

**Office of Homeless Youth (OHY)**

Overview

Authorizing legislation:

*Second Substitute Senate Bill 5404, Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act of 2015 (RCW 43.330)*

Priority areas for addressing youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness:

* **Stable housing:** Every homeless youth should havea safe and healthy place to sleep each night until permanency can be reached. Every family in crisis should have appropriate support as they work to keep their children housed and safe. Every homeless youth discharged from a public system of care in our state will not be discharged into homelessness.
* **Family reconciliation**: All homeless youth should have access to services that support reunification with immediate family. When reunification is not possible, youth should be placed in the custody of DSHS.
* **Permanent connections:** Every homeless young adult should have opportunities to establish positive, healthy relationships with adults, including family members, employers, landlords, teachers, and community members.
* **Education & employment:** Every homeless young adult should have the opportunity and support they need to complete their high school education, pursue additional education and training, and access employment.
* **Social and emotional well-being:** Every homeless youth and young adult should have access to both behavioral health care and physical health care. Every state-funded program for homeless youth and young adults must demonstrate a commitment to youth-centered programming.

Measurable goals:

* Decrease the number of homeless YYA by identifying programs that address the initial causes of homelessness.
* Increase permanency rates among homeless youth by decreasing the lengths and occurrences of youth homelessness caused by a youth’s separation from family or a legal guardian.

Program Transfer:

Street Youth Services, HOPE Centers, and Crisis Residential Centers are transferred from Children’s Administration within the Department of Social and Health Services to the OHY.

Advisory Committee:

* An advisory committee shall be formed to provide guidance and recommendations to the OHY regarding funding, policy, and practice gaps within and among state programs.
* The committee is comprised of 12 members including: at least two legislators, at least two parent advocates, at least one representative from law enforcement, service providers, and other stakeholders.
* Committee members are appointed by the Governor with the exception of legislators.

Criminal Justice Training Program:

The OHY must establish a statewide training program on homeless youth for criminal justice personnel to include:

* + Identifying homeless youth
  + Laws governing intersection of law enforcement and homeless youth
  + Best practices for approaching and engaging homeless youth

Key dates:

* **March 1, 2016:** Advisory Committee must have its first meeting
* **December 1, 2016:** OHY must submit a report to the governor and legislature with recommendations for policy, funding, and best practices in the five priority areas and recommendations to address funding, policy, and practice gaps in the state system.