

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1905

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Reducing homelessness for youth and young adults discharging from a publicly funded system of care.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Senn, Macri, Berry, Leavitt, Taylor, Ryu, Santos, Simmons, Peterson, Chopp, Goodman, Ormsby, Johnson, J., Dolan, Eslick, Ramel, Kloba, Callan, Frame, Davis, Bateman, Harris-Talley, Valdez and Pollet).

House Committee on Children, Youth & Families
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs.

The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) was created in 2015 as an office within the Department of Commerce. The OHY is responsible for leading efforts to coordinate a spectrum of ongoing funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth and improving the safety, health, and welfare of homeless youth in the state.

The measurable goals of the OHY are to:

- decrease the number of homeless youth and young adults by identifying programs that address the initial causes of homelessness; and
- increase permanency rates among homeless youth by decreasing the length and occurrences of youth homelessness caused by a youth's separation from family or a legal guardian.

Some of the duties of the OHY include:

- gathering data and outcome measures;

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- developing recommendation to address gaps within the state system;
- increasing system integration and coordinate efforts to prevent state systems from discharging youth and young adults into homelessness;
- developing measures to include by county and statewide the number of homeless youth; and
- developing a comprehensive plan to encourage identification of youth experiencing homelessness.

The OHY contracts with providers around the state operating or supporting:

- street outreach service programs;
- HOPE Centers;
- Crisis Residential Centers;
- young adult shelters;
- young adult housing programs;
- independent youth housing programs;
- transitional living programs;
- ancillary therapeutic services; and
- system of care grants.

The OHY must regularly consult with an advisory committee composed of advocates, legislators, parent advocates, youth representatives, law enforcement, service providers, and other stakeholders.

Publicly Funded System of Care.

In 2018 the Legislature expressed a goal that beginning January 1, 2021, any unaccompanied youth discharged from a publicly funded system of care would be discharged into safe and stable housing and required the OHY and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to develop a plan supporting that goal. This report was completed in 2020 and is titled "Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care."

The term "publicly funded system of care" is defined as the child welfare system, the behavioral health system, the juvenile justice system, and programs administered by the OHY.

Summary:

Rapid Response Team.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), in coordination with the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY), must develop and implement a rapid response team that appropriately responds to support youth and young adults exiting a publicly funded system of care.

In developing the rapid response team, the DCYF and the OHY must develop and implement a system for:

- identifying youth and young adults that should be served by the rapid response team;
- initiating use of the rapid response team in a timely manner allowing for the best possible transition planning; and
- locating services and connecting youth and young adults with those services to establish stability.

The rapid response team can provide assistance and support to youth and young adults who are at risk of becoming homeless and who are exiting a publicly funded system of care with the goal of securing appropriate housing and other supports for the youth or young adult. If there is no housing identified for a youth or young adult upon exit, the rapid response team must meet before the youth or young adult transitions out of a publicly funded system of care.

Any of the following may refer a youth to the rapid response team:

- a youth or young adult themselves;
- a family member;
- an advocate;
- an educator;
- a law enforcement officer;
- an employee of the DCYF or the OHY;
- a service provider contracting with or licensed by the DCYF;
- a behavioral health service provider serving a youth or young adult; or
- a service provider contracting with the OHY.

The DCYF, in coordination with the OHY, is required to provide a report by November 1, 2023, to the Legislature and the Governor, including data and recommendations related to the rapid response team.

Flexible Funding.

The OHY, in coordination with the DCYF, must administer flexible funding to support persons under age 25 exiting publicly funded systems of care that need discrete support or funding to secure safe housing. These flexible funds may be provided for immediate needs of the person, and that person can receive support more than once.

The flexible funding may be provided to:

- persons under age 25;
- community providers assisting persons under age 25 in planning for discharge and successfully discharging from a publicly funded system of care into safe and stable housing; and
- individuals and entities, including landlords, providing safe housing or other housing-related support for persons under age 25.

Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis Programs.

The OHY must select, monitor, and provide funding and assistance for a minimum of six

total counties that implement Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis Programs (HSYCP) for a period of three years. The HSYCP must include the following components:

- regular training for all appropriate juvenile court staff regarding risk factors and identifiers for youth homelessness;
- an identification and referral system used throughout the juvenile court system related to youth homelessness;
- a dedicated housing stability coordinator that receives referrals, conducts housing stability assessments with youth and caregivers, connects youth and caregivers with relevant community providers based on assessments, and follows up on referrals;
- a model of homelessness prevention services that provides the appropriate amount of intervention based on the youth or family needs; and
- coordinated housing services for youth experiencing homelessness.

The OHY must provide a report to the Legislature and the Governor by October 1, 2025, that includes an evaluation of the HSYCP, and recommendations for improving and expanding the programs.

System of Care Grants.

The OHY must provide system of care grants that prevent youth from exiting a publicly funded system of care into homelessness. These grants must provide support to youth exiting a publicly funded system of care and may include:

- behavioral health services;
- civil legal aid;
- peer navigators and support;
- family reconciliation or engagement services;
- employment support;
- education support;
- case management;
- housing and financial support; or
- other navigation support to support safe and stable housing.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	3
Senate	47	0

Effective: June 9, 2022
January 1, 2023 (Section 2)