



Department of Commerce

Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness

2017 Report

Kim Justice, Executive Director of the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection

Letter from Kim

As chair of the Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness and executive director of the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) Prevention and Protection, it is with great pleasure that I share the Work Group's first annual report. OHY was created in part to identify gaps in how Washington's response system fails to meet the demand for adequate security, support, and resources to young people in need of housing. It is the duty of the Office to convene system partners not only to identify gaps but propose and support enhancements to our systems to ensure there is an effective and efficient system of care for all young people at risk of homelessness.

The Office leads statewide efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness for youth and young adults through five priority areas:

- Stable Housing,
- Family Reconciliation,
- Permanent Connections,
- Education and Employment, and
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing.

The creation of the Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness furthers our collective ability to improve the system response to young people at risk of homelessness and families who experience crisis and need critical intervention services to keep youth from becoming homeless. Our goal is to support a variety of interventions and resources at different access points to improve support to youth and families. This approach requires a coordinated effort by partner-organizations represented on the Work Group.

This report covers how the creation of the Work Group based on the intent outlined in the Governor's directive. The Work Group is convened and staffed by OHY and operates from a solid infrastructure. The agency representatives are carefully selected as leaders and decision makers within their own organizations who come together to address the role of state government in addressing youth homelessness, both to serve youth who are homeless and diverting youth who are at risk of homelessness.

I thank each of the Work Group members for their dedication and commitment to the crisis of youth homelessness and family conflict. We face this challenge together and I'm confident that we can create public policy to reduce and end youth homelessness in Washington.

Commitment

Every agency has a role in preventing and ending youth homelessness. The Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness was established to convene agency representatives to establish a set of shared goals and accountability across state government to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The two areas of emphasis are (1) to identify and divert young people at risk of homelessness and (2) design prospects for housing and services for young people who have experienced homelessness.

As the members of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, we commit to the following:

- Support prevention and intervention strategies for youth and families in crisis;
- Provide adequate referral, assessment, services and case management;
- Increase types and availability of housing options; and
- Provide services designed to support youth development that is culturally responsive.

The Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness will advocate for policies and funding that create service opportunities for homeless youth and young adults in Washington State. The Work Group will strengthen and coordinate state and local level agency investment, policy, programs, services, and operations relating to homeless services and programs for youth and young adults.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

More than 13,000 young people in Washington State are without a safe and stable place to call home. Youth experience homelessness or are unstably housed for any number of reasons, including abuse, family conflict, rejection due to sexual identity, pregnancy, or family poverty (Ending Youth Homelessness: Promising Program Models). They might also be released from systems of care into homelessness or exit a shelter to enter another shelter with no system response to provide supportive transition to stable housing. Leaders in state and local government are responsible for designing and delivering systems that give support necessary for families experiencing crisis and for youth to grow into healthy adulthood.

Per Governor Jay Inslee, “Youth homelessness is complex and touches many systems. While OHY (Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection) oversees this effort, all of state government must be committed and coordinate to ensure that young people have a safe and stable home, support to reunify with family when appropriate, access to physical and behavioral health care, and opportunities to obtain education and employment. Importantly, we must ensure that no young person is discharged from a public system of care into homelessness.”

Washington State discharges youth from state systems of care including child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavior health in-patient facilities. Of the youth population discharged from any of these systems, there is evidence that those youth experience housing instability within 12 months. This equates to 714 youth exiting a chemical dependency treatment facility experience homelessness within a year of leaving treatment. The same research shows that 47 youth exiting foster care and 32 youth exiting a juvenile rehabilitation facility (institution or community facility) experience homelessness within a year of leaving those systems of care.

System	Number Exiting	% homeless within 12 months
Chemical dependency treatment facility	1,488	48%
Foster Care	168	28%
Juvenile Rehabilitation	125	26%

2013 Research and Data Analysis, Department of Social and Health Services

While transition plans are often in place for these youth, they do not adequately prevent homelessness. For many youth returning to a home after being at a residential facility, families are not adequately prepared to manage the stress of re-entry into the home, school, and community. To compound the problem, there is minimal investment in systems designed to prevent homelessness by making services available to deescalate family crisis or divert family violence in a way to resolve conflict.

In response to these gaps, the Work Group will continue to focus on creating opportunity to prevent youth homelessness and add capacity to existing infrastructure to serve youth who are experiencing homelessness. The Work Group intends to promote comprehensive policies and coordinated services between agencies of government to reduce the number of youth who experience homelessness, as well as support programs and services for youth who are homeless.

The following report details the creation of the Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness and sets out the work plan for 2018 that focuses on three near-term action items outlined in the 2016 OHY report.

- Ensure that youth exiting public systems have a safe, stable place to go,
- Invest in crisis intervention and diversion for families experiencing conflict,
- Improve education and employment outcomes.

Work Group Activities

In its [2016 Report to the Governor and Legislature](#), OHY recommended a set of components for a successful system response and strategies to prevent and end youth homelessness. In accordance with those recommendations, the Governor requested the establishment of the Interagency Work Group to provide a forum for an integrated and consistent statewide approach to address youth homelessness.

The Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness was established pursuant to [Governor's Directive 17-01](#) signed on January 24, 2017. The purpose is to integrate systems in order to provide a continuum of services for system-involved youth and young adults who experience housing instability. The Work Group seeks to assess needs, identify gaps, provide transition services, and prevent state systems from discharging youth into homelessness. Initiatives and action plans adopted by the Work Group align the state's investments in youth and young adult programs and service with the principles of OHY.

The Work Group began meeting in May of 2017. Each representative completed an agency profile to summarize their current programs and investment in services for homeless youth. The agency profiles also included information about agency contribution to the Work Group mission, needs and system gaps, and areas of underutilization of programs that serve youth and young adults. The Work Group adopted governance and infrastructure to guide the meetings that include: a draft charter, organization chart, roster, and meeting schedule.

The draft charter identifies seven objectives and a number of related deliverables. The objectives include:

1. Prevent youth from experiencing homelessness after exiting public systems of care;
2. Ensure every youth has a safe and stable place to sleep at night;
3. Reconcile families when safe and appropriate;
4. Provide youth with opportunities to establish positive, healthy relationships with adults;
5. Provide youth with opportunities to advance in their education or training and obtain employment;
6. Ensure youth have access to behavioral and physical health care; and,
7. Recognize over-represented populations of youth or young adults who are homeless and design a culturally-responsive system.

The Work Group membership consists of representatives from sixteen state agencies and various representatives from other state entities, local government, or professional

associations. Based on the varied subject matter expertise of the representatives, the Work Group members self-selected into three subject area teams to develop recommendations for initiatives and related action plans. Those areas are (1) Systems of Care, (2) Education and Employment, and (3) Behavior and Physical Health. Each team proposed initiatives that create the basis for the Work Group's 2018 work plan.

The Work Group is fortunate to be advised by committed stakeholders in the fields of direct service and philanthropy. There are also ongoing joint opportunities to support the work of the OHY Advisory Committee and a role to promote innovative practices through grant funded programs at OHY.

Dashboard

Research and Data Analysis (RDA) is an organization housed within the Department of Social and Health Services that provides data, analytics, and decision support tools to improve the delivery of services that transform lives. To that end, OHY has partnered with RDA to create a dashboard showing youth who exit state systems of care and experience homelessness in 12 months. The dashboard data is generated using a matching analysis of administrative data systems to individuals in one of three systems of care. The purpose of generating and sharing this data is to advise policy makers on programs that are effective at reducing youth homelessness and/or targeting funding to meet the immediate demand.

The report provides information on housing status of youth and young adults who exit Washington State Systems of Care including: foster care, residential behavioral health, and criminal justice.

June of 2017

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

Methodology: Youth or young adults who exit foster care, are discharged from a publically-paid inpatient mental health or substance use disorder treatment, or released from Juvenile Rehabilitation institutions or the State's adult Department of Corrections facilities are followed over a 12 month period post-release using state administrative data. Administrative

information on housing status is used to estimate rates of homelessness or housing instability within 6 and 12 months of discharge/release.

RDA plans to expand the scope of the dashboard to include more court-involved youth who experience housing instability, pending release from the court involvement (including juvenile detention).

RDA has provided other resources to support OHY and the Work Group. Research staff advise the Work Group on strategies to evaluate success in program outcomes and continue to partner with OHY on grant funded innovations that improve the effectiveness of programs and operations that serve youth and families. RDA staff participate in Work Group and small group meetings to share information about existing data sets and is available to conduct analysis to inform Work Group Initiatives.

Initiatives and Action Plans

The work Group is tasked with developing shared goals and begin implementing action plans that include comprehensive transition plans and a risk assessment and referral process for youth in systems of care.

Systems of Care		
Subject Area	Initiative	Action
Shelter Options	Increase statewide shelter options for youth and young adults	Research alternative safe shelter options for adolescent youth
		Engage communities statewide on expanding shelter options
		Create outreach strategy for communities that show disproportionate rates of youth homelessness
Housing Stability	Increase access to HUD resources	Family Unification Program (FUP) voucher via housing authority for housing up to 2 years - FUP vouchers provide housing assistance to families involved with the child welfare system, to reunify families or keep them together, and youths aged 18-21 who have aged out of the foster care system. To qualify, families and youths must lack adequate housing.
	Increase access to Bridge Housing for youth and young adults	Agency-owned, block lease, youth and young adult services
	Address barrier for placement for individuals with criminal history	Use partnerships with civil legal advocates or navigators to assist youth existing juvenile justice who are in need of independent housing
Intervention systems	Establish Presumptive Enrollment	Extended Foster care
		Medicaid
		SNAP
	Improve system response for youth and families in crisis	Support initiatives that provide case management and services to adolescent youth exiting child welfare and/or JR
		Promote prevention and intervention to reduce youth homelessness by defining system improvements to support families in crisis
Opportunities for positive and healthy relationships	Promote best practice programs	Conduct literature review to determine best practices for at risk youth population and mentor-type programs
		Connect youth in systems of care with mentor programs as part of ongoing support and supervision or as part of a transition plan upon exit
	Increase support to youth networks and peer mentoring programs	Passion to Action Youth Network
		Mockingbird Society Youth Voice

Independent Living Skills	Support consistent Independent Living Skills Programs (develop resources for added capacity or within existing beds)	Assessment: Casey life skills
		Responsible Living Skills placement for youth – remove requirement that youth must be dependent
		Extend Responsible Living Skills Program beds and street outreach until age 21

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Education and Employment		
Subject Area	Initiative	Action
K-12: District Homeless Liaisons	Support the role of District Homeless Liaisons by matching workload with adequate staffing	Equate workload with staff to student ratio to provide adequate staffing
		Define best practice and job description
Education and Outreach	Eliminate barriers to full implementation of ESSA	Provide staff training for agencies related educational rights of homeless children and youth
		Review organizational policies and procedures to ensure no barriers for access to and full participation in education, including school of origin rights, for students experiencing homelessness
Workforce Coordinating Board: WDC Approved Plans	Ensure connection of District Homeless Liaison to the WDC	Present on the role of District Homeless Liaison to the Coordinating Board
		Request Liaison updates at all WDC meetings (create expectation via Coordinating Board)
Improve Resource Sharing	Increase access to information about youth homeless resources	Create clearinghouse by district or region
	Promote interface between high school and beyond plans and career pathways (internships, etc.)	Youth Technology Platform
Higher Education	Strengthen coordination of college resources with re-entry population (target JR and RLSP)	Survey of current practices and literature review of promising strategies
		Create handbook of resources
		Connect college and housing resources at time of discharge from systems of care

Behavior and Physical Health

Subject Area	Initiative	Action
Transition Planning: At Risk Populations	Improve health care coordination for at risk youth and young adults prior to being released from a system of care to include: enrollment eligibility, PRISM prescreen, WISe screen	Expand existing “jail transition” model to other at risk populations: JR institution or JR community settings, juvenile court probation and civil cases
Promote Innovative Practices	Expand evidence based or promising programs such as: We Care, P2P, and Zero Suicide	Review existing programs and conduct Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) analysis to determine expansion strategy
Community Based Options: Young Adults w/ Early Serious Mental Illness	Increase capacity and support for young adults with early serious mental illness using subsidized housing and case management	Case Management: Determine models of wrap-around services necessary for young adults with early serious mental illness
		Subsidize Housing: Expand models that offer housing (coupled with wrap-around services) for individuals most likely to otherwise be housed in an institution

Conclusion

There is urgency to develop a multi-staged effort to address youth homelessness. The advantage to OHY and the Work Group is that youth homelessness is an area of universal commitment by policy makers, state and local government representatives, parents and youth, system partners, providers, and communities. The creation of the Work Group is a testament to that commitment and the responsibility to promote solutions requires an equal level of urgency and commitment.

Next Steps

The Work Group has inventoried the high-level existing systems designed to support youth transitions from care and housing. In the upcoming six months, we will continue to challenge the existing system response to identify barriers by recognizing system limitations and areas of under-utilization, design strategies to increase capacity, and focus on prevention. This work will continue to refine the 2018 strategy for policy and operational changes to the network of systems to support youth as well as systems designed to serve families in crisis.

The action steps articulated by the Work Group will be informed increasingly by research, service providers, and most importantly, by the input of youth and families with lived experience.

Updates to Work Plan

The Work Group's work plan will be updated twice in 2018:

- June 2018 ~ interim work plan update
- December 2018 ~ annual report

