

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1406

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning youth seeking housing assistance and other related services.

Sponsors: House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Cortes, Senn, Berry, Ortiz-Self, Goodman, Thai, Alvarado, Simmons, Orwall, Taylor, Bateman, Lekanoff, Peterson, Ramel, Macri, Bergquist, Pollet, Reed, Ormsby, Doglio and Davis).

House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Human Services

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs.

The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY) is a branch of the Department of Commerce and leads the statewide efforts to coordinate funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth and improving the safety, health, and welfare of homeless youth.

The OHY contracts with service providers that help prevent youth homelessness and serve youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness. The OHY contracts with licensed youth shelter providers, including Crisis Residential Centers (CRC) and HOPE Centers.

Licensed Overnight Youth Shelters.

Any entity that provides 24-hour care to a child that is not a relative must be licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Overnight youth shelters may be licensed to provide care for youth ages 13 through 17 or youth ages 16 through 21.

When a youth first enters an overnight shelter, the facility must:

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- determine whether the youth's parents are aware of the whereabouts of the youth;
- follow parental notification procedures (provided below); and
- notify law enforcement or the DCYF of any youth 12 years old or younger who is unaccompanied by an adult and requesting services.

If an overnight youth shelter or licensed organization providing services for runaway or homeless youth learns that a youth staying in its facility does not have parental permission, the facility must:

- notify the parent by telephone or other reasonable means unless compelling reasons exist within 72 hours, preferably within 24 hours;
- notify the DCYF if compelling reasons exist not to notify a parent including concerns of abuse or neglect; and
- review the publicly available information on missing youth made available by the Washington State Patrol at least every eight hours while the youth is present. If the youth is listed as missing, the facility must contact the DCYF.

HOPE Centers.

HOPE Centers provide temporary residential placements for street youth under age 18. Street youth are homeless youth living on the street or other unsafe locations. Youth may self-refer to a HOPE Center for services, and entering a HOPE Center is voluntary. While residing in a HOPE Center, each youth will undergo a comprehensive assessment to include:

- the youth's legal status;
- a physical examination;
- a behavioral health evaluation; and
- an educational evaluation of their basic skills, along with any learning disabilities or special needs.

The purpose of the assessment is to develop the best plan for the youth. The plan will focus on finding a permanent and stable home for the youth. This plan might include reunifying the youth with a parent or legal guardian and getting the youth into a transitional living situation and off the streets.

No youth may remain in a HOPE Center longer than 30 days unless approved by the DCYF.

Crisis Residential Centers.

The CRCs operate as semi-secure or secure. A semi-secure CRC is not locked, but operates in a way that reasonably assures that youth placed there will not run away. Secure CRCs are designed and operated to prevent a youth from leaving without permission.

Family Reconciliation Services.

Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) are voluntary services for runaway adolescents, and youth in conflict with their families. The program targets adolescents between ages 12 through 17. The FRS are meant to resolve temporary crisis situations and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placement. The goal is to return the family to a precrisis state and

to work with the family to identify alternative methods of handling similar conflicts. If longer-term service needs are identified, the FRS will help facilitate getting the youth and his or her family into ongoing services.

The FRS may include, but are not limited to:

- short-term family counseling;
- CRC services;
- referrals for substance abuse treatment and/or counseling;
- referrals for behavioral health services;
- short-term placement; and
- family assessments in conjunction with juvenile court services.

Summary:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is required to offer Family Reconciliation Services to families or youth after receiving a report that a youth is away from a lawfully prescribed residence as soon as possible, but no later than three days, excluding weekends and holidays, after receiving a report.

A child is authorized to remain in a licensed overnight youth shelter or with another licensed organization with a stated mission to provide services to homeless or runaway youth and their families for up to 90 days, subject to any limitations established by those shelters or organizations, if:

- the shelter or organization is unable to make contact with a parent despite the required notification efforts; or
- the shelter or organization makes contact with the parent, but the parent does not request that the child return home even if the parent does not provide consent for the child to remain.

In the circumstance described above, the shelter or organization must notify the DCYF.

The length of time that a youth may remain in a HOPE Center is increased to 90 days (from 30).

A child may remain in an out-of-home placement following law enforcement placement in a crisis residential center beyond 72 hours if the parent has not requested that the child return home.

The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs must provide additional funding and assistance to contracted youth service providers or other entities who convene a community support team (Team). The purpose of the Team is to help identify supports for a youth and the youth's family, focused on resolving family conflict and on obtaining or maintaining long-term and stable housing. The Team must prioritize reunification between the youth and the youth's family to the extent possible without endangering the health,

safety, or welfare of the child. The Team may not engage with a family member other than the youth if the parent, guardian, or legal custodian objects to the support or assistance that is offered or provided.

The Team must include the youth and supportive adults identified by the youth.

The Team must develop a process that allows youth who enter a licensed overnight youth shelter or other licensed organization with a stated mission to provide services to homeless or runaway youth and their families to request assistance from the Team.

Any youth who enters a licensed overnight youth shelter or other licensed organization is eligible for the Team.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 96 0

Senate 48 0

Effective: July 23, 2023