

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1905

As of February 18, 2022

Title: An act relating to reducing homelessness for youth and young adults discharging from a publicly funded system of care.

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).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/22, 94-3.

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/18/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, in coordination with the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY), to develop and implement a rapid response team that appropriately responds to support youth and young adults exiting a publicly funded system of care.
- Requires the OHY to provide flexible funding and system of care grants to support the housing needs of youth exiting a publicly funded system of care.
- Requires the OHY to select, monitor, and provide funding and assistance for a minimum of six total counties that implement Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis Programs for a period of three years.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

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.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

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. 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 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 OHY include:

- gathering data and outcome measures;
- 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.

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.

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 passed SSB 6560 with the intention 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 OHY and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to develop a

plan supporting that goal.

OHY and DCYF published the "Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care" report in 2020 outlining the steps to achieve this goal.

The term publicly funded system of care refers to the child welfare system, the behavioral health system, the juvenile justice system, and programs administered by OHY.

Summary of Bill: In 2018, the Legislature established a goal that any unaccompanied youth discharged from a publicly funded system of care in Washington will be discharged into safe and stable housing.

Rapid Response Team. DCYF, in coordination with OHY, the Department of Social and Health Services, and the Health Care Authority is to develop a rapid response team to support youth and young adults exiting a publicly funded system of care. DCYF is to 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 that will allow for the best possible transition planning; and
- locating services and connecting youth and young adults with those services to establish stability.

A rapid response team means a team of representatives from relevant state agencies that meet to respond to complex cases involving a youth or young adult located anywhere in the state exiting a publicly funded system of care to support those youth or young adults with the goal of securing appropriate housing and other supports for the youth or young adult. If there is no housing identified upon exit, the rapid response team is to meet before a youth or young adult transitions out of a publicly funded system of care to allow the youth or young adult better prepare for the exit.

A youth or young adult may be referred to the rapid response team by:

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

The DCYF, in coordination with 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. 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. 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 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.

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. 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.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is a product of over 50 stakeholders working together over the interim, creating a 201 plan—something more advanced as to what we need to do move forward in ensuring that youth and youth adults are not discharged from a publicly funded system of care into homelessness. Time has been spent determining what would be most impactful in reducing youth homelessness as each youth has unique needs. This plan is very implementable. If youth are asking for help, we should listen and provide a number of tools given the number of youth that become homeless. Young people 18 to 24 shoulder the biggest burdens from the pandemic, especially within communities of color.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Tana Senn, Prime Sponsor; Lisa Striedinger, Friends without homes; Tim Meliah, Director of Catholic Charities; Miracle Negron, Member of the Mockingbird Society; Shaun Frazier, Director of Homeless Services at the Y Social Impact Center; Sam Martin, Mockingbird Society/Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.