The background of the top section is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this is a large, faint, circular seal of the State of Washington. The seal features a portrait of George Washington in the center, surrounded by the text "THE STATE OF WASHINGTON" and the year "1889".

Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care

Pursuant to RCW 43.330.720

January 2020

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Lisa Brown, Director

Acknowledgments

The Office of Homeless Youth extends its sincere appreciation to all the people who have contributed to the completion of the RCW 43.330.720 report and plan. Special recognition goes out to the young people who talked to us about their experiences and helped design their ideal system. Thank you for sharing, creating and teaching us to approach this work with an open mind and heart.

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Thank you for supporting us with space, outreach to young people, and feedback on our work.

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Center for Children Youth Justice

Cocoon House | YMCA | Community Passageways | Volunteers of America | Team Child | Oasis Youth Center | Janus Youth | YNHS | Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project Y4Y Board | Passion to Action

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Executive Summary

Overview

The 2018 Legislature enacted RCW 43.330.720 (SSB 6560), directing the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) to develop a plan to ensure that publicly funded systems of care discharge youth into safe and stable housing.

When young persons (12-24 years) are not discharged into safe and stable housing, they are more likely to experience chronic stress and trauma. Youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness correlates to numerous adverse implications for brain development and mental and physical health¹ that can have a long-term impact on the individual's life and wellbeing. Data showed that 17%² of young people exiting a publicly funded system of care experienced unstable housing within the first six months of their exit in 2015, and 26% of YYA exiting state systems of care experienced housing instability within 12 months. These data points show the need for holistic strategies that create supports and pathways for long-term stable housing for the YYA population at a critical time in their development.

Each year about 1,800 young people are unstably housed within 12 months of their exit from a publicly funded system.

Highlights

- In some systems, **transition planning** does not occur in a timely or thorough manner, causing YYA to exit into homelessness or become unstably housed shortly after exiting state systems of care. Where transition planning occurs, it is infrequent, happens too late, families (bio or chosen) are not engaged, and the process is not youth-centered. Important critical conditions³ such as self-esteem, mental and physical health, healthy peer and adult relationships, community and cultural connections, job readiness, and education, are not considered during transition planning or supported immediately after discharge into the community.

¹ Edidin, et al, "The mental and physical health of homeless youth: a literature review," (2012), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22120422>

² Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division (DSHS RDA), "Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Systems," (2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/rda/documents/research-11-240.pdf>

This data does not include county court-involved youth, and foster youth have experienced failed adoption or guardianship. Additionally, these counts do not have information of all people younger than 18, as it was collected prior to Chapter 15, Laws of 2018 (HB 1630).

³ Samuels, et al, "[Voice of Youth Count \(VoYC\) In-Depth Interviews: Technical Report](https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Voices-of-Youth-Count-Component-Report-FINAL-May-28.pdf)," Chapin Hall, (May 2019), <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Voices-of-Youth-Count-Component-Report-FINAL-May-28.pdf>

The report identified personal and inter-personal conditions that support housing stability.

- Young people exit systems without **adulting skills**, such as financial and conflict management, rental experience, goal setting, cooking, and other basic skills that enable them to thrive in their community.
- **Partnerships** across state agencies, tribes, counties and community-based providers **are** needed to coordinate trauma-informed and culturally responsive services for young people and their natural supports to facilitate housing stability.
- A one-size-fits-all approach to housing will not address the **diversity of housing and service needs** of this population.

Summary of Priority Recommendations

The following recommendations address the most critical gaps and make improvements that have the potential for the highest impact.

1. Effective Transitions from Care

Phase 1

Fund and implement a new transition planning process for young people in child welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation institutions including improvements to programs designed to promote independence post exit.

Phase 2

Fund and implement a new transition planning process for young people exiting inpatient behavioral health treatment.

2. Community Connections

Fund grants to five communities with the highest prevalence of exits to homelessness to assess, connect and serve young people who have transitioned out of public systems. Select and support a mobile application and website to show available resources.

3. Housing

- Fund a transitional housing program for youth ages 16-17.
- Expand funding for the Young Adult Housing Program within the Office of Homeless Youth, with a targeted focus on serving youth and young adults exiting systems.

Introduction

Background

In 2018, the Washington State Legislature passed RCW 43.330.720 (SSB 6560), which requires DCYF and OHY to develop a plan to ensure safe and stable housing for youth who exit from the following systems of care:

- OHY shelter and housing programs
- Juvenile justice (county and state)
- Child welfare
- Residential behavioral health institutions

RCW 43.330.720 states that:

"... it the goal of the legislature, that beginning January 1, 2021, any unaccompanied youth discharged from a publicly funded system of care in our state will be discharged into safe and stable housing."

The statute also states that:

"The department of children, youth and families and the office of homelessness youth prevention and protection programs must jointly develop a plan to ensure that, by December 31, 2020, no unaccompanied youth is discharged from a publicly funded system of care into homelessness."

The Problem

Unstably housed⁴ YYA are at risk of significant harm, including physical and sexual assault, robbery, and sexual and commercial victimization.⁵ Studies have shown that youth and young adults experiencing homelessness face traumatic events at a higher rate than their peers who have stable housing.⁶ Homelessness has long-term impacts on brain development and wellbeing and creates barriers to education and employment.

In Washington State, about 7,096 young people⁷ exited foster care, criminal justice and behavioral health institutions in 2015. Shown below is the number of young people exiting criminal justice, behavioral health and child welfare. The criminal justice data includes releases from state Juvenile

⁴ Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including sleeping in emergency shelters, on the streets, in cars, in other unsafe or unstable places, or "couch-surfing" and "doubled-up" where a person has no legal right to stay.

⁵ National Network for Youth, "NN4Y Issue Brief: Consequences of Youth Homelessness," (n.d.), https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf

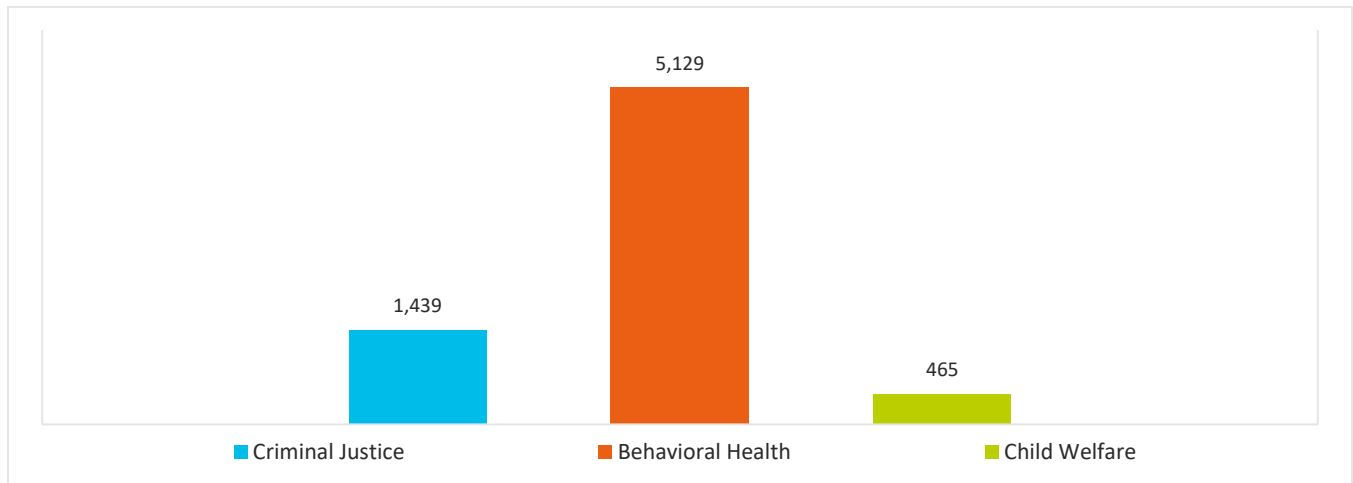
⁶ Lilly, Kevin, "Youth Experiencing homelessness Face Many Challenges," Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (last updated August 2019), <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/youth-experiencing-homelessness>

⁷ DSHS RDA, "Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Systems"

Rehabilitation institutions (12-21) and the Department of Corrections (18-24). The graph below does not include data from shelter programs and county court systems.

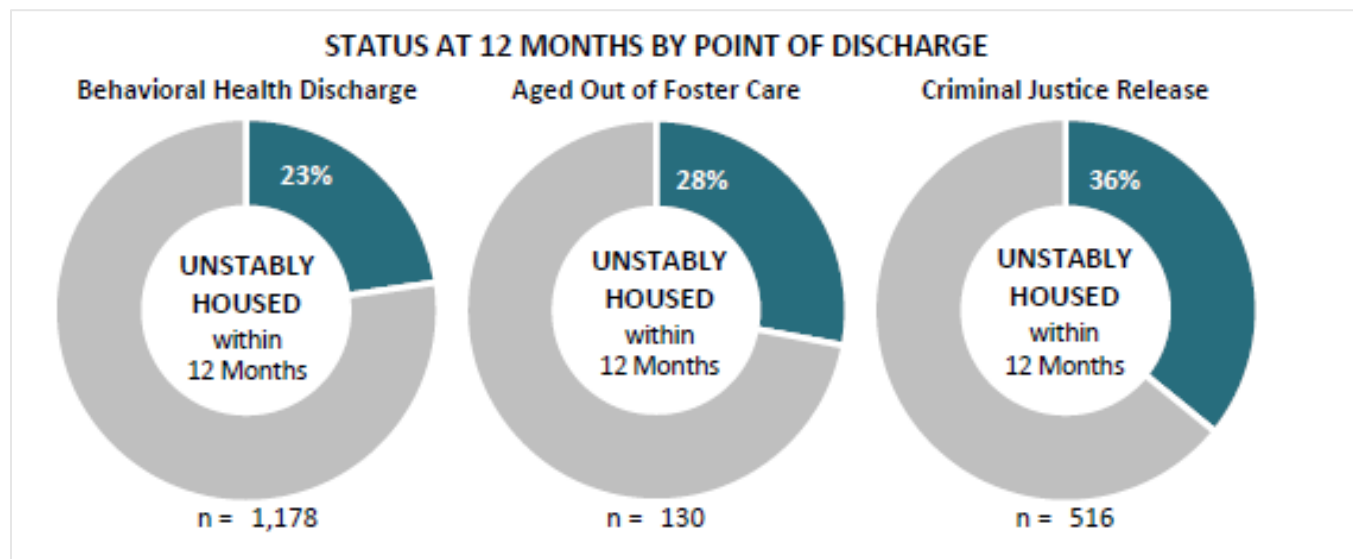
Figure 1 shows youth exits from systems of care in 2015. Note that future work is required to gather updated data for all public systems.

Figure 1: Number of Young People Who Exited a System of Care, 2015



Source: Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division, Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Symptoms, (June 2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

Figure 2: Status of Young People 12 Months after Discharge by System, 2015



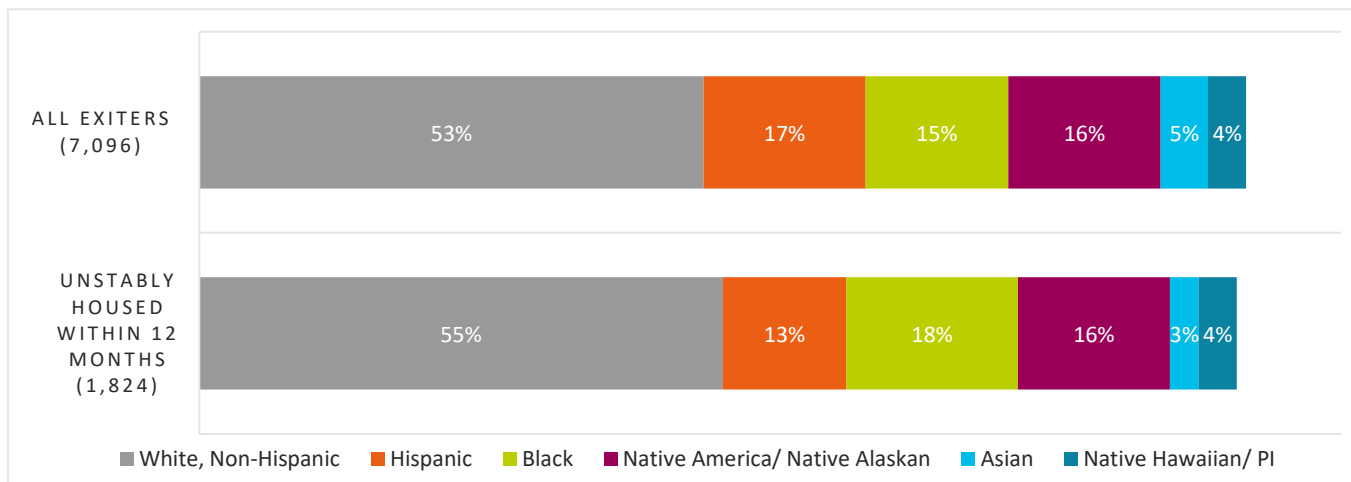
Source: Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division, Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Symptoms, (June 2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

In 2015, 7,096 young people exited criminal justice, child welfare and behavioral health systems. In Figure 2, "n" indicates the number of young people by system who experienced housing instability in 2015. RDA data shows that 12 months after exit from behavioral health foster care and the criminal justice systems, 26% (1,824) of YYA were unstably housed across these systems, up from 17% (1,212)

measured six months after exiting, and 13% (895) were re-institutionalized. These findings indicate the urgency to ensure safe and stable housing upon release from public systems to ensure longer-term stability and safety. A separate data analysis of 2018 data from the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)⁸ of the 3,961 young people who are involved in the county court systems and responded to their housing status, found that 39% stated that they had either run away or been kicked out of their homes at the time of the assessment, indicating that an additional 1,500 young people experiencing housing instability are currently not shown in the Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA) dashboards. More data analysis will be required to understand the demographic make-up of the court-involved youth who identify as "runaway or kicked out."

The following charts focus on the data made publicly available through the RDA dashboard titled - Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice systems.

Figure 3: Race and Ethnicity of Youth Exiting Systems vs. Unstably Housed Youth 12 Months After Exiting, 2015



Source: Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division, Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Symptoms, (June 2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

Young people of color are disproportionately represented in the different systems and the population of young people experiencing housing instability. According to the 2016 Census Bureau estimates, Native Americans make up 1.4% of the total state population but are over-represented in public systems. Similarly, African Americans make up 4% of the state's population but make up 15% of the system-involved young people.

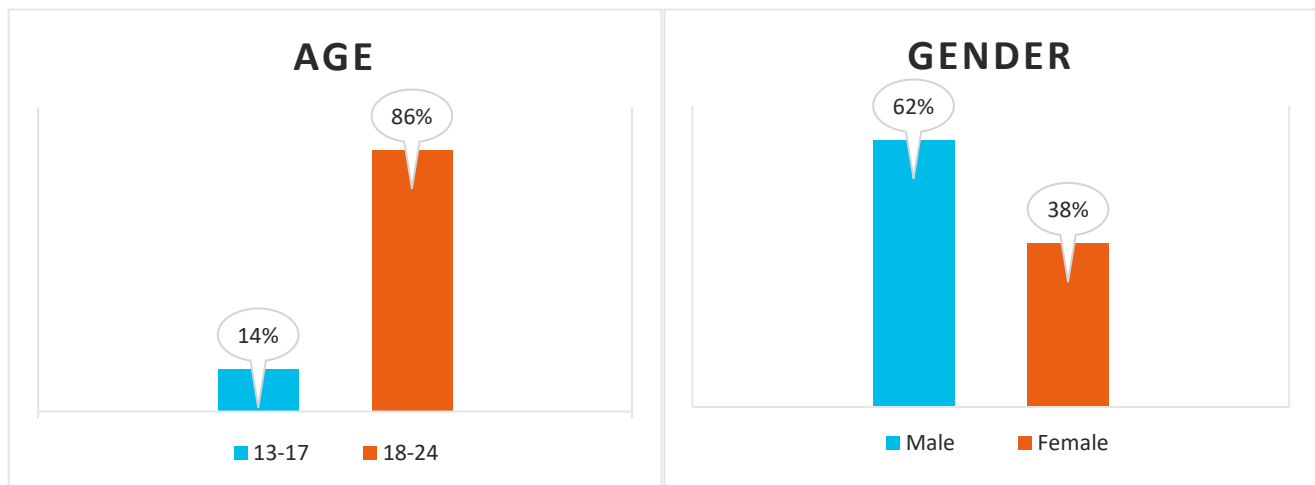
Studies such as the "King County Youth of Color Needs Assessment"⁹ indicate how intergenerational homelessness, poverty and structural racism contribute to housing instability for these young people.

⁸ Administrative Office of the Courts, Washington State Center for Court Research, <http://www.courts.wa.gov/index.cfm?fa=home.sub&org=wscrcr&p=welcome&layout=2&parent=committee&tab=Welcome> PACT Data was analyzed from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018.

⁹ Lippy, et al, "King County Youth of [Youth of Color Needs Assessment](https://www.nwnetwork.org/youth-of-color-needs-assessment): The Experiences, Strengths, and Needs of Homeless and Unstably Housed Youth of Color," The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, & Gay Survivors of Abuse, (2017), <https://www.nwnetwork.org/youth-of-color-needs-assessment>

The study also indicates the need to understand the role that families and communities play in the lives of young people of color to support their holistic needs.

Figure 4: Age and Gender Distribution of Unstably Housed Youth, 2015



Source: Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis Division, Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Symptoms, (June 2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

Figure 4 shows the age and gender distribution of young people who were unstably housed within 12 months after exit from the three different systems of care (child welfare, behavioral health and criminal justice systems). LGBTQ+ data is not currently available.

A 2015 study¹⁰ by the RDA team at the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) showed that, for youth aging out of foster care, a variety of protective factors such as high academic performance, relative foster care placement, and fewer school moves could prevent homelessness. Studies have also shown that when YYA are supported to develop skills in problem solving, planning and goal setting, self-esteem¹¹ and social support¹² can not only prevent homelessness but also support wellbeing after a period of homelessness when combined with appropriate housing intervention. These findings draw a strong link between individual, societal and structural factors that need to be stabilized and supported to ensure long-term stable housing and wellbeing for YYA.

Approach

Multiple approaches were used to gain an understanding of what causes young people to exit systems into housing instability and to identify potential solutions:

¹⁰ DSHS RDA, "Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Systems"

¹¹ Lightfoot, et al, "Protective Factors Associated with Fewer Multiple Problem Behaviors Among Homeless/Runaway Youth," (2011), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4562907/>

¹² Johnstone, et al, "Breaking the cycle of homelessness: Housing stability and social support as predictors of long term wellbeing," (2015), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02673037.2015.1092504>

- Hosted eight Co-Design sessions¹³ titled “Ending Youth Homelessness in WA State” with about 76 young people across the state¹⁴ who have experienced one or more systems and homelessness to identify high-priority issue areas for the recommendations for RCW 43.330.720 to focus on.
- Hosted nine co-design sessions with about 95 line staff in child welfare, juvenile justice (state and county) and behavioral health. Seventy of those were staff from the six different regional offices of DCYF's Child Welfare Department.
- Hosted three brainstorm meetings per system of care that included youth advocates, system-side stakeholders and parent advocates.
- Designed and distributed a survey to a variety of stakeholders, including community-based providers, parents and youth advocates. One hundred seventy-six people answered the survey.
- Researched statewide and national literature and data to understand the underlying causes of system involvement and youth pathways into and out of homelessness.
- Collected and analyzed examples of promising programs from child welfare, juvenile justice, housing and behavioral health system from across the country.

¹³ Chisholm, John, "What is Co-Design?," <http://designforeurope.eu/what-co-design>

¹⁴ “Ending Youth Homelessness in WA state” Co-Design Sessions happened between June to September 2019 to understand the needs and experiences of YYA exiting systems into homelessness. Locations King (Youth of color), Pierce (LGBTQ youth), Spokane, Yakima, Clark, Passion to Action, BoS YHDP Y4Y board, Snohomish.

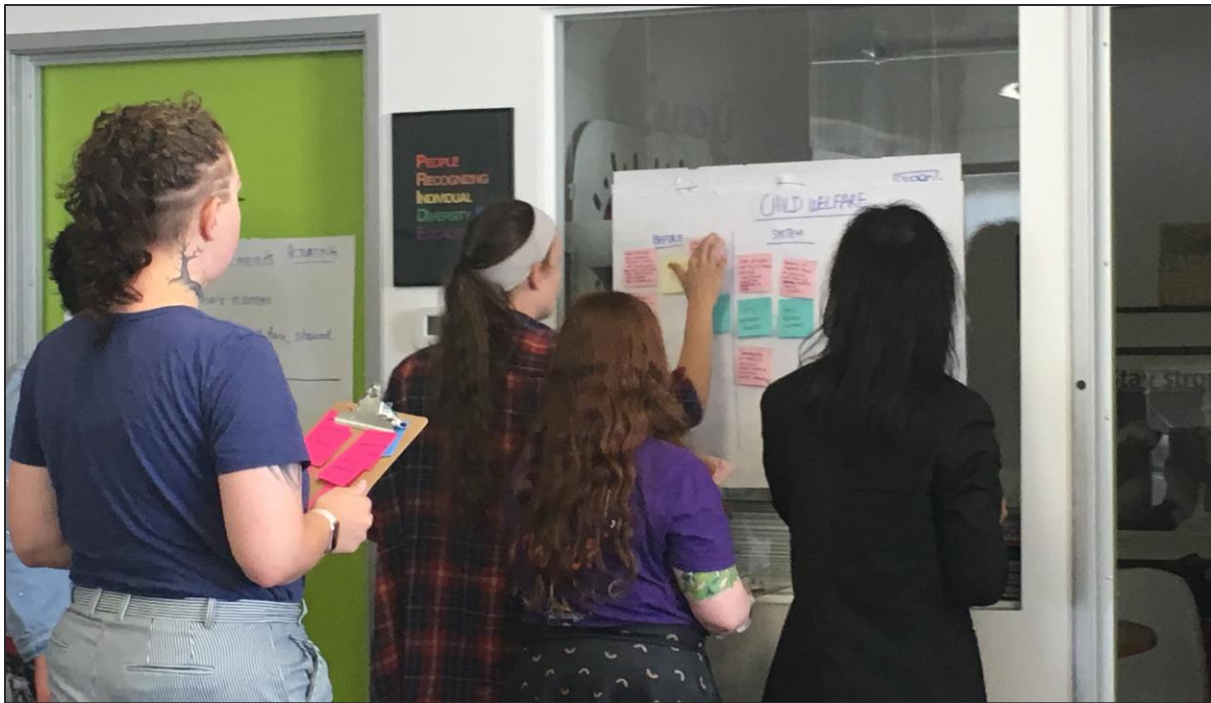


Image 1: Young adults identifying issues in the child welfare system at the Pierce County child welfare session.

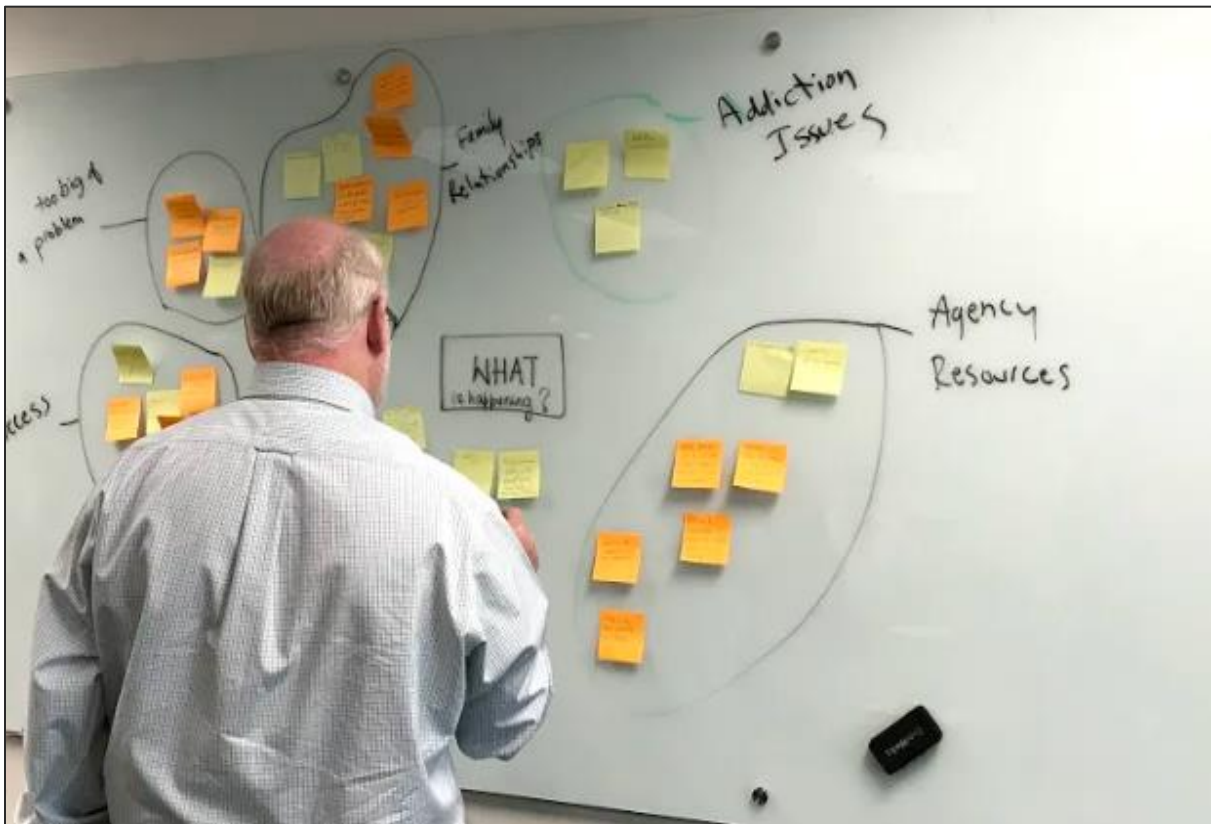


Image 2: August 2019, juvenile justice session in Skagit and Snohomish counties, with detention managers and parole officers.

Recommendations

Overview

In addition to data and existing literature, this report uses a holistic, youth-centered approach to identifying recommendations to ensure the needs of young people are prioritized. The principle of human-centered design guided this approach,¹⁵ as well as inclusion and racial equity to ensure the recommendations developed are youth-centered, affirming and inclusive of the voices and needs of the most marginalized communities, including those with disabilities, pregnant and parenting teens and youth of color who are disproportionately represented in systems and the homeless YYA population.

To address the issues identified through research, co-design sessions with young people, and engagement with stakeholders, the Office of Homeless Youth and Department of Children, Youth, and Families recommend a three-pillar approach to preventing young people from exiting public systems of care into homelessness. This framework is used throughout the plan and technical report:

1. **System modification** to improve outcomes for young people through better transition planning and support before exit.
2. **Community connections** and development of resources to cohesively support the needs of YYA when they exit from systems to communities.
3. Develop and implement **housing** that meets the different needs of system-involved YYA that include varying levels of supportive services.

OHY and DCYF have identified three high priority areas and other important recommendations that span across the four different systems (child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health and shelter programs), community and housing.

Appendix A provides additional information on each recommendation, including tables of the recommendations, adding context around each issue area and logic model. Evidence to support each recommendation is included at the end of each request.

¹⁵ Both, Thomas, "[Human-Centered, System-Minded Design](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/human_centered_systems_minded_design)," (2018), Stanford Social Innovation Review, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/human_centered_systems_minded_design

Three Near-Term and High-Priority Recommendations



1. EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS FROM SYSTEMS OF CARE

New | Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice (state)

Legend



Service Solution



Policy Solution



Funding Solution

Research indicates that thoughtful transition planning is necessary to ensure that when young people are discharged or exited from a system, they have the tools, support, and skills necessary to maintain stability and launch successfully into adulthood.¹⁶ Such planning should occur in partnership with young people based on their individual goals.

Transition planning within systems is currently happening too little, late, or not at all. The following approach will institute new approaches to transitions:

Phase 1: Fund and implement a new transition planning process for young people in child welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation institutions.

Transition processes should incorporate the following:

- Ongoing assessment to evaluate service needs and risk of housing instability.
- Creation of a curriculum on “adulting” skill-building to teach skills such as budgeting, obtaining credit, cooking, household maintenance, navigating health care, car maintenance, career development, landlord/tenant rights, conflict management, etc.
- Obtaining identification necessary to work and secure housing.
- Offering housing navigation.
- Strengthening relationships with family and natural supports (biological, kin, or chosen).
- Supporting connection to employment, job training, and education.
- Connecting to public benefits and community supports.
- Planning for dependent youth that includes an adolescent-specific social worker unit to convene and facilitate a dynamic multi-disciplinary youth-centered, family-included planning for the end of

¹⁶ Dworsky, A., Gitlow, E., Horwitz, B., & Samuels, G.M., "Missed opportunities: Pathways from foster care to youth homelessness in America," (2019), Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/missed-opportunities-pathways-from-foster-care-to-youth-homelessness-in-america/>

care.¹⁷ Youth who experience frequent placement disruption are at greater risk of homelessness and should be assigned a placement team.¹⁸

- Planning for young people in juvenile rehabilitation includes more consistent transition planning starting a year before release. Adding housing support supervisor to cover the Northwest region of the state to supplement the work of the two existing housing support supervisors.¹⁹
- Support those exiting juvenile rehabilitation to get certified as peer mentors, and ensure peer mentors are an integral part of the release team meeting (RTM) in juvenile rehabilitation.²⁰

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: DCFY/JR, DSHS/ES

Evidence [The Adolescent Brain/Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2011](#), [Pathways to Success Model/Center for Policy Research Colorado, 2018](#)

Phase 2: Fund and implement a new transition planning process for young people exiting inpatient behavioral health treatment.

Add to the Health Care Authority a system designer/management analyst who specializes in youth and young adult populations. This position will be required to understand the needs of YYA and families, and develop specialized services and support program improvement for YYA and families across the state to improve housing outcomes.²¹

Design and pilot innovative ideas such as respite families to support caregivers to ensure long-term housing stability for YYA.

The process and lessons learned from transition planning in child welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation should be applied within the behavioral health system, including engaging family and natural supports in the process.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: Office of Homeless Youth, HCA/Behavioral Health, and philanthropy partners

Evidence [From Inpatient Treatment to Homelessness/A Way Home Washington, December 2018](#)

¹⁷ Based on the [Family Assessment and Team Planning model incorporated in Larimer County, CO](#).

¹⁸ DSHS RDA, "Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Systems": Risk factors for homelessness post exit include more than foster care placements, more than four congregate care placements and more than four school moves in 3 years.

¹⁹ Coalition for Juvenile Justice, "[Issue Brief - Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Collaboration and Impact](#)," Volume 1, Issue 1, (June 2016),

²⁰ Requested by residents of Green Hill School.

²¹ McCann, Erin Shea, "[From Inpatient to Homelessness](#): Envisioning a Path Toward Healing and Safe Housing for Young People in Washington State," A Way Home Washington, (December 2018)



2. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

New | Community-based organizations

Fund five grants to communities with the highest prevalence of exits to homelessness; select and support a mobile application and website to show available resources.

When young people transition out of the care of a public system, they re-enter the community, where it is important to have a healthy support system and connection to resources that meet ongoing needs. Communities must have the capacity to assess, connect, and serve youth and young adults who have transitioned out of public systems. This capacity can be built through grants issued by the Office of Homeless Youth, which will allow communities to respond to the needs of young people who have transitioned out of care. Community support may include housing navigation, civil legal aid, therapy, coaching, family engagement, employment and education support, and other services that promote stability and success.

Select and support a mobile application and a website to show available resources for YYA exiting systems. Ensure thorough competitive analyses and processes to keep the resource list updated. Work with application developers to add benefits that young people are eligible for. The application and website should be accessible by parents, young people and service providers.

Anticipated biennial cost: \$1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: OHY, DSHS/ESA and DCYF

Evidence: [DCYF Families and Youth in Crisis, April 2019, Full Frame Initiative, Pathways to Success Model/Center for Policy Research Colorado, 2018, Literature Review of Model Programs/OJJDP, August 2017 Critical Transition Coaching, Building Changes, 2019 Full Frame Initiative](#)



3. HOUSING

New and expanded | Office of Homeless Youth

Young people exiting systems of care face significant barriers to securing and maintaining housing. In many cases, young people are transitioning from very structured environments and have not had experience living on their own. Those exiting the justice system may have criminal records that screen them out of housing. Youth younger than age 18 have limited housing options if they are unable to return home. Two key housing interventions would support stable housing for young people who have exited systems:



Fund a transitional housing program for 16- to 17-year-olds

Over a year, 30% (113) of youth exit a HOPE Center into another shelter, the streets, or a temporary living situation. Data from two counties show that in 2014, nearly 700 youth in detention had no parent

willing or able to pick them up.²² Yet there are limited housing options for minors younger than age 18. Funding of \$1 million per fiscal year to the Office of Homeless Youth would support the piloting of 15 non-time limited beds for youth ages 16-17.

○ Expand funding for the Young Adult Housing Program focused on serving youth exiting systems

The Office of Homeless Youth’s Young Adult Housing Program provides rental assistance and case management to young adults ages 18-24. Sixty-eight percent of young people participating in this housing program exit to permanent housing.²³ Using master leasing through this program allows community-based organizations to hold the lease while subleasing to young people, removing barriers to housing such as criminal records, lack of credit, rental history, and other factors. Case management supports young people to maintain their housing and achieve education and employment goals. Funding of approximately \$400,000 per fiscal year will support housing for 50 households.

Anticipated biennial cost: \$1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: OHY

Evidence [From Inpatient Treatment to Homelessness/A Way Home Washington, December 2018](#)



Image 3: A young person in Clark County designs a phone application to support them in their experience of homelessness. The application includes support for them to find resources such as food and location to stay.

²² Columbia Legal Services, “Falling Through the Gaps: How a Stay in Detention Can Lead to Youth Homelessness,” (2015), https://www.schoolhousewa.org/reports/Detention_to_Homelessness_Web_0.pdf

²³ Homeless Management Information System data, state fiscal year 2019. Includes data from King and Spokane counties, and the Balance of State Continuums of Care.

Other Important Recommendations



RELATIVE AND KINSHIP PLACEMENT

Expansion | Child Welfare

Increase services to enable thorough relative search and recruitment. Provide training and support to relatives to meet the needs of YYA, including affirming care for LGBTQ+ YYA. Supports should be provided to both licensed relatives and those serving in guardianship capacity. Adjust licensing requirements to mitigate the impacts of institutional racism on family systems of care (i.e., excluding family members or people with lived experience).

Anticipated biennial cost: \$1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: DCYF and Economic Services Administration

Evidence [WSIPP and UW-EBPI Updated Inventory of Evidence-Based, Research-Based, and Promising Practices for Prevention and Intervention Services for Children and Juveniles in the Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Mental Health Systems, Revised March 2019](#)



RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, TRAINING, AND RESPITE

New | Child Welfare

Creating recruitment standards for foster parents with input from foster care alumni to ensure increase in recruitment of foster parents and foster parents of color who understand and can specialize in serving the needs of YYA, ages 12-21 years old and LGBTQ+ YYA. Ensure foster families and caseworkers are trained and have the resources to serve the needs of youth of color and LGBTQ+ YYA. Create an accountable system for identifying appropriate and supportive placement for youth in care.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: DCYF



PREVENTIVE SERVICES FOR NON-DEPENDENT YOUTH

New | DCYF, OHY, County courts

Ensure timely access to preventive services such as family reconciliation services, response to youth who identify as abandoned, and youth who are not retrieved by parents after a period of confinement in a juvenile detention center. A team representing DCYF, OHY, Washington Association of Juvenile Court

"My mom kept kicking me out of the house and then filed an ARY (At-Risk Youth) petition and reported me as 'runaway' when I was sleeping outside on her front porch the whole night. I went to jail week after week when I was 11 years. I was so scared.... Some kids come back like 50 times. Instead of locking them up, the system can tell there is some other problem; they should rehabilitate them"

-Co-Design Participant, Snohomish County

Administrators (WAJCA) and Behavioral Health should develop this model to serve youth and their families reliably across the state.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: DCYF/WAJCA/OHY/BH

Evidence [Families and Youth in Crisis/DCYF, April 2019. Office of Juvenile Justice, September 2018](#)



SCHOOL RE-ENTRY SUPPORT

Expansion | Behavioral Health and Juvenile Justice State

Expand school re-entry support for youth who are enrolling in an education program after discharge from residential behavioral health or juvenile rehabilitation facilities to support aftercare needs, coordination of services, and academic/social assistance at school.

Anticipated biennial cost: \$1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: HCA/Behavioral Health and DCYF/ JR

Evidence [Literature Review of Model Programs/OJJDP, August 2017](#)



STANDARD VULNERABILITY INDEX APPROPRIATE FOR YYA*

New | Community Network

Co-design coordinated entry criteria with young people to ensure that it takes into account the unique vulnerabilities of youth and young adults, such as prior system involvement. Create a standard index that equitably and accurately assesses vulnerability and ensures implementation across the state.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY and the Mockingbird Society

Evidence: * MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT REQUEST



DIVERSION FUNDS

Expand | OHY

Expand diversion funding to prevent homelessness by helping young people identify immediate alternate housing arrangements, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them maintain stable housing or both. Diversion funds could include support to pay first and last month deposit, initial move-in costs or other short-term needs not covered in current housing model supports.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY

[Diversion Works, Youth Way Home Montgomery County, July 2015](#)



ALLOW MINORS TO BE IN HOPE OR CRC BEYOND 72 HOURS

New | OHY

Allow youth to remain in an out-of-home placement beyond 72 hours in situations where a parent is not reachable or refuses to provide consent for the youth to remain in the placement, but will not allow them back home. Allow continued out-of-home placement after 72 hours when a youth or parent files a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition. Increase capacity for HOPE and crisis residential center (CRC) staff to support youth to file a CHINS petition to authorize out-of-home placement.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY



Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISe) ENGAGEMENT

Expansion | Juvenile Justice State

Improve support to residents in juvenile rehabilitation residential programs with mental health needs through the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strength (CANS) assessment and orient the case plan and transition plan to accept WISe in the community.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: HCA/Behavioral Health/JR

Evidence [Literature Review of Model Programs/OJJDP, August 2017](#)



HOUSING STABILITY for YOUTH in COURTS (H-SYNC)

Expand | Juvenile Justice (County & State)

Expand HSYNC housing specialists in counties to support juvenile justice-involved youth who have housing needs, particularly after a stay in detention, and serve youth exiting a juvenile rehabilitation facility.

Anticipated biennial cost: \$1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: DCYF/WAJCA, and DSHS ESA

Evidence [Literature Review of Model Programs/OJJDP, August 2017](#)



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Expansion | Juvenile Justice State

Expand the capacity of community facilities so that all YYA who have met suitability criteria have the opportunity to reside in a community facility before release. The advantage of community facilities is that it allows youth to return to their home communities and increases access to family supports, education or vocational training, job placement, and coaching for adult skills.

Anticipated biennial cost: \$3 million to \$5 million

Responsible agency: DCYF/Juvenile Rehabilitation



HOST HOMES

Support | Community Network

Support growth and development of host home programs by expanding resources to help communities develop host home programs and adhere to best practices.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY

Evidence [Research and Recommendations on Host Home Programs/OHY, July 2017](#)
[From Inpatient Treatment to Homelessness/A Way Home Washington, December 2018](#)



CIVIL LEGAL AID

Expand | Juvenile Justice State & Community Network

Increase capacity for civil legal aid to seal criminal records, help YYA get identification cards, emancipation, landlord/tenant laws, and other issues that hinder YYA options for housing stability, access and employment.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible Organization: TeamChild, Legal Counsel for Youth and Children

Evidence: Legal Services Partnership for Youth/LCYC, May 2018, Students Before and After Juvenile Court Dispositions/WSCCR



RESPONSIBLE LIVING SKILLS PROGRAM (RLSP) IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION

Expand | Child Welfare

Expand, restructure and improve RLSP program for extended foster care youth (ages 18-21) using a youth-centered process with input from current and previous participants to allow young people to learn and practice adulting skills in a safe environment prior to exit. Establish quality improvement process to ensure the program is meeting client needs and expected outcomes. Create opportunities to revamp and update the program if outcomes are not being met. Expand "independent living skills" program to include "adulting skills".

Anticipated biennial cost: \$ 1 million to \$3 million

Responsible agency: DCYF/Juvenile Rehabilitation



CONTINUITY OF SUPPORT AND TREATMENT

Expansion | Behavioral Health

Increase rehabilitation case management funding (State General Fund) to allow behavioral health providers to bill for Substance Use Disorder Treatment pre-release planning. Standardize continuity of appropriate assistance for families when youth move in and out of residential programs so there is no break in support.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: HCA/Behavioral Health



ACCESS TO BENEFITS

New | OHY

Increase screening for eligible benefits as part of the intake process in shelter programs by using Washington Connection to apply for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Economic Services Administration (ESA) benefits for medical, disability benefits, cash or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) if parenting.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY grantees and DSHS/ESA

Evidence [Full Frame Initiative](#)



BASIC CASE MANAGEMENT IT SYSTEM

New | OHY

Develop technology that centralizes and stores basic intake information such as allergies and medical information that shelter programs need to serve youth. The case management system proposed here would be distinct from the information collected by the Homeless Management Information System. Ensure this information is accessible across service providers, complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and is secure.

Anticipated biennial cost: Less than \$1 million

Responsible agency: OHY and shelter service providers

Evidence: FY 18 Data Summary HAU Annual Report

Additional Analysis

Additional analysis and collaboration are required to understand the supply and demand for different housing types across the state.

Tailored Housing Models Analysis

An in-depth analysis of demand for different types of housing models using discharge data by system and community is required before making decisions on housing needs and type of housing required across the state. This analysis should include housing services such as mentor support, adult skills, low-barrier, trauma-informed, harm reduction, education and employment support.

Research and Evaluation Capacity

Infrastructure to support continued advancements across systems need to be reliably resourced. Development of capacity in transition practices, community response, and housing resources require leadership within the research community. Research and Data Analysis provides ongoing data analysis showing the intersection of young people exiting from publicly funded systems of care and housing stability. To further inform program development and system response as mandated in SSB 6560, it is necessary to integrate court and education data. There are current restrictions on the use of education data that limit the ability to incorporate well-being indicators for the targeted population of young people with prior system involvement. Data sharing agreements should be prioritized while simultaneously increasing access without violating privacy.



Image 4: Participants at the Snohomish County Co-Design Session

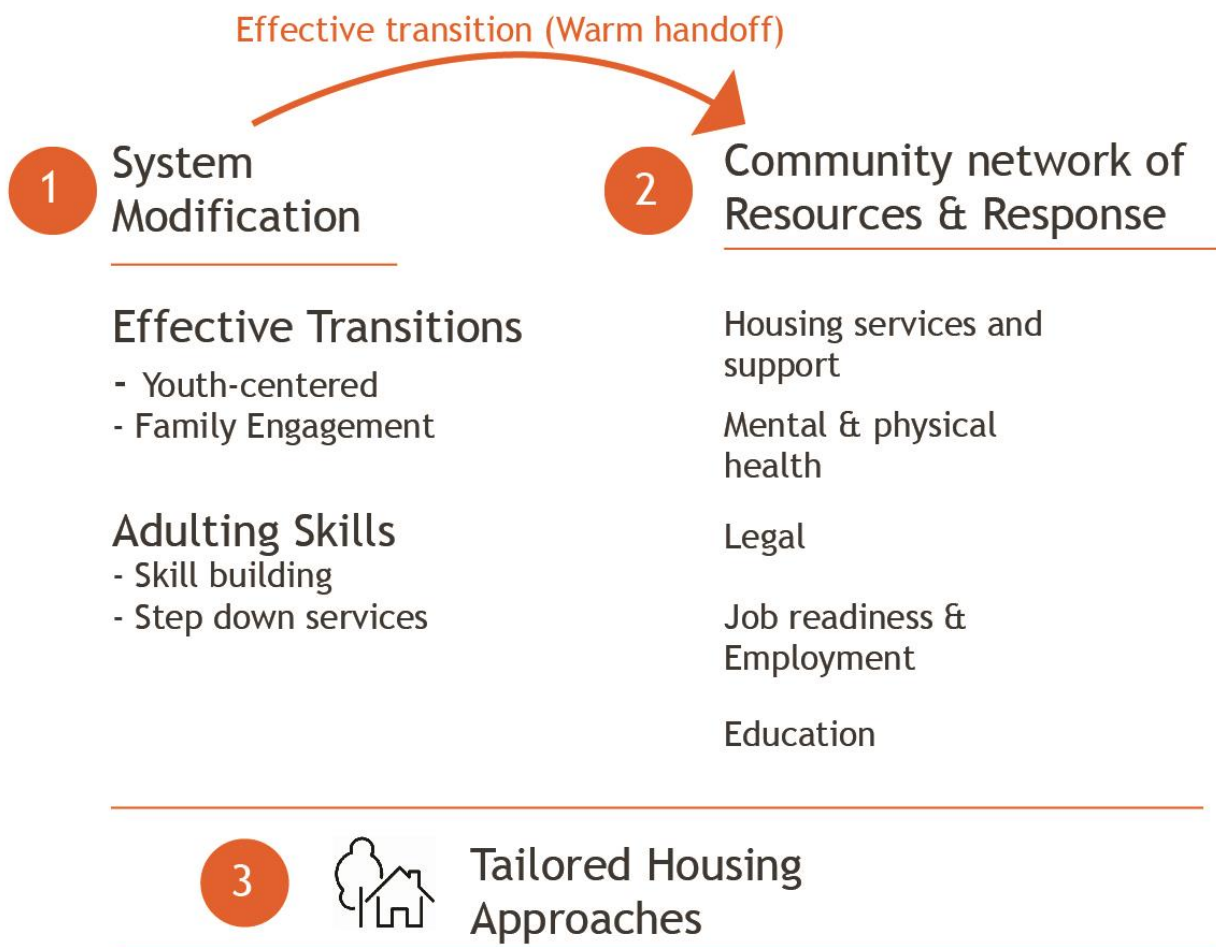
Report

Overview

The recommendations follow a three-pillar strategy used throughout the narrative of the plan. Balanced investment in all three parts is necessary to make progress on the goal set by the legislature through SSB 6560. Systems of care require:

1. Improvements to transition planning
2. Partnerships to support YYA once discharged into communities
3. Access to supported housing or support to families to maintain housing

Figure 4: Three-Pillar Strategy Guiding Plan Recommendations



Issues and Response

1. System Modification

The system modification recommendations center around one major theme across literature, youth and system-stakeholder conversations: effective transitions. Each system must offer a comprehensive and transparent transition planning process that begins at entry into the system.

○ EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

Issue: Child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and shelter programs do not adequately address housing in transition planning. Where transition planning exists, it happens either too late or infrequently.

Response: Each system must offer a comprehensive and transparent transition planning process that is youth centered and begins at entry into the system. Transition planning must include post-discharge housing stability, as well as plans to support critical conditions that affect a young person's ability to be stably housed, such as mental health, peer and adult relationships, cultural connections, education and self-esteem.

"I was at Comprehensive Health. It didn't help me and at the end, they gave me Benadryl and put me on a bus."

-Co-Design Participant, Snohomish County talking about the discharge practice at the residential behavioral health institution they experienced.

○ ADULTING SKILLS

Issue: Many YYA are involved in systems during critical developmental periods where their peers are learning crucial life skills in informal settings such as at home and through peers. Adulting skills include conflict and stress management, budgeting, cooking, laundry, etc. Step-down services are rarely available in systems for young people to apply learned adult skills in a safe environment before exiting.

Response: Systems should ensure that YYA have the opportunity to learn and practice adulting skills through programs and hands-on learning regardless of placement in a residential program, in a step-down facility or while receiving services in community-based home-like settings.

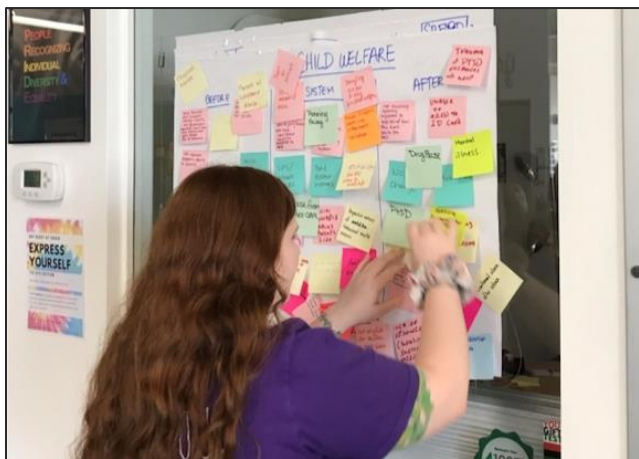


Image 5: YYA adds input at the LGBTQ+ Co-Design session.

○ FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Issue: Opportunities for families (biological or chosen) to be involved in the young person's treatment or system involvement are inconsistent or not available.

Response: Engage natural and community supports (biological or chosen family, mentors and partners) as early as possible and through treatment, incarceration or separation. Special attention should be given to support families of youth of color and LGBTQ+ YYA to be involved with their children (biological or chosen)

○ YOUTH-CENTERED SERVICES

Issue: Services and programs offered in system, such as case management, are often not centered on the needs of young people they intend to serve. This can frequently lead to inconveniences such as confusion on the part of the young person on services they qualify for to more dire longer term impacts such as re-traumatization²⁴.

Response: The process should be youth-centered and incorporate a racial equity lens and be trauma informed to ensure that services work directly with the young person to identify their needs. Service providers can then work to connect young people to **resources** such as aftercare for treatment needs, job readiness services and educational connections; and assess for eligible benefits based on individual needs.

2. Community Connections

Making measurable progress to ensure stability for YYA discharging from systems requires partnerships between the state and communities. Incentivizing the development or coordination of reliable local resources will improve access to supportive services for YYA with prior system involvement. Only then will the "warm handoff" between systems and communities be comprehensive and serve the needs of this population. Meeting the demand for a community network of supports that work equally across the state requires a level of cohesion rarely realized in social service networks that blend state and county responsibility for serving YYA at a highly vulnerable point in their lives.

○ COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Issue: When YYA are leaving a system, often there are not enough resources for young people, like trauma-informed aftercare, mental health supports, job programs or housing options in the community.

Response: It is necessary to develop community-level coordination of resources and services to ensure the young person receives required support in the community post-discharge. This plan calls for partnership among system stakeholders at the state, tribal, county, municipal, community, and service provider levels.

²⁴ Insight gathered from synthesis of findings from the Co-Design sessions on Ending Youth Homelessness in WA state.

COORDINATION OF RESOURCES

Issue: Where resources do exist in communities, often YYA with prior system involvement are unaware of benefits they are entitled to, are excluded from programs, and have challenges learning about resources that exist in their community.

Response: YYA who are discharged from systems need meaningful access to resources in their communities. In communities where resources exist, accessing assistance for resources (including food, benefits, treatment, emergency shelter and transitional housing) needs to be streamlined. In communities where resources are inadequate to meet the demand, community partnerships are the basis of a shared coalition to create additional resources.

CROSS-SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Issue: State systems are designed to work independently and are held to outcomes set by the individual systems. These outcomes are based on mandates, policies or law. Each system works independently and performs as designed. Currently, there is no cross-system strategy, data monitoring or accountability set.

Response: To ensure cross-system learning and promote state-community partnerships, the Interagency Work Group (IAWG) on Youth Homelessness will host this work. Governor Inslee's Directive 17-01²⁵ listed housing stability for YYA exiting public systems of care as a topic for the IAWG to address.

²⁵ <http://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/17-01YouthHomelessnessWorkGroup.pdf>

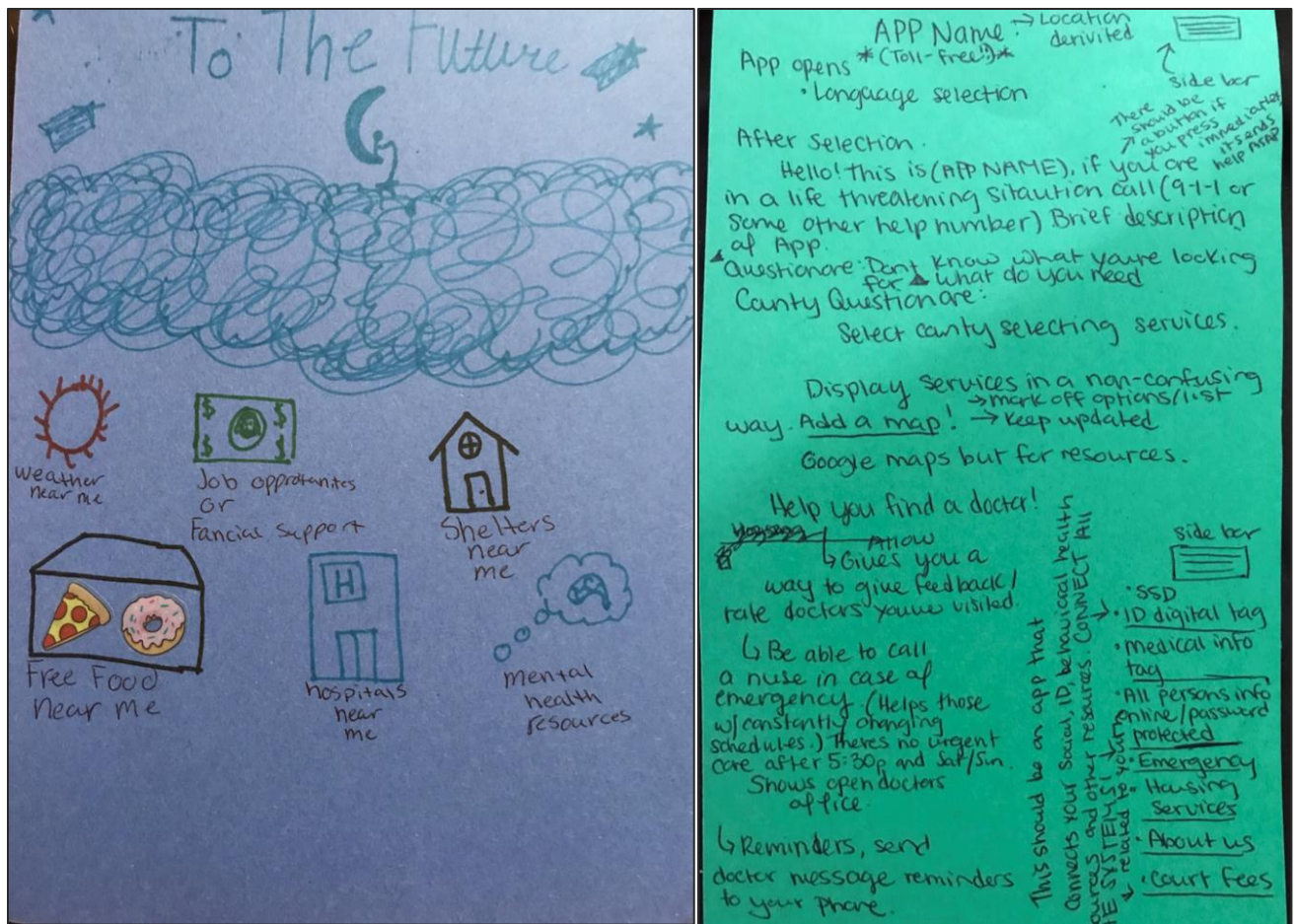
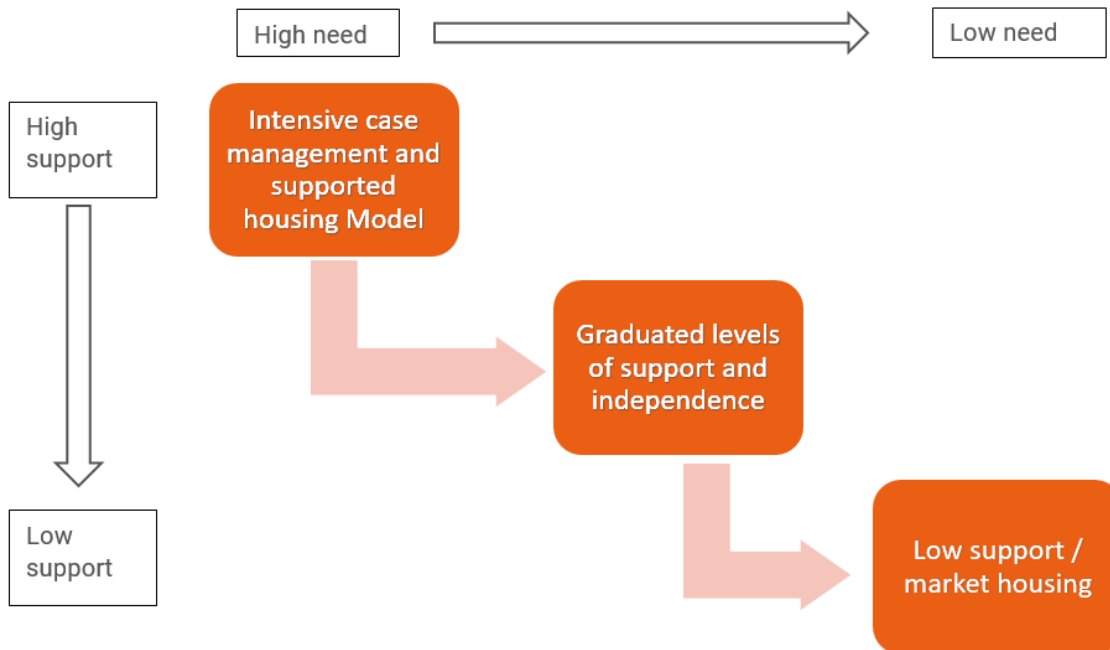


Image 6: Shows two innovative ideas generated by LGBTQ co-design session participants. Both indicate the need for coordination of resources across providers to help young people. The image on the left indicates the different categories of services that young adults need when they are experiencing homelessness. The image on the right is a comprehensive phone application that supports young people in managing their identity (driver license, SSN) and a variety of system-related content (court fees, housing services). The solutions indicate the resources that young people want and need and the complexity of their situation.

3. Housing

Figure 6 shows the types of housing models needed to fully support the needs of young people. These models will vary across the state and will be designed based on exits from care.

Figure 6: Supportive Housing Models for Youth Exiting Systems of Care



○ HOUSING RESPONSE

Issue: There is a statewide shortage of housing supports and housing stock for the YYA population. There is a lack of variety and choice in housing options for young people based on their needs in both urban and rural areas.

Response: Housing models need to be designed to meet the needs of young people exiting different public systems. The addition of housing models needs to offer varying levels of support and independence so that YYA have options to best support their needs (see figure 6).

○ COORDINATED ENTRY

Issue: YYA are competing with chronically homeless adults and families for resources, causing them to rank lower on the vulnerability index (VI). YYA in systems do not qualify as "homeless," even if they need housing and cannot access housing resources before discharge. Those who are younger than 18 do not qualify for housing through coordinated entry.

Response: In areas of our state where housing resources are inadequate to meet the need, coordinated entry systems use a VI to prioritize housing placement. The current tools disadvantage YYA in general and even more YYA who are system involved. The VI tools need to be recalibrated to take into consideration needs and risks for YYA and include eligibility for YYA discharging from systems.



Image 7: Photo shows a house designed by a participant in a co-design session with young people from the rural counties in Washington. The participant designed the house to showcase within the larger solution of a tiny house village with a small garden for each family to work on

O DIVERSION

Issue: Diversion is a strategy that prevents housing instability by using funds to pay for immediate demands for utility, rental down payment, short-term support, conflict mediation for the young person, or their biological or chosen family, all of which prevent entry into homelessness. It is currently not uniformly available across the state.

Response: Housing should include services such as flexible funding to support costs of renting, coaching and mentoring to support and apply adulting skills, support based on a person's need to develop and maintain healthy relationships.

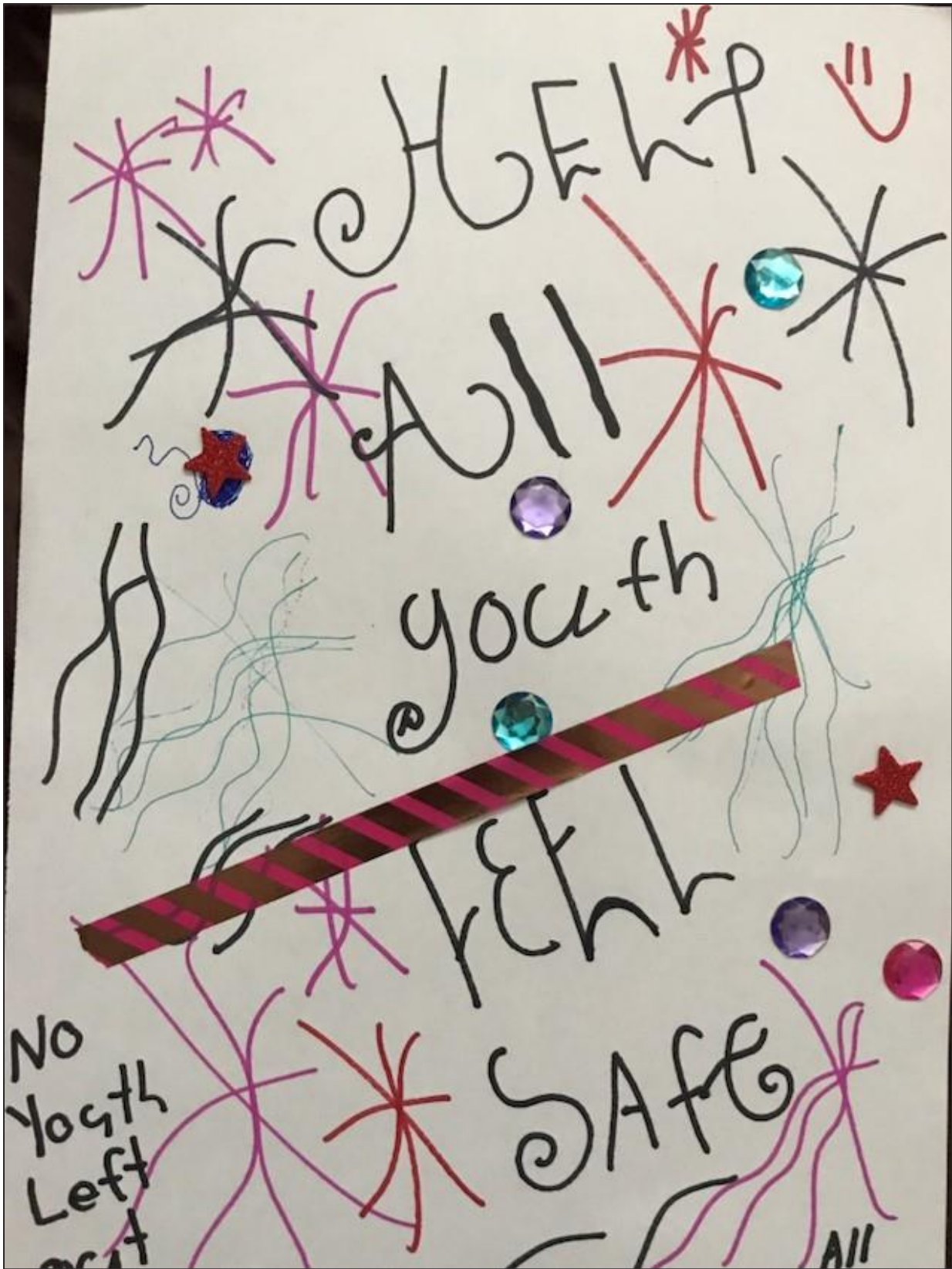


Image 8: A young person from the LGBTQ+ co-design session's request to legislature to ensure "No youth is left behind" and the need to make sure "All youth feel safe" and "All Youth Matter" speaks to racial, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability inclusion in housing and service options.

Appendix A: Recommendation Summary Table

*Key to Cost Columns

\$: Less than \$1 million

\$\$: Between \$1 million and \$3 million

\$\$\$: Between \$3 million and \$5 million

Table 1: HIGH PRIORITY Effective Transitions from Care (Phase 1)

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
Early transition planning	\$	System Child welfare	Effective transitions	Shared Planning meetings would be held quarterly for dependent youth, age 13 and older. The meetings would use a multi-disciplinary team approach, be youth-centered, and include a risk screener for youth with multiple placements. Letter from youth to potential placement. Request from the Youth Leadership Summit (2018 and 2019).
Additional supports for frequent placement disruption	\$	System Child welfare	Youth-centered services	For youth age 13 and older who experience frequent placement disruption, additional services and support would be assigned to stabilize placement. The additional supports might include housing specialists, experienced social workers, additional therapeutic services, and emphasis on developing natural supports.
Assessment across systems	\$	System All	Effective transition	A simple, easy-to-use, and non-intrusive assessment that works across systems to identify youth who are at high risk for housing instability post-exit to help prioritize more intense services.
Adulting curriculum	\$	System Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice state	Adulting skills	YYA who are in a JR residential program have requested a program to teach life (aka adulting) skills that include tactical self-maintenance skills and complex interpersonal skills. Request from YYA at Green Hill School (2019).
Access to benefits	\$	System	Effective transition	Screen for benefit eligibility at each intake. This fund will develop an easy-to-use toolkit for shelter providers, work with

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
				Economic Services Administration to connect services to YYA, and allow OHY to develop process/expectation.
Housing specialist & mentors	\$	System Juvenile Justice state	Effective transition	Add a housing specialist to cover state and serve JR youth discharging that will increase available housing options and add peer mentors to re-entry team meetings.

Table 2: HIGH PRIORITY Effective Transitions from Care (Phase 2)

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
Behavioral health system improvement	0	System Behavioral health	Effective transition, adulting skills	Adds FTE to Division of Behavioral Health Recovery (use private funding) to develop BH strategies for transition planning in residential programs and increase access to BH services in the community through aftercare.
BH Re-entry process	\$\$	System Behavioral health	Effective transition	Establish and implement transition planning in BH residential programs. Ensure family services plan (support and aftercare) are completed before discharge with an emphasis on family engagement.
Respite	\$	System Behavioral Health	Effective transition	Respite homes provide relief to YYA and families after a return home. This recruitment, training, and support recommendation targets YYA with BH needs.

Table 3: HIGH PRIORITY Community Connections

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
Assess Connect Serve	\$\$	Community	Community resource	Transition support in the community that includes navigating housing, supporting accessing diversion funds if needed, aftercare and mental health resources. Community grants will target communities that show a high prevalence of youth discharges into housing instability.
Resource tech	\$	Community	Community resource	A public-facing application that is easy to use and navigate and provides resources that youth and providers need on the landscape of resources available to youth based on age, location and system-involvement. Resources include information on civil legal aid providers, housing availability, etc.
Civil Legal Aid	\$	Community	Community resource	Adds capacity to serve YYA discharging from JR who have legal impediments to being stably housed after discharge. This estimate is based on 50-100 YYA served.

Table 4: HIGH PRIORITY Housing

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
Transitional housing	\$\$	Housing	Housing response	Create a housing option for youth (initially ages 16-17) that provides residential placement in a supported setting that is not time-limited. This report proposes a 15-bed pilot project.
Young Adult Housing Program	\$	Housing	Housing response	The model allows for a variety of housing stock to exist by allowing a single agency to own the lease and sublease to young people. The model removes known housing barriers for youth, such as lack of credit, down payment or criminal records. Request from the Youth Leadership Summit (2019)

Table 5: Other Important Recommendations

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
Relative and kinship placement	\$\$	System Child Welfare	Effective transition	Evidence that adolescents placed with relatives are more likely to be stably housed. Need to support relative and kin placements financially and with services to create and maintain placement.
Recruitment, retention, training, respite	\$	System Child welfare	Effective transition, adulting skills	Targeted recruitment of adolescent-specific foster families and caseworkers to help specialize the workforce to serve this special population.
Prevention services for non-dependent youth	\$	System Child welfare	Effective transition (family engagement)	Establishes a planning schedule for system partners to develop proposals to improve services for youth and families in crisis, not retrieved from juvenile detention, or self-refer as abandon.
School re-entry support	\$\$	System Behavioral health & Juvenile justice state	Effective transition	Add support at middle or high schools to target youth returning from residential care. Additional support for aftercare, coordination of services, academic and social issues at school.
Standard Vulnerability Index for YYA	\$	System OHY	Housing response	Co-design a vulnerability index that takes into consideration unique vulnerabilities of YYA who are discharging from systems. Request from the Youth Leadership Summit (2019)
Diversion funds	\$	Community	Effective transition	This flexible fund can be used to support housing for YYA or their families upon exit from a system of care. OHY will administer this fund, but it will be available to community-based providers who provide justification after due diligence shows need.
Allow minors to be in HOPE or CRC beyond 72 hours	0	System Housing	Housing response	This provision will allow longer placement in shelter programs when a parent refuses to allow youth to stay but also will not allow them to return home. Longer stays in shelter programs require additional program capacity and support for CHINS petition filing.

Recommendation Biennial Cost Estimate	*Cost	Type System	Issue Area	Logic Model
WISe engagement	\$	System Juvenile Justice state	Effective transition	Add MH services to YYA in JR residential programs that will ensure timely Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment (eligibility screener for WISe), MH-oriented services while in care, and connection to WISe or other aftercare, outpatient support post-discharge.
Housing Stability for Youth in Courts (HSYNC)	\$	System Juvenile Justice county & state	Effective transition	Creates housing specialists in counties to serve court-involved referrals or JR discharges based on referrals from system case managers. Discharge data by county is available to determine which counties have the most significant need.
Community facilities	\$\$\$	System Juvenile Justice state	Adulting skills	Increase opportunities to learn and practice life skills, be connected in the community, maintain a job before being formally discharged from a facility.
Host homes	\$	Housing	Housing response	This fund will support material development and technical assistance through the Host Home Alliance to recruit, support, and expand quality programs in communities that have a need and homes interested.
Responsible Living Skills Program	\$\$	System Child Welfare	Effective transition, Adulting skills	This recommendation is to expand a program to serve YA (Extended Foster Care) in a supported housing model that teaches and supports adulting skills.
Continuity of support and treatment	\$\$	System Behavioral Health	Effective transition	Increase rehabilitation case management funding to allow outpatient providers to bill for their participation in re-entry team planning for YYA and families before discharge.
Basic case management IT system	\$	Housing	Community network	Design, implement and maintain a case management system that collects intake information for YYA entering shelter programs, which would save the information to streamline intake to other housing funded by OHY.

Appendix B: Definitions

Stable housing - Consistent and maintained, independent or community (with roommates or parents), and safe housing that does not vary month to month.

Homelessness - Defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (RCW 43.330.702). This definition includes sleeping in emergency or transitional shelters, on the streets, in cars, or in other unsafe, unstable places. Also included are youth who are “couch-surfing” or “doubled-up,” where a person has no legal right to stay. Housing instability, unstably housed are other terms used in this report to refer to homelessness.

Unaccompanied youth- Individuals younger than age 18 who are experiencing homelessness and are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Youth - Individuals between the ages of 12-17 years. Some systems also term this age group as “adolescents.”

Young adults - Individuals between the ages of 18-24 years.

Young people - Individuals between the ages of 12-24 years. It is used to refer to both youth and young adults (YYA).

Critical conditions - Defined by Chapin Hall to include factors such as mental health, peer and adult relationships, cultural connection, education, employment and self-esteem.

Systems and systems of care - Both terms refer to publicly funded government agencies highlighted in SSB 6560. These include child welfare, juvenile justice (county and state), OHY shelter programs and inpatient behavioral health institutions.

Adulting skills - Skills needed for the young person to thrive independently, within a community or family. These skills include tactical self-maintenance skills (cooking, cleaning, laundry²⁶, financial management and budgeting²⁷) to complex skills (conflict and stress management, and goal setting²⁸).

Expansion - Programs or services that exist and need to be expanded in reach.

New - Programs or services that currently do not exist.

Support - Program or services that currently exist that should be supported.

²⁶ Cooking, cleaning and laundry skills were brought up at the Pierce County co-design session and by parent advocate who represents parents with children with severe mental illnesses.

²⁷ Financial manment and budgeting were brought up across the state multiple times (King County, Yakima County) as a high-need area, especially learning about credit, debit.

²⁸ Setting realistic goals and coaching to achieve them was recognized as a good skill in one of the King County sessions where youth advocates were present.

Appendix C: Systems of Care

Overview

Each system of care has a different focus, processes and orientation. Each organization has specific mandates and separate areas of focus, causing resources and services provided to young people and families to be disjointed, creating gaps in services.

Shelter and Housing Programs

The Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) provides grants to community-based organizations across the state to operate shelter and housing programs. The programs are designed differently for different age groups (see chart below).

Juvenile Justice

"A fundamental attribute of the juvenile justice system in Washington State is the division of responsibility between the county-run system of juvenile courts and the state-run system intended to serve higher-risk youth and young adults who have been found responsible for more serious offending behavior."²⁹ These systems are interdependent, and their responsibilities are outlined below.

County – Juvenile Court

Washington State has a decentralized court system, and the juvenile courts operate under the county superior courts, otherwise known as a court of general jurisdiction. Each county in the state has access to a juvenile court. Washington has 35 independent, locally funded, and locally administered juvenile courts serving Washington's 39 counties. There are mandated court processes for offenders and civil cases.

State – Juvenile Rehabilitation

The state's Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) is a department within the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) serves Washington's highest risk YYA, up to age 25. JR provides residential treatment in secure facilities and community facilities. There are three residential facilities in Washington state and eight community facilities (two on the west side of the state and six on the east side). JR provides community supervision (parole) to limited YYA after discharge from care.

Child Welfare

The child welfare system supports the well-being of the child by reuniting children safely with their families, or by achieving permanency for children who cannot return home safely. Most families become involved with the child welfare system through Child Protective Services because of a report of

²⁹ Department of Social and Health Services, Rehabilitation Administration, Office of Juvenile Justice, "Washington State Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project: A Statewide Strategic Plan," (2018), September 2018, <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/JJSI-Strategic-Plan-Handout.pdf>

suspected child mistreatment (this includes abuse and neglect as defined in statute). In Washington State, adolescents can stay in state care until the age of 21.

Behavioral Health - Residential Care

The length of stay in behavioral health residential programs ranges from a few days to many months, and youth are admitted from cities and rural areas of Washington State, as well as from other states. Referrals come from emergency rooms, juvenile justice system providers, outpatient behavioral health providers, and others. A total of 554 mental health/substance use disorder beds are available for children and adolescents, and these beds discharge patients back into the community. These programs represent a continuum of care: acute psychiatric facilities, children's long-term inpatient program (CLIP), and residential substance use programs.