
Children, Youth & Families Committee

HB 1883

Brief Description: Establishing a lifeline for youth and young adults who have experienced or are at risk of entering into public systems of care.

Sponsors: Representatives Chopp, Ryu, Santos, Simmons, Slatter, Stonier, Wicks, Peterson, Goodman, Ormsby, Dolan, Ramel, Taylor, Callan, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Davis, Fey, Macri, Valdez and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Lifeline for Independent Living program (Lifeline) for youth and young adults who have experienced or are at risk of entering into public systems of care.
- Creates and prescribes membership of the Lifeline Task Force and Steering Committee.
- Creates the Lifeline Account.

Hearing Date: 1/19/22

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

Office of Homeless Youth.

In 2015 the Legislature created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) within the Department of Commerce. The OHY provides services for youth and young adults, including through the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), street youth services, HOPE Centers, and crisis residential centers.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Institutions.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

On July 1, 2019, the Juvenile Rehabilitation division (JR) transferred from the Department of Social and Health Services to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). The JR operates three juvenile institutions for juveniles who are convicted of crimes and serving more than 30 days of confinement.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Community Facilities.

Community facilities allow youth to begin transitioning back to the community. These facilities provide treatment, education, and vocational services. To be eligible for community facility placement, a youth must be placed on minimum security status. Minimum security status is based on risk and behavior assessments and requires that the individual served 10 percent of their aggregate minimum disposition or 30 days, whichever is greater, and all placement assessment requirements have been met. Individuals who attempt to escape or escape, individuals who are eligible for civil commitment, and individuals who meet other criteria are not eligible for minimum security status.

Dependency Court Proceedings.

Anyone, including the DCYF, may file a petition in court alleging a child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because there is no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child. These petitions must be verified and contain a statement of facts that constitute a dependency and the names and residence of the parents, if known.

When a child is taken into custody, the court is to hold a shelter care hearing within 72 hours. The primary purpose of the shelter care hearing is to determine whether the child can be immediately and safely returned home while the dependency case is being resolved. If a court finds the need to maintain a child out of the home, the shelter care status remains until a dependency fact-finding hearing is held or the parties enter an agreed order of dependency.

If a court determines a child is dependent, the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations regarding the child's placement, the provision of services by the DCYF, compliance of the parents, and whether progress has been made by the parents.

"Child welfare" is defined as a continuum of services that keep children safe and provide support for families in caring for their children. Child welfare services in the state are provided by the DCYF.

Inpatient Behavioral Health Treatment.

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. These programs represent a continuum of care: acute psychiatric facilities, children's long-term inpatient program, and residential substance use programs.

Youth Exiting Systems of Care.

In 2018 the Legislature required the DCYF and the OHY to develop a plan to ensure safe and stable housing for youth who exit from identified public systems of care. The DCYF and OHY's recommendations were included in the 2020 report titled "Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care."

Summary of Bill:

Lifeline for Independent Living Program.

The Office of the Governor, in collaboration from the Department of Commerce (Commerce), must establish the Lifeline for Independent Living program (Lifeline) to provide support and connections to services for youth and young people who have experienced or are at risk of entering into public systems of care, and who require assistance to overcome a life challenge, or are in need of general mentorship and counsel.

"Public systems of care" is defined as Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Shelter and Housing programs, the Juvenile Justice System, Child Dependency, and Inpatient Behavioral Health Treatment.

The Lifeline must do the following:

- establish four regional centers across the state by January 1, 2023, with a headquarters in Olympia;
- be fully operational throughout the state by January 1, 2024;
- create training modules for Lifeline regional center volunteers by December 1, 2022;
- establish a toll-free telephone number, website, and other appropriate technology to facilitate access to contracting advocacy organization services;
- form rules and procedures to support youth and young adults who access the Lifeline who cannot be served sufficiently through existing services;
- establish a uniform reporting system to collect and analyze nonidentifiable data relating to calls and services provided by the Lifeline; and
- establish the Lifeline Steering Committee (Steering Committee) to oversee operations of the Lifeline and ensure satisfactory coordination of services.

The Lifeline Account (Account) is created in the State Treasury. Expenditures from the Account may be used for activities that are dedicated to the benefit of youth and young adults who have or are expected to experience public systems of care.

Activities of the Lifeline must be carried out by a Director of the Lifeline (Director), supervised by the Office of the Governor. The Lifeline must designate a liaison who reports directly to the Director to serve as a liaison between state agencies, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature, and community partners to identify long-term solutions for issues that require use of the Account.

Lifeline Task Force.

The Lifeline Task Force (Task Force), administered by the Commerce, is established to

determine the Lifeline's structure, policy, and best practices. Membership of the Task Force must include representation from:

- Commerce;
- the Department of Children, Youth, and Families;
- the Office of the Governor;
- a Washington or federally recognized Indian tribe;
- Washington counties;
- community-based providers and advocacy organizations; and
- youth and young adults with personal experience in each public system of care.

The statutory authorization establishing the Task Force expires January 30, 2023.

Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee is comprised of the same membership as the Task Force. The Steering Committee is to provide guidance and recommendations to the Lifeline regarding funding, policy, and practice gaps within and among state programs. The Steering Committee must have its initial meeting by March 1, 2023.

Reporting Requirement.

Beginning December 30, 2023, and annual thereafter, the Lifeline must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature with findings and recommendations for improving services and service delivery. The report must include:

- the number of individuals who have accessed the resources of the Lifeline;
- the number of service providers and organizations, by type, who the Lifeline has accessed to provide support or connect with youth and young people;
- demographic information for the individuals who have accessed the Lifeline, limited to the individual's age, gender, and city and county of residence;
- a description of resources provided;
- average time frame from receipt of call to referral for services or resources provided; and
- systemic barriers to services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2022.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.