriers to accessing them. As progress is made to increase housing and services available to young people, strategies should be in place to remove barriers and safeguard access to those services: Strategies to remove barriers that stand in the way of young people getting the support they need include:

- Address barriers to employment and housing by youth with **criminal records** (L,P)
- Make **legal advocacy services** available to youth and families so they can navigate their options and have an advocate in the courtroom. (\$)
- Help young people **obtain documentation**, such as SSN, birth certificates, and state IDs, which are necessary to obtaining employment and housing. (P)
- Provide **navigators** to help youth access services across a variety of systems such as housing, education, employment, and health care. (\$,D)

C. STRATEGIES BY GOAL

STABLE HOUSING

A safe and stable place to call home provides the foundation young people need to succeed in school, maintain good health, and develop socially and emotionally. A safe place should be readily available during crisis so that no young person has to spend a single night on the street. Homelessness can and should be prevented for youth who are known to be at risk, particularly those exiting public systems such as foster care or juvenile justice.

Results:

HOMELESS YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS HAVE A SAFE & STABLE PLACE TO SLEEP EACH NIGHT UNTIL PERMANENCY CAN BE REACHED.

NO YOUTH DISCHARGED FROM A PUBLIC SYSTEM OF CARE WILL BE DISCHARGED INTO HOMELESSNESS

Indicators:

- ↑ Exits to safe and stable housing
- ↓ Number of new homeless
- ↓ Returns to homelessness
- ↓ Length of time in program
- ↓ Discharged to the street from public systems¹⁷
- ↓ Count of unsheltered

Strategies:

1. Stable Housing Strategy:

EXPAND OUTREACH EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE HOMELESS YOUTH

- Target outreach efforts to youth in schools, juvenile justice facilities, safe place sites, rural areas and to subpopulations such as trafficked youth, LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and pregnant or parenting youth. (P)
- Expand availability of Street Youth Services and extend eligibility to age 24. (L)

2. Stable Housing Strategy:

EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS THAT MEET THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

- Support an emergency housing model for rural communities. Promising models include Host Homes or other home-based housing. (\$, L)
- Promote low barrier shelter practices that make services more accessible to the hardest to reach youth. This includes allowing access to youth who may otherwise be turned away due to struggles with mental illness, drug or alcohol use, criminal backgrounds, or other factors. (P)
- Increase funding for the Young Adult Housing Program, which provides transitional housing and rental assistance to young adults age 18-24. [WACHYA recommendation] (\$)
- Prohibit discrimination against renters based on their source of income or youth status. [WACHYA recommendation] (L)
- Expand eligibility for existing programs that are limited to foster youth, to serve the broader population of homeless youth. This could include the Responsible Living Skills Program, Independent Living, and Extended Foster Care. Alternatively, the state could create state-only funded programs that mirror these models. (\$,L)
- Develop housing designed for youth with unique needs such as homeless youth who are parenting, youth who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and LGBTQ youth. (\$, P)
- Improve licensing options and standards. Assess whether current licensing requirements and standards used for shelters and extended foster care placements are appropriate and overseen by the appropriate body. (P)

¹⁷ The OHY is working with DSHS's Research and Data Analysis division to measure this outcome. Data is expected to be available in 2017.

3. *Stable Housing Strategy:*

PREVENT EXITS TO HOMELESSNESS FOR YOUTH INVOLVED IN PUBLIC SYSTEMS

- Implement a risk assessment and referral process for youth in public systems of care. Institute a standardized assessment tool to identify youth at risk of homelessness and a streamlined process to connect them to services. (D)
- Require transition plans for youth that include a housing plan, an education and employment plan with meaningful steps for achieving goals, contacts for the youth for relatives and other individuals in the community who have been identified as adult resources for the youth, and a completed independence check-list (addressing issues such as a clean credit report, legal documents in-hand, including identification and birth certificate, and a bank account has been established). (D)
- Require that courts not dismiss a dependency without a transition plan that identifies definitive stable housing. (L)
- Evaluate Extended Foster Care to determine if the program is accessible and working as intended for youth currently eligible. Expand options to enroll in EFC by allowing participants to opt-in and out any time up to age 21, and allow youth to qualify if they were formerly a state dependent but not a dependent at the time of enrollment. [WACHYA recommendation] (\$, L)

FAMILY RECONCILIATION

Youth under the age of 18 need the care and protection of responsible adults. When it is safe and appropriate to do so, the ideal outcome is to mend relationships with family so that youth can remain home and maintain healthy adult relationships. When family reunification is not possible, we must ensure that another guardian or system takes on responsibility for the safety and well-being of youth.

Results:

HOMELESS YOUTH ARE REUNIFIED WITH FAMILY WHEN SAFE AND APPROPRIATE

YOUTH WHO CANNOT RETURN HOME ARE PROVIDED SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND STABLE HOUSING

Indicators:

↑ Reunited with family

Strategies:

These strategies apply to minor youth under age 18

1. Family Reconciliation Strategy:

- **IMPROVE AND EXPAND FAMILY RECONCILIATION SERVICES TO SUPPORT YOUTH RETURNING HOME** Conduct an evaluation of the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness

of the Family Reconciliation Services program to ensure we are providing adequate services to families in crisis. (\$,L)

- Examine alternative models of family reconciliation and methods of delivering services, such as building the capacity of youth service providers to have a licensed family therapist on staff or on contract so that services are more directly available and integrated. (L)
- Include a mental health evaluation as part of reconciliation services. (P)
- Ensure reconciliation services are proficient in helping youth with unique needs reconcile with family, including LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and youth with developmental disabilities. (P)

2. Family Reconciliation Strategy:

PROVIDE CRISIS INTERVENTION AND DIVERSION SERVICES TO FAMILIES AND YOUTH

- Support families by assisting them in accessing and applying for other public benefits such as food stamps, TANF, disability, SSI, physical and behavioral health, or other benefits. (\$,P)
- Increase funding and support services that are available to family/kin and other natural supports that would result in youth being able to remain housed with their family/kin/natural supports. (\$, P)
- Establish a crisis hotline and support groups for families in conflict to address underlying issues and keep youth off the streets. (\$, P)
- Utilize Crisis Residential Centers to serve families who need respite and support services to reconcile. (P)
- Expand diversion interventions to prevent youth from entering juvenile detention for status offenses. Community truancy boards and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative create alternative interventions for youth, but access is limited. (\$,L,P)
- Reform status offense laws to reduce the number of youth detained for actions like violating curfew and running away. (L)

Tacoma Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter recommendation

Topic: Eliminating Youth Detention for Status Offenses and Expanding Family Reconciliation Services

The Tacoma Chapter wants to eliminate use of the Valid Court Order Exception in Washington state that allows juvenile detention for status offenses. In addition, the Chapter is advocating for funding to restore and expand the Family Reconciliation Services program to prevent juvenile detention and provide families with supportive alternatives. Status offenses only apply to youth under 18, and punish young people for actions like running away or breaking curfew. Washington detains youth for status offenses more than any other state in the country. Studies have found that juvenile detention usually increases the severity of problem behaviors and can increase the chances that the youth will be detained or incarcerated in the future. Juvenile detention can also worsen mental illness and put youth at greater risk for self-harm. By prioritizing early intervention and reconciliation, and eliminating the practice of detaining minors for status offenses, the state could save money and ensure better outcomes for at-risk youth and their families.

3. Family Reconciliation Strategy:

STRENGTHEN SUPPORTS FOR OLDER ADOLESCENTS

- Establish an adequate public system response to meet the specific needs of older minor youth who cannot return home and are deemed not appropriate for foster care. (\$,L,P)

- Strengthen the role of the child welfare system to support older minors (age 15-17) who are homeless without parental care. (\$,L,P)
- Provide options and tools for youth who are denied of services through the child protective system. (L,P)
- Provide flexible foster care options for 17 year olds that allows for more independence, such as Extended Foster Care. (L)
- Address the foster parent crisis. Increase resources for recruitment and retention of foster care homes and increase overall foster care placements. Implement the Mockingbird Family Model to support and retain caregivers. [Everett Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter recommendation] (\$)

PERMANENT CONNECTIONS

It is often said that just one caring adult can change the life of a young person. Positive, healthy connections with adults help young people get the guidance and support they need to navigate adolescence and serve as models for developing healthy relationships with others. These connections can come from mentors, teachers, employers, extended family, and others who have a regular presence in the life of a young person.

Result:

HOMELESS YOUTH HAVE HEALTHY, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS

Indicators:

- ↑ Have a consistent case manager until stable housing/ independence is achieved¹⁸
- ↑ Can identify an adult they have a positive, healthy relationship with¹⁹

Strategies:

1. *Permanent Connections Strategy:*

PROMOTE HEALTHY ADULT CONNECTIONS

- Promote contacts with extended family, family friends, and family of choice. (P)
- Encourage, coordinate, and provide financial support for pro-social activities (i.e. service learning opportunities, educational workshops, trainings, etc.). (P)
- Conduct assessments with youth that identify core strengths, skills, hobbies, and interests, and then match youth up with community mentors and opportunities in those interest areas. Match youth with existing mentorship/ positive development organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Boys and Girls Clubs.(P)

2. *Permanent Connections Strategy:*

INCREASE CONTINUITY OF CASE MANAGEMENT

¹⁸ Data for this measure will be collected via a client survey that is currently under development

¹⁹ Ibid.

- Facilitate consistency of case managers as youth access multiple services. Promote stability by assigning a single case manager per youth. (\$,L,P)

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

A quality education and employment experience is often the ticket to a better life. Keeping youth connected to school and providing opportunities to gain needed skills helps young people become prepared to live independently and self-sufficiently when they become adults.

EDUCATION

Results:

HOMELESS STUDENTS SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY & HAVE THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO BECOME INDEPENDENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT

Indicators:

- ↑ Enrolled and attending school
- ↑ High school graduation rates²⁰
- ↑ Academic testing scores²¹
- ↓ Absenteeism, expulsions, suspensions, truancy²²
- ↑ Life skills

Strategies:

1. Education Strategy:

IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

- Designate a trained **homeless student liaison in every K-12 public school** that can build relationships with young people, identify homeless students, connect them with services, and create individualized support plans for their educational success. *[Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness Recommendation]* (\$,L)
- Expand housing options available through the **Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)** to connect older youth and unaccompanied youth with services and housing (such as host homes). (\$,P)
- Expand housing options available through the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) to connect unaccompanied youth with housing (host homes for example). (\$, P)
- Encourage adoption of trauma-informed discipline in high schools with elevated rates of homelessness and disproportionality. (D)
- Require annual training of teachers and school administrators on identifying and referring homeless students. (D)

²⁰ Data for this measure will be reported biannually by OSPI beginning in 2017.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

- Utilize tools and assessments to identify youth who may be at risk of homelessness.(D)

Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness recommendation

Topic: Educational Supports for Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH) Chapter wants to improve high school graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness or housing instability by ensuring there is a trained point person in every school that can build relationships with young people, help identify homeless students, connect them with services, and create individualized support plans for their educational success. Furthermore, the Chapter proposes the state guarantee supplemental instruction and services to these students under the state's definition of basic education. Experts estimate there are over 8,800 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability in Washington's schools. These youths are more likely to fare worse on standardized tests, are disproportionately individuals of color, and are 240 percent more likely to drop out of school. Only 30 out of 295 school districts in Washington receive federal McKinney-Vento funding intended to meet the needs of homeless students, which YAEH members believe is insufficient. By providing funding for a point person in every school and prioritizing the needs of homeless students alongside other vulnerable student populations, the state can better provide youth the supports and tools they need to graduate at an equal rate with their stably housed peers.

2. Education Strategy:

SUPPORT HOMELESS STUDENTS IN ACCESSING AND SUCCEEDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Require higher education institutions to submit a plan to the WA Student Achievement Council on how to promote and support the admission and educational success of students experiencing homelessness. (L)
- Work with higher education institutions to develop a process to identify homeless students registered at their postsecondary institution, connect them to existing resources and track outcomes.²³
- Increase the role that colleges and service providers play to help homeless students apply for financial aid. (P)

3. Education Strategy:

HELP HOMELESS YOUTH TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD OBTAIN INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

- Incorporate an independent living skills curriculum into programs that serve youth and young adults. (P)
- Expand the Independent Living Program to serve homeless youth ages 15 through 21. (\$,L)

EMPLOYMENT

Result:

HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Indicators:

²³ Ibid.

- ↑ Employed
- ↑ Availability of work and training opportunities²⁴
- ↑ Improved economic self-sufficiency

Strategies:

1. **Employment Strategy:**

CONNECT YOUTH TO WORK-BASED LEARNING AND INTERNSHIPS THAT LEAD TO EMPLOYMENT

- Expand YouthWorks and dedicate a portion of funding to serve unaccompanied homeless youth. Through YouthWorks, the state's 12 Workforce Development Councils implement programs that bring industry together with schools and youth service organizations to improve education and employment outcomes for young people with low-incomes. YouthWorks provides opportunities for homeless youth to enroll in programs that combine education and training, employment and job placement, and housing support. (\$)

2. **Education Strategy:**

PROVIDE SUPPORTS THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOUTH TO GET AND KEEP A JOB

- Expand transportation resources so youth and young adults can job search and get back and forth to work. Make it easier for youth to obtain driver's licenses and permits. [*Olympia Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter recommendation*]. (\$,L,P)
- Increase collaboration between youth service providers, DOL, SSA, and DOH to help youth acquire legal documents required to establish eligibility to work in the United States. (P)

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Adolescence is an important time for youth to form their identity and learn to be an adult. Maintaining good health, physically and mentally, are important to this development. Social and emotional well-being come about from opportunities that help young people develop a sense of self-worth, practice decision-making, and learn how to communicate and work with others.

Results:

HOMELESS YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS ARE HEALTHY PHYSICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY

PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IDENTIFY, ENCOURAGE, AND NURTURE EACH YOUTH'S STRENGTHS AND ABILITIES AND DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO YOUTH-CENTERED PROGRAMMING.

Indicators:

- ↑ Have health insurance
- + Physical and mental health status

²⁴ Data for this measure will be collected via a client survey that is currently under development

↑ Opportunities for clients to participate in program planning and policy development²⁵

Strategies:

1. Social & Emotional Well-Being Strategy:

IMPROVE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

- Provide youth with access to a behavioral health specialist at any place where they are being served, including schools and along the homeless service continuum. Build the capacity of homeless youth providers to provide mental health services on-site (including during street outreach), either through mental-health professionals on-staff, or through enhanced partnerships with local behavioral health providers.²⁶ [WACHYA recommendation] (\$,L,P)
- Support continued treatment and a supportive environment for youth exiting treatment facilities. Group recovery housing such as Oxford Houses provide a supportive environment for youth to live clean and sober life. (\$)
- Determine barriers to creating a system of on-demand, developmentally appropriate detox treatment beds for youth. (\$,D)
- Ensure mental health services for youth throughout the state are trauma-informed, strengths based, culturally competent and use a positive youth development framework. (P)

2. Social & Emotional Well-Being Strategy:

IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

- Increase collaboration between homeless youth providers and Health Care Authority in-person assistors to help eligible youth sign up for health insurance, or train youth providers to become in person assistors within their agencies. (P)
- Help youth identify and establish relationships with primary care providers that can address their healthcare needs. (P)
- Provide access to sexual and reproductive health services including comprehensive sex education to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. [Spokane Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter recommendation]. (P)
- Continue support for the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver. (D)

3. Social & Emotional Well-Being Strategy:

SUPPORT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Build infrastructure to allow homeless and formerly homeless youth to provide input and leadership in systems reform and service programming. (P)
- Allow youth to be the architects of their future by providing case management tools, such as an “Individual Development Plan” for youth to identify their goals and for service providers to build a plan of support and services to help youth reach their goals. Use priority areas as the framework (stable housing; family reconciliation; permanent connections; education & employment, social & emotional well-being). (P)

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See page 15 of the A Way Home Washington report for details on integrating mental health and homeless services.

XII.

APPENDIX

a. Federal definitions of homelessness

Source: Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

[insert pdf chart]

b. Office of Homeless Youth overview

[insert pdf briefing paper]

[insert chart with providers and services]

c. Youth Advocate Recommendations

d. A Way Home Washington “Youth Homelessness in Washington” report