Shifting Services and Systems to Prevent Youth Housing Instability

WASHINGTON STRATEGIC PLAN
SEPTEMBER 2021
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In January 2021, the Office of Homeless Youth, in collaboration with lived experts, community-based organizations, and state-level agencies, published the Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness as requested by the 2020 Washington state legislature in the 2020 supplemental operating budget. The report identified the need for lived experts to lead the strategy development process to ensure that solutions meet the needs of those not being served by existing interventions.

In November 2020, the Communities of Color Coalition (C3), the Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative (IHTC), and the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) started collaborating to identify communities in Washington who are least represented at state and local level decision making tables, and to create a trauma-informed, healing centered approach to co-design the strategy with lived experts and caregivers. Lived experts and caregivers were recruited to be a part of the Steering Committee on Prevention of Youth Homelessness based on their expertise, identity (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation), availability, interest, and geographic representation. Our goal was to ensure diversity representative of the youth and young adults (YYA) who are disproportionately represented in unstably housed populations.

The Steering Committee collaborated with IHTC, C3 and OHY for over 40 hours spread out over three months starting in February. The collective identified four main prevention pillars:

1. Support whole family well-being
2. Universal support for basic human rights
3. Eliminate racism in systems and supporting youth and families impacted by them
4. Shift resources to Black, Indigenous and people of color communities

Recommendations identified in this report to prevent youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness are from people who have experienced housing instability and caregivers on the Steering Committee. You can read all the recommendations that were collaboratively identified, here.

1-4 These recommendations are aligned with the following strategies in the Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan, in the order that they appear on the page—

Executive summary
High-priority recommendations

The high-priority recommendations are a smaller subsection of all the changes that are required to see transformational change in Washington state. See all recommendations sorted by thematic FWJFXhere.

The following are the high-priority recommendations that the 8YJJWNSL(TRRNYYJJNIJSY*N*JIGFXJITSXTQZYNTSXYMFMFJ) the opportunity catalyze transformational change for Black, Indigenous and people of color, LGBTQ2+, rural and other marginalized youth and families.

5 Co-design with lived experts a single-entry point to a comprehensive, multigenerational, preventative well-being service system. Services should be available to youth and families before and during crises without Child Protective Services (CPS) or court involvement. Divert all CPS mandatory reporter, self-referral calls and court referrals through the well-being system to support families and youth as the initial entry-point to the intervention; TSQ*QYJWHFQQXTKFGZJFSIJISFSLJWRJSYYT(58
   • The well-being service should include holistic, culturally informed prevention services, information and supports such as community-based family reconciliation, crisis resolution, mediation, LBGTQ2+ needs and support to meet employment, health, educational needs of older youth and their caregivers.

6 This recommendation aligned with Strategy 5 in the Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan.

7 This recommendation reflect HB 1220 (laws of 2021).

8 Invest in stigma -free respite for caregivers or youth with no strict length of stay to enable family members to access services needed to heal such as temporary elective housing, models such as “house mom” or “Mockingbird Family” HFWJHTSXYJQQFYNTS

5 See Supporting whole family well-being >Prevent separation of families and youth for detailed recommendation around mandatory reporting updates.

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9MNXWXJHTRRJSIFYNTSFWJHY*QFXTWK

8 This recommendation aligned with Strategy 5 in the Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan.
Provide a variety of options for parental consent required in emergency housing, residential programs, host homes and other placements for minor youth when a parent is unreachable or unwilling to provide consent to provide housing to a minor.  

Require history, diversity, equity and anti-racism training for all state agency workers with an emphasis on judges, law enforcement and front-line staff. Identify and acknowledge harm that government systems, from the local to state level, have caused to communities of color. Require acknowledgment of previous and current harms caused. Prioritize individual and organizational learning so that state workers can work to dismantle racism within their agencies. 

Reduce siloed requirements for funding disbursements from the state level to ensure people's whole health and well-being is supported and not just outcomes for different agencies. Divert the majority of the state funding to BIPOC grassroots organizations. 

Create state-funded housing programs for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults and their partners that are a combination of low-barrier, youth-centered transitional living programs, housing vouchers for market value rentals or motels, support to non-parental caregiver, or host home as applicable. Programs should include supportive services access employment or trainings. 

Improve comprehensive relationship education that is cross lifespan and includes information on adolescent body changes, desires, consent, sex, pregnancy, inappropriate behaviors, relationship boundaries, trafficking, contraception, internet safety, building protective factors, pregnancy and child caring for youths of all genders. This should be available in community centers, Family Resource Centers, and after-school programs. Make relationship education accessible to parents, grandparents, chosen family and other adults. 

Build strong partnerships with private sector industries to create and increase entry-level positions in high growth industries across the state. Focus on opportunities for low income and housing unstable YYA, with a specific focus on trans women of color, pregnant and parenting, YYA engaged in sex work or experiencing trafficking and neurodivergent YYA as they are more severely impacted by stigma and lack of opportunities.
Next steps

Next steps required to actualize the recommendations from this report include:

1. Set up and program manage a cross-system coordinating body that includes agency stakeholders, legislators, community-based organizations working in prevention and a steering committee of lived experts to analyze fiscal needs for the implementation of the recommendations. Ensure lived experts are paid for their time.
   a. Identify agency leads for each of the recommendations including stakeholders within the agencies to lead the work. Prioritize incorporation of high priority recommendations into agency ask to legislature.
   b. Develop a plan of action for implementation. Coordinate across systems at the state and local level to implement recommendations. Conduct on-going accountability meetings with agency leadership, lived experts and the cross-system coordinating body to ensure that the recommendations are co-designed and implemented.
   c. Develop required legislative workgroups that include steering committee members and incorporate recommendations into existing workgroups to champion the transformative changes required to support whole family well-being.

2. Fund community-based preventative services across the state and fund the development of a call-in line and website to access the services.

3. Set up the data infrastructure with Research, Data and Analytics team at Department of Social and Health Services to measure identified outcomes highlighted in this report. Incorporate outcome measure into Results WA dashboards.

For a comprehensive solution set to preventing youth and young adult homelessness from early crisis to post exit from systems, refer to the following content:

1. Universal, primary and early secondary prevention:
   a. Understanding of the system gaps and existing evidence-based practices that can be utilized: Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness.
   b. Recommendations that span the continuum of prevention: Shifting Services and Systems to Prevent Youth Housing Instability (current report).

2. Later secondary and tertiary prevention:
   b. Behavioral health systems: Safe and supportive transition to stable housing for youth ages 16–25 years.

Alignment and coordination with the efforts of the Poverty Reduction Work Group's 10-year Plan to Reduce Poverty & Inequality, a Blueprint for a Just & Equitable Washington, also referred to as "Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan" in this report, will also support the work to prevent homelessness.
Background

In January 2021, the Office of Homeless Youth, in collaboration with lived experts, community-based organizations and state-level agencies, published the Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness as requested by the 2020 Washington state legislature in the Chapter 357, Laws of 2020, sec. 96. This follows closely after the 2018 Legislature passed RCW 43.330.720 (SSB 6560) which required the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) to collaborate with the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) to develop a plan to ensure that no unaccompanied youth is discharged from a publicly funded system into homelessness.

The preliminary prevention plan published in January 2021 focused on understanding the underlying root causes of youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness and system gaps and responses to homelessness. Specifically, stated in the proviso language:

(i) “How existing efforts in this area are coordinated;
(ii) The demographics of youth involved in homelessness and other related negative outcomes;
(iii) Recommendations on promising interventions and policy improvements; and
(iv) Detail and descriptions of current prevention

The preliminary plan detailed three priority recommendations:

1. Create and establish a coordinating body focused on preventing unaccompanied youth homelessness, unnecessary system involvement with child welfare, juvenile justice system and other negative outcomes. The coordinating body should include state agency representatives, legislators, practitioners, youth and caregiver lived experts.
   a. Amend RCW 43.03.220 to allow compensation for lived experts’ participation in the coordinating body and related state-level advisory groups to allow for an inclusive, equitable approach to informing the government.

2. Build the data infrastructure to measure the prevalence of youth and young adult homelessness.
   a. Develop a youth homelessness database with data sharing and Research and Data Analysis (RDA) to ensure a comprehensive youth homelessness measure.

3. Provide funding to the Department of Children, Youth and Families to redesign their Family Reconciliation Service to be a community-based service for youth and families focused on primary prevention.

Supportive services for youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 24 who are unaccompanied by a parent or an adult caregiver.
This report builds on the research and recommendations from Department of Children, Youth and Families’ 2019 report—Families and Youth in Crisis and is aligned with many of the recommendations from the Poverty Reduction Work Group’s 10-year Plan to Reduce Poverty & Inequality, a Blueprint for a Just & Equitable Washington.

Prevention of youth and young adult housing instability happens along a continuum (see page 11 for illustration of the prevention continuum). There are multiple opportunities for communities, providers and state agencies to support youth and families to stay stably housed or easily access housing when in crisis. Previous reports have addressed different parts of the spectrum with recommendations that are either co-designed or deeply informed by lived experts. To prevent youth homelessness at different junctions of need, experience and system involvement, review the following reports.

**Universal, primary and early secondary prevention:** In these phases of prevention the work is focused to prevent crisis in the family unit, ensuring access to services and prevention of escalation and system involvement.

**Later secondary and tertiary prevention:** In these phases, ensuring systems support young with access to housing, NlJSYN*HFY NTSTKMTZXSLSXYFGNQNY*FSINRRJINFYJFHHJXXYT housing are critical.

**a. Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness.**

**b. Shifting Services and Systems to Prevent Youth Housing Instability (current report).**

This report predominantly focuses on recommendations universal FSIUWRNFV:UWJ[JSY NTXUFHJIZY MJNRR]SXJSJINJSYN* by lived experts, caregivers and system side stakeholders.
Prevention continuum

**UNIVERSAL PREVENTION**

Education for larger population of the state, youth, *FSIK FRNQNJX*

*Also referred to as Primordial

**PRIMARY PREVENTION**

Supporting youth and families prior to system involvement to reduce risk of housing instability for youth.

**EARLY SECONDARY PREVENTION**

Early system (CPS or Juvenile or Criminal Justice) interaction that does not lead to out of home placement or incarceration.

**LATER SECONDARY PREVENTION**

Preventing deeper system involvement and housing instability.

**TERTIARY PREVENTION**

Preventing housing instability for those exiting the system.

Ensuring those who are experiencing homelessness move quickly into safe and stable housing and receive *FUUWTUWFNYJXZUUTWY*

Majority of the recommendations in this report focus at this point of the continuum.
Steering Committee on Prevention of Youth Homelessness

Since the publication of the initial report that focused on understanding root causes and system side levers for prevention of youth homelessness, the Communities of Color Coalition, Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative and the Office of Homeless Youth worked together to recruit, support and host lived experts to co-design the prevention of youth homelessness strategy for Washington in a Steering Committee of YYA lived experts and caregivers.

The Steering Committee on Prevention of Youth Homelessness is made up of youth lived experts between the ages of 15–30 who have experienced housing instability between ages 12–24, and caregivers (bio, kin, informal or foster) who have personal experience supporting Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit (LGBTQ2+), or young people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD)). Steering committee members represent urban, rural and Tribal areas.

A small team supports the Steering Committee made up of Communities of Color Coalition, Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative and the Office of Homeless Youth. The group was recruited from a larger pool of applicants who responded to a recruitment survey shared through “By and For” community organizations across the state, the Department of Children Youth and Families’ (DCYF) resource family mailing list, youth-serving organizations and individual referral. The initial group was limited to 22 participants, 10 caregivers and 12 youth to enable full participation in a digital format. Members were paid for their attendance and participation in 10 scheduled digital work sessions. The committee hopes to continue its work in moving the recommendations forward in collaboration with agency stakeholders and lawmakers.
The goal of the collective

The goal is to ensure safe and stable housing for all young people across the state of Washington so that they may thrive in the short and long term regardless of their location, age, race, ethnicity, neurodiversity, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Address the root causes of housing instability

To learn more about the root causes of housing instability, refer to the Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness. To prevent young people from experiencing housing instability and other resulting negative outcomes, we must move upstream to address the underlying conditions that cause housing instability. This requires a holistic approach that meets the needs of the whole family or care circle, which may include biological family, kin, chosen family, extended family, or any other natural supports in a young person’s life.

Focus efforts on those most impacted

Not every young person experiences the same level of risk for housing instability. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit, (LGBTQ2+), youth with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), and neurodivergent youth experience housing instability at higher rates than their white, heterosexual, cis-gendered, neurotypical, able-bodied peers.

Therefore, all strategies and recommendations described throughout this report are intended to center young people who are BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent and/or experience physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities.
Public, private and Tribal systems involved in achieving prevention goals

**Juvenile and criminal legal systems**
- Law enforcement
- Court systems
- Detention, juvenile rehabilitation
- Adult corrections

**Health**
- Physical health
- Behavioral health
- Public health
- Indigenous medicine

**Employment**
- Private-sector employers
- Employment benefits
- Informal employment economy
- Public sector employers

**Social services**
- Temporary cash assistance
- Food assistance
- Public benefit
- Food banks
- Child care

**Financial systems**
- Credit
- Debit

**Homelessness services**
- Youth and young adult housing
- Adult housing
- Family housing
- Coordinated entry

**Housing**
- Rental
- Ownership
- Eviction

**Child welfare**
- Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Out-of-home placement systems
- Independent Living Program

**Education**
- Postsecondary education

**Washington Strategic Plan**

SHIFTING SERVICES AND SYSTEMS TO PREVENT YOUTH HOUSING INSTABILITY

WASHINGTON STRATEGIC PLAN, 2021-2026
Outcomes

These outcomes are achieved through collective work. The cross-system coordinating body should be guided by these outcomes.

**Decrease in housing instability among BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent, physical, intellectually or developmentally disabled (I/DD), youth and young adults.**

**Decrease in the family separation of BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent, physical, intellectually or developmentally disabled (I/DD), youth and young adults due to engagement with the child welfare or homelessness system.**

**Reduction in emotional, physical, sexual, and domestic violence against children, youth and young adults.**

**Increase in financial resources within BIPOC communities and at organizations that are “By and For” where leadership and staff belong to the same community they serve, promote, and work to preserve.**
# Recommendations

Recommendations from the Steering Committee on Prevention are thematically organized by four main pillars highlighted below. These pillars go across the prevention continuum and should be considered at every point in the prevention continuum. It is important to return to these main thematic pillars to ensure work is done towards preventing youth homelessness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PILLARS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Supporting whole family well-being</strong></td>
<td>• Invest in youth and family well-being&lt;br&gt;• Prevent the separation of families and youth&lt;br&gt;• Meet the health and wellness needs of minors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal support for basic needs</strong></td>
<td>• Support housing stability&lt;br&gt;• Support whole health and well-being of communities across the state&lt;br&gt;• Ensure youth people have access to information they need&lt;br&gt;• Create pathways for economic security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eliminating racism in systems and supporting youth and families impacted by them</strong></td>
<td>• Require training in systems and support youth and families impacted&lt;br&gt;• Design services to meet the needs of marginalized communities&lt;br&gt;• Eliminate racial bias in systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shifting resources to BIPOC communities</strong></td>
<td>• Direct state funding to By and For organizations&lt;br&gt;• <em>SXZWJYMJ\TWPKTWHJWJ+HYXYMJ</em> demographics of those served</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Supporting whole family well-being

Many of the recommendations in this section are aligned with or complimentary to recommendations in the Families and Youth In Crisis report from 2019, COVID-19 and Child Welfare: Using Data to Understand Trends in Maltreatment report by Chapin Hall, and A Way Home America’s Child and Family Well-Being Justice pillar of the New Deal.

Invest in youth and family well-being

**Primary prevention:** Co-design a single-entry point to comprehensive multigenerational, preventative well-being service system available to youth and families before, and during a crisis. Ensure that services are co-designed with lived experts and accessible through the call-in line or website. Ensure that services are funded and available in communities across the state. Do not require or court referral (juvenile, drug

- The well-being service system should include holistic, culturally informed prevention services, information and supports such as community-based family reconciliation, crisis resolution, mediation, LBGTQ2+, neurodivergent, intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) and sex worker needs. Ensure supports meet basic needs of youth and families such employment, physical and behavioral health, education.

- For prevention services in the community including, but not limited to, time-limited cash assistance for biological parents and youth. Make same level of support available to kin and chosen family without having to go through CPS screening or DCYF licensing processes for caregivers (aunt, uncle, chosen family, grandparent) to support young people who might not be able to live with their biological parents.

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14 Instead of designing a whole new system, there is an opportunity to build on the Crisis Connections lines developed by Health Care Authority.
Supporting whole family well-being

- If a family is CPS-involved or court-involved through truancy, At-Risk Youth (ARY) or Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions, they should be referred to the community-led well-being services system instead of building a separate service pipeline for families who are system-involved.\(^15\)

- Relocate family reconciliation services (FRS) into the well-being services system so that services are provided by community-based organizations and does not require a court order or referral through CPS to access.

- Ensure screening for services in the well-being service system (and across providers and agency services) are streamlined. Families and youth should not be required to do multiple screenings. Screenings questions and timing should be trauma and culturally informed. Ensure basic needs (rest, food, housing, culturally appropriate medicine, calming services) are met first. Screening should not be used to gate keep access to services.

- Services can be available or integrated into existing service centers and networks such as Family Resource Centers and the behavioral health crisis response system such as Family Resource Centers and the behavioral health crisis response system G\(\text{JNSLJ]\[\text{JQTUJ]\[\text{W-FSI\[\text{TWP}G]\[\text{NSLITS}]}\) ^{G}\) ^{54}\) ^{1,'96}\) ^{f'}} ^{\text{FSI+TWgTWLFSN_FYNTSX}}

- Fund community-led support groups for parents of adolescents, with focused support on parenting LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent, I/DD youth and young people facing behavioral health challenges. Include appropriate counseling and bonding support for parents W\(\text{JHT]}\[\text{WNLSLKWTDXZXGXYFSHJZX]}\[\text{INXTWJ]}\[\text{WFSlMTXJHMNQIW]}\[\text{SFWJWJZSNJIFKYJW}}\) ^{\text{out of home placement. Refer to evidence-based prevention practices highlighted by Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) and promising practices highlighted by Department of Commerce's January 2021 report.}\(^18\)

- \(\text{+ZSIRJSTXWMNUUWLWFRLXHWTXMMJXFYJXTXZUTW}^\text{Y^TZSLUJTUQJQIG}\) ^{\text{FSIH}} ^{\text{TWg}}\) ^{\text{organizations and support programming similar to Career Connected Learning (CCL). Adapt CCL programming as needed for the youth who are served.}}


Supporting whole family well-being

Early Secondary prevention: Fund transition services for young people going into guardianship to support the guardian and young person.

Tertiary prevention: Increase funding for behavioral health services integrated within housing and shelter programs for youth and parents, emphasizing individualized wrap-around supports for youth and families. Additionally, increase funding for mobile crisis units to provide immediate crisis response in emergency shelters and street response.

Prevent the separation of families and youth whenever possible

Primary prevention: Invest in stigma-free respite for caregivers or youth with no strict length of stay to enable family members to access services needed to heal. This should be available to families who are not involved in the child welfare system, families at risk of entering child welfare, and biological families and kin. Include an array of

- Community members offering short-term support with housing and respite.
- Temporary elective housing for parents and youth.
- *UFSINSLMT* informally trained community members to support parents and youth.

Positive example: Safer Families Initiative

Positive example: The Mockingbird Society’s “Mockingbird Family” care constellation model creates an innovative model to support foster parents through an extended family network.

Opportunity: Create a similar model for biological families to be supported and access respite when needed.

Positive example: Vanessa Behan Crisis center in Spokane is available 24-hours and seven days a week for childcare birth to 6 years old to allow parents some respite. It includes supportive services and parenting classes.

Opportunity: Similar models open to older youth and their caregivers can serve as a respite model.

Positive example: CRC\(^\text{19}\) or HOPE\(^\text{20}\) centers with supportive services.

Opportunity: Extend the limit of stay at CRC or HOPE centers to allow time for family reconciliation. Increase awareness, reduce barriers for entry to CRC and HOPE centers.

Positive example: “Granny army” of mobile elders\(^\text{21}\) or tribal elders or “House parent” who is a trained community member who helps to maintain household structure.

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\(\text{19} \) Crisis Residential Centers

\(\text{20} \) CRC and HOPE centers

\(\text{21} \) Soon to be implemented in Prowers County by the Cornerstone Resource Center with support from Tennyson Center for Children
Supporting whole family well-being

**Early Secondary prevention:** Prevent unnecessary separation of BIPOC families as a result of child welfare engagement.

- Refine mandated reporting categories to differentiate poverty-related neglect from abuse and endangerment\(^{22}\) to ensure that families that fall into poverty-related neglect categories can be diverted away from child welfare\(^{23}\) into community based supportive services in the well-being service system rather than go through CPS processes. Ensure that supports include economic supports to families.\(^{24}\)

- Co-create new training for all mandated reporters with families and youth, to re-orient their roles to be mandated supporters of family well-being rather than engage in family policing. CPS, educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement and caseworkers should understand the link between trauma, poverty and substance use to detect unmet needs such as housing, food, clothing for families and youth rather than further traumatize and separate them from their families through out of home UQFHJRYSYTKYMJNWHMNQIWSFISJTZY.

- Require meaningful evidence before a child is removed from the home, HB 1227 (2021).\(^{25}\)

- Improve family finding process and prioritize kinship placement or guardianship when out of home placement is deemed necessary. (Chapter 211, Laws of 2021).

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\(^{23}\) Recommendation is aligned with recommendations in Chapin Hall’s Family and Child Well-Being System: Economic and Concrete Supports as a Core Component Working group such as the Families Together Workgroup are working to addressing issues related to keeping families together.

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**Early Secondary prevention:** 2FPYMJXFRCQJQTKFSHNFQFSINSPNSI resources available to biological parents to care for youth with physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities as placement in Behavioral Rehabilitation Service (BRS) facility. If staying at home is not an option, resources should be available to kin or foster homes to ensure the caregiver is supported.

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\(^{25}\) Working group such as the Families Together Workgroup are working to addressing issues related to keeping families together.
Later Secondary prevention: Reform the court process to help families in severe crisis resolve conflict and/or address treatment needs. Re-examine the Family In Need of Services (FINS) proposal (HB 2870/SB 6467, 2018) to create a family-focused process for accessing support and providing intervention when parents are not reachable, do not consent to out-of-home placement, or when families are unable to reconcile.

Tertiary prevention: Prevent organizations from separating families in shelters, including but not limited to: children over the age of 2 years in pregnant and parenting shelters, children over the age of 13 years in domestic violence shelters, and fathers with children. In addition, ensure shelters and housing programs for minors can accommodate minors with children.

Tertiary prevention: Fund and develop more culturally led treatment centers where families can heal together.

Tertiary prevention: Expand the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot program to support reunification among families where lack of housing is the primary barrier.
Supporting whole family well-being

Meet the health and wellness needs of youth under the age of 18

Recommendations in this section build on exiting work done to review state-level laws impacting unaccompanied minors, including *Alone without A Home* and *State Laws to Support Youth Experiencing Homelessness*.

**Tertiary prevention:** Provide options for parental consent required in emergency housing, residential programs, host homes and other placements for minor youth. 4UY NTSX NSHQZIJ

- Delaying the time required to obtain consent from 72 hours to 7 days to allow time for program staff to work with parents/guardians, or;
- Allowing consent from youth to be provided when a parent/guardian is unreachable or refuses to allow youth to return home, or;
- Requiring program staff to notify a parent of youth’s housing rather than obtain consent to provide emergency, transitional or longer-term housing to youth.

**Tertiary prevention:** Develop and expand interventions that support long-term stability for youth, such as:

- Increasing or removing the length of stay in HOPE Centers to allow more time for family reconciliation,
- Supporting the guardianship process for young people to live with kin or chosen family,
- Expanding transitional living programs,
- Making the emancipation process accessible and feasible for youth who don’t have any parental supports.
Supporting whole family well-being

- **Tertiary prevention:** Reform the court process for minors to access support when their basic needs are not being met at home. Re-examine the Family In Need of Services (FINS) youth who cannot safely return home. Expand access to civil legal aid for families.

- **Tertiary prevention:** Fund legal advocacy for minors. Ensure advocates, pro-bono or otherwise, are present and available in HOPE centers, CRC and other youth housing.

- **Tertiary prevention:** Reform licensing of residential programs that serve adolescents, such as HOPE and Crisis Residential Centers, to be developmentally appropriate and support increased independence.

- **Tertiary prevention:** Allow unaccompanied minors to consent to their own preventative health services.
Support housing stability through innovative policy levers and funding specialized housing

**Across the continuum:** Establish new models of housing.

- Create community land trusts (CLT) in urban, suburban and rural areas to permanently maintain affordable housing.

- Design and fund multigenerational housing communities for young families, parents with adolescents, biological parents who need support to have access to elders and community members to prevent social isolation, with case managers and supportive services easily accessible. Example: Bridge Meadows, OR.

- Fund transitional housing for black trans people in western and eastern parts of the state designed, developed and maintained by organizations with lived expertise of Queer, Trans, People of Color (QTPOC) experience and history of supporting Black trans people.

- Create state-funded housing programs for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults and their partners that are a combination of low-barrier, youth-centered transitional living programs, housing vouchers for market value rentals or motels, support to non-parental caregiver or host home as applicable. Programs should be designed, developed and maintained by organizations with lived expertise of Queer, Trans, People of Color (QTPOC) experience and history of supporting Black trans people.

- Develop and fund supported transitional and supported permanent housing for young people with severe mental health conditions across the state where they do not need to compete with chronically homeless adults to stay stably housed with services.

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This recommendation aligned with Strategy 3G in the Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan. Recommendation is aligned with or complementary to the demands of the WA Black Trans Task Force (WA-BTTF) demands.
Universal support for basic human rights

Across the continuum: Make housing inclusive and low-barrier. Ensure all housing programs for young people are informed by YYA with lived expertise and include employment support and connection to resources in the community. Ensure housing and shelter programs for young people are low-barrier and can accommodate pets, partners, and personal belongings such as cell phones.

- Require modification to local zoning laws across the state in urban, rural and suburban areas to increase different high-density housing options to counter the lack of affordable housing in the state.
- Credit history or co-signers should not be a requirement to access housing for YYA.
- Pathways to ownership should be made available to maintain affordability of housing and to build wealth for historically marginalized and discriminated communities.
- Direct 50% or more of capital funding projects to BIPOC led organizations, Tribal nations, and rural areas to help increase housing stock.
- Invest in culturally sensitive sober living environments that can refer to low-barrier housing if an individual relapses.

28 Also refer to the Affordable Housing Brief—Dismantling Poverty in Washington
29 MNX WJ HTR RJS FYNTSWJ +JHY · QF \\ TK
Universal support for basic human rights

Universal and Primary prevention: Protect housing stability for renters.

- Create a tax credit for low-income renters similar to homeowner’s mortgage tax credit.
- Institute rent control in all areas of the state,
- Regulate evictions and create a policy to ensure eviction does not cause long-term housing instability by limiting access to eviction records, especially for low-income community members.

Tertiary prevention: Create state government funds to buy back native lands currently not under state oversight to give back to tribes and generate a process to return native land under state jurisdiction to native communities and tribes.

Support whole health and well-being of communities across the state

Universal prevention: Provide access to universal healthcare for everyone in WA state, especially low-income community members and preventative care access for undocumented young people.

- Train clinicians and doctors on supporting youth with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), trans, queer, and two-spirit youth as there is overlap and cross-over between these communities. Ensure existing training for support of ASC youth includes access to mental health supports and speech and occupational therapy for youth. Ideally, both trainers and health care providers are neurodiverse, trans and/or BIPOC.
- Provide health care support for transgender young people, including transitioning support, hormones and peer mentors.
- Improve and fund access to therapy for everyone in WA state. Support culturally relevant therapy practices for BIPOC, neurodivergent and LGBTQ2+ communities.

Due to the differential experiences of non-cisgender people with the medical system, here we want to highlight supports specifically designed with them.

This recommendation aligned with Strategy 4E in the Dismantling Poverty in Washington strategic plan.
Universal support for basic human rights

Universal prevention: Ensure accessibility and affordability of an array of services, including intensive case and care management for young people and parents with severe mental health considerations (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, others). Provide services for those in mental health crisis to prevent interaction with law enforcement or deeper system involvement in the criminal legal system.

Universal prevention: Stigma-free universal screen of neurodivergence to ensure that youth of color are not misdiagnosed when they are neurodivergent.
  • Support and invest in research on diagnosis and treatment at the intersection of mental health and ASC for youth of color.
  • Ensure all research on ASC, neurodivergence and behavioral health includes BIPOC youth and their needs.

Universal prevention: Increase awareness of needs of youth with autism and other intellectual or developmental disabilities through mass education.

Universal prevention: Reduce bias and stigma around gender identity and sexual orientation through campaigns and mass education approaches with access to information for youth and parents to learn more.

Tertiary prevention: Increase the age limit of youth BH treatment centers to 21 years.

Tertiary prevention: Create a screening for intimate partner violence and commercial and sexual exploitation of children, youth and young adults to connect them to the appropriate resource and supportive services. Screening should be conducted in JRJWLSHWTTRXIZWNSLRJNHFQHMJHPZUXNSXHMTTQXFINSMTZXNSLXJW[NHJX

Tertiary prevention: Tribal nations should establish partnerships with local law enforcement systems to identify, support and bring back youth missing from Tribal and DCYF care.
Universal support for basic human rights

Ensure young people have access to information they need to make life decisions and are supported through high school and beyond

**Universal prevention:** Improve comprehensive relationship education that is cross-lifespan and includes information on adolescent body changes, desires, consent, sex, internet safety, building protective factors, pregnancy and child caring for youth of all genders. This should be available in community centers, Family Resource Centers, and after-school programs. Make relationship education accessible to parents, grandparents, chosen family and other adults.

- Prioritize sessions for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers.
- Support youth and young adult advocacy in school assemblies to inform one another about understanding abuse, gender identity, sexual orientation, bodies, relationship boundaries, toxic relationships and resources for those who are
- Create access to resources for adults to heal from previous sexual assault, toxic relationships, physical and emotional trauma.
- Empower women and LGBTQ2+ young people through mentors and supporting self-esteem to prevent involvement in toxic relationships.

**Primary prevention:** Increase funding for school-based social workers who have mental health clinical training to support youth. Ensure all school districts have appropriate resources to ensure social workers are available, known about and accessible. Prioritize BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, foster care and homelessness lived experts and

Positive example: Our Whole Lives
Universal support for basic human rights

**Primary prevention:** Increase special education (SE) funding for school districts by increasing the multiplier used in calculating SE allocation to school districts to ensure the needs of neurodivergent students and those with disabilities are met.

- Ensure funding and maintenance of alternative schools in all communities.
- Create safe spaces in schools for youth of all genders and BIPOC youth to support life skills learning, curriculum or activities focused on empowering minoritized genders and LGBTQ2+ understanding.

**Universal prevention:** Develop a comprehensive universal screening tool for schools to detect student substance use, behavioral health needs and potential for housing instability to connect youth and families to resources. Build on existing tools such as Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment screening. Increase awareness of school based supports available to unaccompanied youth with students, teachers, afterschool programs so that students are aware of services available and can self-refer to access resources such as transportation, Wi-Fi access, basic needs through existing programs such as the [Homeless Student Stability Project (HSSP)](https://www.hssproj.org) and [McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act](https://www.hud.gov).}

**Tertiary prevention:** Higher education.

- Create and fund financial aid navigation support for all students in high school and college to ensure that students are aware of and apply for federal and Washington college to ensure that students are aware of and apply for federal and Washington 8Y FYJ*SFSHNFQFNIFUUVQNHF YNTS
Universal support for basic human rights

- Housing, food and basic needs for post-secondary
  - All low-income and homeless youth should have guaranteed housing while in post-secondary education, including between-terms and summer. Partnerships with higher education, agencies and community-based organizations should provide emergency, short-term support to ensure affordable off-campus housing to ensure that housing is not a barrier to post-secondary completion. Case management should include wrap-around services with connection to UZGONHG]SJ*YXHFRUZXTWHTRRZSNY`W]XTZW]JXFSIHTZSXJQNSL
  - Work requirements for students enrolled in full-time post-secondary or higher education institutions. Create and expand equitable food systems for college and university students, including but not limited to food cards for low-income and homeless students not eligible for SNAP to access food on and off-campus. Expand Washington Connections Child Care subsidies (WCCC) to include students working towards their bachelor's degree.
  - Allow unaccompanied and low-income students to take a break from college.
  - Allow low-income, undocumented and refugee students who need to take credit-bearing courses while taking English as a Second Language (ESL) courses in all colleges and universities to maintain financial aid and make progress towards their degree.

32 Postsecondary includes all programs after high school such as apprenticeships, training. 33 Recommendation is reflective of content in soon to be published document by the Post-Secondary Basic Needs Taskforce. Content will be available here: Student Supports | WSAC 34 Recommendation is similar to recommendations from the Post-Secondary Basic Needs Taskforce.
Universal support for basic human rights

Create pathways for economic security for YYA and families who have been historically (and continue to be) marginalized from participating in Washington’s thriving economy

- **Universal prevention:** Build strong partnerships with private sector industries to create entry-level positions in high growth industries across the state. Focus on women of color, pregnant and parenting YYA engaged in sex work or experiencing lack of opportunities. Provide support to translate current experiences to workforce, and increase entry-level positions in high growth industries across the state. Focus on

  - Co-design training and increase awareness in the private sector on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), impact of stress on the brain, trauma and needs of neurodivergent and trans, queer, and two-spirit YYA, and mental health conditions to ensure that young people with different needs can access jobs and be supported in their roles without encountering stigma and bias.
  
  - Increase the timeline of support to neurodivergent young people connected to jobs through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to 12 months of mentorship to support neurodivergent young people connected to jobs through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to 12 months of mentorship to
  
  - Create a support network for neurodivergent and young people previously engaged in sex work who are in the workforce to gather feedback from mentors and get input on navigating workplace dynamics.

**Positive examples:**

- **Career Connected Learning**

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35 Due to the differential experiences of non-cisgender people with employers and the high unemployment rate of trans people, we want to highlight the need for
Universal support for basic human rights

**Primary prevention:** Provide broadly available cash assistance for young people or their caregivers to meet their basic needs.

**Universal prevention:** Annually evaluate and update income limits for access to public benefits to reflect the difference in cost of living across the state. In the analysis, ensure that caregivers do not lose all benefits if their income varies.

**Universal prevention:** Provide cash incentive payments or higher education scholarship assistance to minor parents on TANF who have completed education and training requirements.

**Primary prevention:** Lower the barriers to entry for apprenticeship and certification programs by not requiring completion of a GED or high school diploma to qualify for vocational programs and allowing YYA to work on the vocational program and high school completion simultaneously.

**Primary prevention:** Provide comprehensive financial education and support for foster youth, low-income youth and young adults, and unaccompanied minors. Create concrete pathways for YYA to build credit and participate in the economy, housing and other interconnected systems that support their well-being.

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38 Recommendation is aligned with recommendations in the Alone Without A Home report
39 Youth advocates at The Mockingbird Society have
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gear towards young people in foster care and/or experiencing homelessness.
Eliminate racism in systems and supporting youth and families impacted by them

Require training in systems and support youth and families impacted

**Tertiary prevention:** Create a funding stream for multimodal therapy, supportive services and flexible funding to support BIPOC youth and families impacted by government systems including but not limited to juvenile and criminal legal, and child welfare. Additionally invest in recommendations co-created with young people in the report *Improving Stability of YouthExiting Care* to prevent homelessness from child welfare, behavioral health and juvenile legal systems.

**Early and Later Secondary prevention:** Require history, diversity, equity and anti-racism training across all state agency workers with an emphasis on judges, law enforcement and front-line staff. Identify and acknowledge harm that government systems, from local to state level, have caused to communities of color. Require acknowledgment of previous and current harms caused. Prioritize individual and organizational learning so that state workers can work to dismantle racism within their agencies, policies and programs.

**Early and Later Secondary prevention:** Train judges and prosecutors in understanding the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on brain development and adolescent brain development.

**Primary prevention:** Require a minimum standard of training for law enforcement across the state that includes an understanding of trauma and its impact on brain development. Invest in supportive services for police to understand and deal with their individual and personal trauma and understand the impact of stress on their behavior to WJIZHJUTQNHJ[NTQ]SHJ
Eliminate racism in systems and supporting youth and families impacted by them

Design services to meet the needs of marginalized communities

**Across the continuum:** Employ peer specialists in the delivery of services and system navigation across behavioral health, health and human services, schools, housing as BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent, and/or experience physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities.

**Across the continuum:** Partner with and pay young people and caregivers with lived expertise to design programs, services, and policies at the state, county, city government and in community-based organizations; specifically, those who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodivergent, and/or experience physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities.

**Universal prevention:** Ensure language accessibility of state, local and regional advisory and steering committees. Provide compensation for participation on committees.

**Early Secondary prevention:** Create a process in the juvenile legal system that allows a young person to talk directly to the judge and court staff in a trauma-informed, safe space so that they can advocate for themselves before any decision is made on their case.

Recommendations reflect and overlap with research insights and recommendations from the Black Brilliance Research Report and Preliminary Strategic Plan: Prevention of Youth Homelessness.
Eliminate racism in systems and supporting youth and families impacted by them

**Primary or Tertiary prevention:** Fund centralized diversion through BIPOC organizations to ensure that young people have access to basic needs, access to a diversity of housing and opportunities to move out of state to live with a caregiver if necessary.

**Eliminate racial bias in systems**

**Universal prevention:** Ensure all new policies in the state go through anti-racism screening to not perpetuate existing inequalities. Review previous policies to decolonize and make exits from jail or prison qualify as "homeless" on CE prioritization assessment.

**Early and Later Secondary prevention:** Support the court system in updating their practices, processes and approaches, so they are trauma-informed and anti-racist, especially in the juvenile context.

**Tertiary prevention:** Create equitable access to housing by updating Coordinated Entry guidelines.

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- Include each police or system involvement as a vulnerability factor.
- Prioritize parents involved in the child welfare system.
Shifting resources to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities

Direct state funding to support organizations run by and working directly with predominantly BIPOC communities

**Across the continuum:** Reduce siloed requirements around funding from the state to ensure people’s whole health and well-being is supported and is not based on outcomes siloed by department needs.

**Universal prevention:** Provide more state funding to BIPOC and “By and For”

Ensure the workforce reflects the demographics of those served

Ensure each organization working in human services is representative of the community served (BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, neurodiverse, survivors of trafficking, sex-workers) from case managers to leadership to board; make funding contingent on the organization representing the community being served.

**Universal and Primary prevention:** Fund mentoring programs for youth of color and neurodivergent as free after school programs across the state where youth learn life skills, are exposed to different careers and build a strong network of caring adults.
Next steps required to actualize the recommendations from this report include:

1. Set up and program manage a cross-system coordinating body that includes agency stakeholders, legislators, community-based organizations working in prevention and a steering implementation of the recommendations.\(^{42}\) Ensure lived implementation.

   a. Identify agency leads for each of the recommendations including stakeholders within the agencies to lead the work. Prioritize incorporation of high priority recommendations into agency asks to legislature.

   b. Develop a plan of action for implementation. Coordinate across systems at the state and local level to implement recommendations. Conduct ongoing accountability meetings with agency leadership, lived experts and the cross-system coordinating body to ensure that the recommendations are co-designed and implemented according to the vision of the Steering Committee.

   c. Develop required legislative workgroups that include steering committee members and incorporate recommendations into existing workgroups to champion the transformative

2. Fund community-based preventative services across the state and fund the development of a call-in line and website to access the services.

3. Set up the data infrastructure with Research, Data and Analytics team at Department of Social and Health Services Incorporate outcome measure into Results WA dashboards.

For more information:

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\(^{42}\) Preliminary Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness.