Youth Homelessness in Washington

Landscape scan

COURTNEY NOBLE

In 2015, Washington State established the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection ("OHY"). Housed within the Department of Commerce, the OHY will lead statewide efforts to reduce and prevent youth homelessness by working with partners and communities to establish ongoing and future funding, policy, and best practices related to improving the welfare of youth and young adults in transition in Washington.

A group of funders, service providers, youth, advocates and government partners has come together to form A Way Home Washington, a coalition committed to advancing the vision of a state where homelessness amongst youth is rare and, if it occurs, brief in duration and never repeated. Supported by the Raikes Foundation, A Way Home Washington commissioned this report to help better understand what we know about the issue of youth homelessness in Washington State: current capacity, as well as assets and gaps in policy, program, and practices. Our work can serve as a tool for the OHY, but is distinct from the report that the OHY will submit to the Governor and Legislature in December of 2016.

Washington is at a critical juncture in its efforts to address youth homelessness, with coordination, resources and leadership at unprecedented levels. The OHY is poised to bring together multiple agencies to more effectively serve youth across the homeless, child welfare, justice, education and behavioral health systems. We hope this report can be a resource for anyone working to address homelessness, and that our state can keep more young people housed, safe and moving towards their futures.

As used herein, the term homeless youth refers to the population of unaccompanied 12-25 year olds. When relevant, the distinction is made between minors (under 18) and young adults (18-25).

PARTNERS

RAIKES FOUNDATION

STATE OF WASHINGTON Department of Commerce

A WAY HOME

Overview

The goals of the project were to:

(i)   identify what we know and do not know about Washington's homeless youth; **slides 4 – 7**
(ii)   describe system gaps; **slides 8 and 9**
(iii)   recommend potential policy and practice solutions; **slides 10 – 17**
(iv)   suggest communities of opportunity that merit additional attention; **slide 18**
(v)   assess public funding resources that could be newly leveraged or repurposed to better serve this population; **slide 19**

Research Methods

Our methodology included both qualitative and quantitative elements:

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data
2. Education system data: numbers of unaccompanied homeless students required to be reported under the McKinney Vento Act and estimates developed by Columbia Legal Services for school districts that are not required to report this data
3. Point In Time Data: one-night counts of unsheltered youth collected by communities every two years as mandated by HUD
4. ACES data: used by DSHS caseworkers to determine eligibility for public assistance
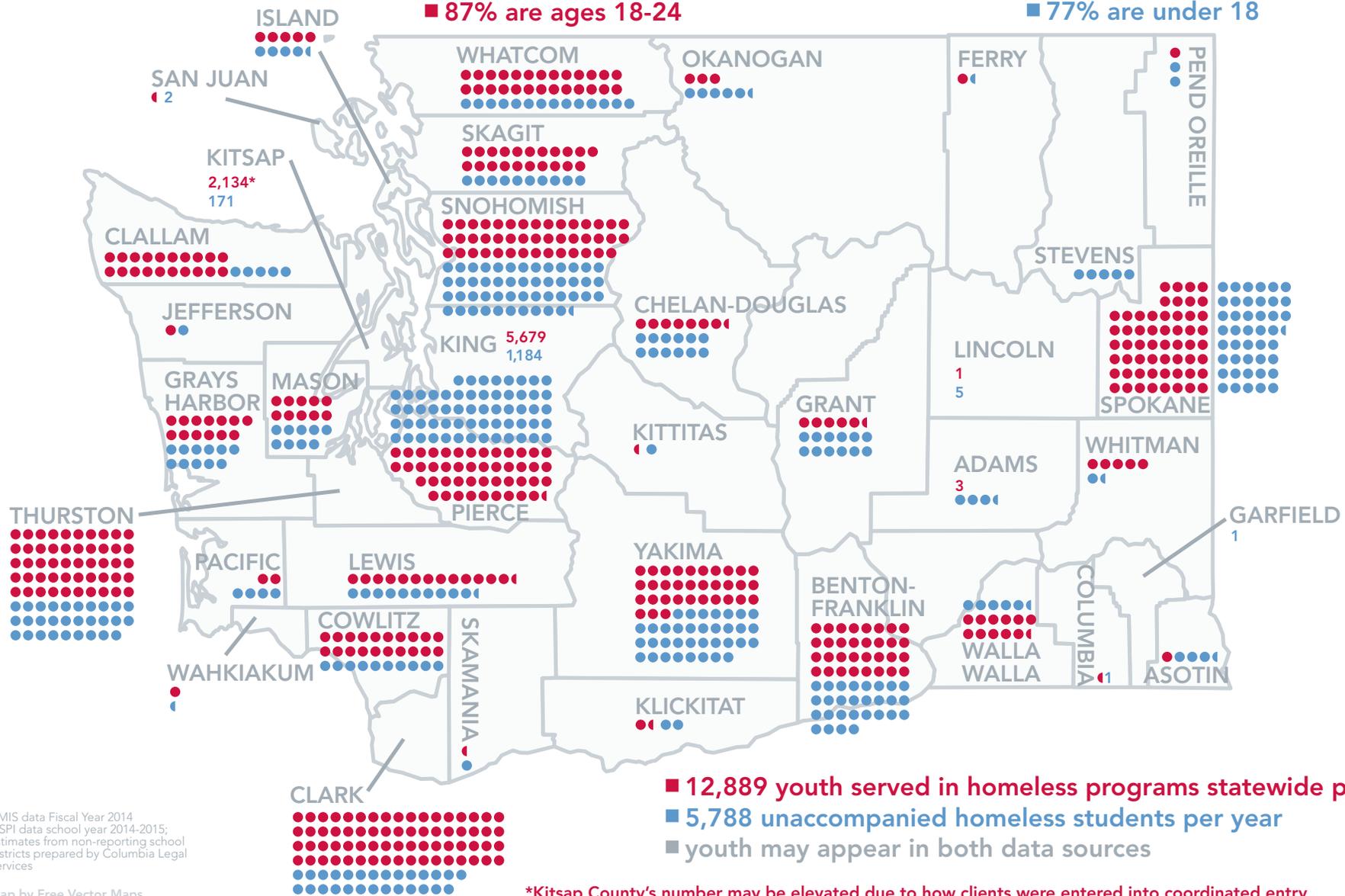
LITERATURE REVIEW

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

INTERVIEWS: phone interviews with 32 service providers and policy experts statewide

ASSESSMENT: to determine which communities in the state might be best poised to leverage new opportunities or serve as models for change, a rating matrix scoring need, infrastructure, innovation and leadership was applied to various regions

Youth experience homelessness in every county in Washington State.

● **Youth receiving homeless services or housing (one dot represents ten youth)**
■ **87% are ages 18-24**

● **Unaccompanied homeless students (one dot represents ten youth)**
■ **77% are under 18**

ISLAND

SAN JUAN
● 2

KITSAP
2,134*
171

CLALLAM

JEFFERSON

GRAYS HARBOR

MASON

THURSTON

PACIFIC

WAHKIAKUM

COWLITZ

CLARK

WHATCOM

SKAGIT

SNOHOMISH

KING
5,679
1,184

PIERCE

LEWIS

SKAMANIA

OKANOGAN

FERRY

PEND OREILLE

STEVENS

CHELAN-DOUGLAS

CHELAN

KITTITAS

GRANT

YAKIMA

KLICKITAT

LINCOLN
1
5

ADAMS
3

SPOKANE

WHITMAN

BENTON-FRANKLIN

WALLA WALLA

COLUMBIA

GARFIELD
1

ASOTIN

■ **12,889 youth served in homeless programs statewide per year**
■ **5,788 unaccompanied homeless students per year**
■ **youth may appear in both data sources**

*Kitsap County's number may be elevated due to how clients were entered into coordinated entry

homeless minors
(under 18)

where do homeless youth come from?

LOCAL
78% of unaccompanied homeless students began 9th grade in Washington, 22% transferred in from out of state

who are homeless youth?

unaccompanied homeless youth are:

14% in shelters

81% doubled up (sharing housing due to loss of housing or economic hardship)

4% unsheltered

1% hotels or motels

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
students with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse needs are **three times** more likely to experience homelessness than their peers

where do they go?

GRADUATION
Only **57%** of unaccompanied homeless students graduate from high school on time.

25% drop out, 66% of whom will do so in the 12th grade.

Youth exiting Crisis Residential Centers were released to:

19% parent, kin or suitable adult

38% foster home

14% CRC or HOPE bed

4% on the run

17% group home

7% not released to the Children's Administration

• Student data for 2015 from OSPI and Columbia Legal Services
• CRC data for 2014 from Dept. of Commerce

homeless young adults (18-24)

where do homeless young adults come from?

86% LOCAL
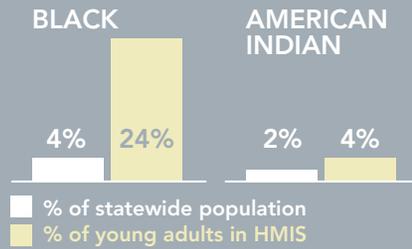of new clients are entering a homeless program in the same county as their last permanent zip code

48% RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT
of clients discharged from a chemical dependency treatment facility are homeless in 12 months

28% CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION
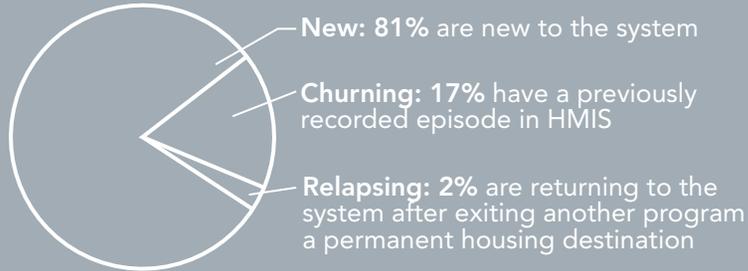of youth aging out of foster care at 18 are homeless in 12 months

26% JUVENILE REHABILITATION
of youth exiting a state institution or residential program are homeless in 12 months

who are homeless young adults?

DISPROPORTIONALITY

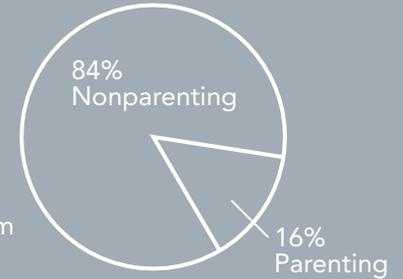**BLACK** 4% 24%
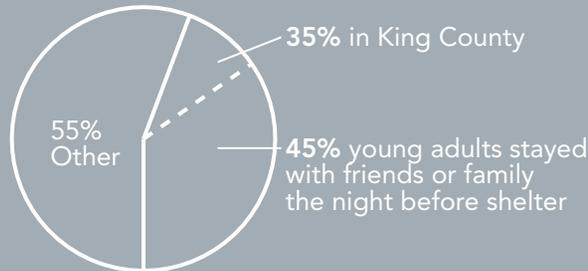**AMERICAN INDIAN** 2% 4%

☐ % of statewide population
☐ % of young adults in HMIS

ENGAGEMENT

New: 81% are new to the system

Churning: 17% have a previously recorded episode in HMIS

Relapsing: 2% are returning to the system after exiting another program a permanent housing destination

PARENTING

84% Nonparenting

16% Parenting

WHERE THEY STAYED

55% Other

35% in King County

45% young adults stayed with friends or family the night before shelter

GENDER

41% Male

52% Female

<1% Transgender

6% Unknown
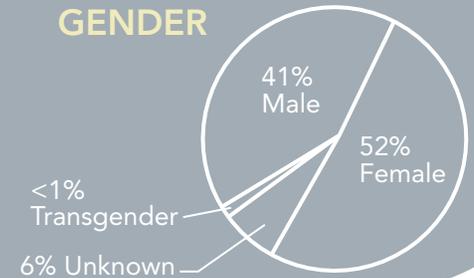
where do they go when exiting homeless programs?

4% shelter or hospital
1% foster care
1% jail
27% housing (permanent, transitional)
2% unsheltered location
7% motel or temporarily with family or friends
58% unknown

- HMIS data Fiscal Year 2014
- Residential Treatment number from Shah, MF, et al. (2012), The Housing Stats of Individuals Discharged from Behavioral Health Treatment Facilities, available at https://www.dshs.wa.gov/SESA/rda/documents/research-11-170.pdf
- Children's Administration number from Shah, MF, et al. (2015), Youth At Risk of Homelessness, available at https://www.dshs.wa.gov/SESA/rda/documents/research-7-106.pdf
- Juvenile Rehabilitation number from Shah, MF, et al. (2013), Impact of Homelessness on Youth Recently Released from Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities, available at https://www.dshs.wa.gov/SESA/rda/documents/research-11-191.pdf

KEY DATA TAKEAWAYS

- Youth are homeless in every county in the state.
- The vast majority of young people using homeless housing and services are appearing to the system for the first time, and are accessing resources in the communities where they live.
- Among crossover youth who experience homelessness after exiting another state system, the largest numbers come from residential treatment facilities, but the most likely to access homeless services are those from child welfare.
- Sufficient research exists on risk factors for future homelessness among in-system youth to allow for early identification and intervention.
- Many youth have social supports they can stay with immediately before becoming homeless, particularly in rural regions.
- The incidence of homelessness is elevated amongst African American youth, American Indian youth and parenting youth. Black non-Hispanic youth are most over-represented in urban homeless systems, and Native American youth are over-represented in more rural parts of the state.
- There is vast regional variation in the results of interventions designed to support homeless youth.

GAPS IN DATA AND RESEARCH

- Very little is known about the local relationship between youth homelessness and family conflict, child maltreatment, economic hardship, sexual orientation, gender identity and county juvenile court involvement. Gaps in data integration, collection or analysis in these domains limit our ability to address these underlying contributors to homelessness.
- Data on youth under 18 in HMIS is currently restricted due to issues surrounding their ability to consent to data collection, and due to the absence of state-funded under 18 beds in HMIS.
- Effective point in time counts of homeless youth are not conducted statewide.
- We lack consistent, valid methods of measurement to monitor progress addressing youth homelessness against statewide, cross-system benchmarks.

1. THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING AND SHELTER FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IS INSUFFICIENT.

Data and providers overwhelmingly indicate that the current housing resources available to youth are not adequate:

• Over half of the 39 counties in Washington lack any beds dedicated to homeless youth or young adults.

• 44% of homeless young adults are served within the adult homeless system.

• Over-capacity shelters assign beds by lottery, which contributes to high rates of exits from homeless programs to unknown destinations.

Confusion around licensing requirements for shelters, host homes and Extended Foster Care Placements deters providers from expanding housing supply.

2. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES ARE NOT ADEQUATELY INTEGRATED INTO HOMELESS SERVICES.

Youth in crisis and experiencing homelessness struggle to have their behavioral health needs met due to a lack of availability of resources. Primary gaps include:

• **Diversion**: access to chemical dependency detox beds and 24-7 crisis services for youth experiencing a psychotic episode;

• **In-system**: mental health professionals at homeless drop-ins, shelters and housing; and

• **Transition services**: holistic family reunification support for youth exiting mental health, justice and child welfare systems.

3. DIVERSION PROGRAMS FROM CHILD WELFARE AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS ARE IMPORTANT PREVENTION TOOLS THAT ARE INCONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

Given the rates at which youth exit the child welfare and justice systems into homelessness, effective diversion programs must be broadly implemented.

• The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, which safely reduces detention populations by implementing alternatives for detention and developing risk assessment instruments to determine which youth need incarceration, is active in 1/3 of juvenile courts statewide. Truancy boards, which divert truant youth from the justice system, are currently operating in 30% of Washington's school districts, but are mandated statewide by the 2017 school year.

• In the child welfare system, Family Assessment Response (FAR), a program connecting families at low to moderate risk for child maltreatment with concrete supports and resources with the goal of averting a youth's removal from the home, is underway in 32 (of 48) Child Protective Services offices.

4. INTENSIVE, COLLABORATIVE TRANSITION SERVICES ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUTH EXITING CHILD WELFARE, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS WITH ELEVATED NEEDS.

While the populations of youth in foster care and detention have decreased over the last 10 years, the intensity of the mental health and service needs for youth in care has also increased. The problem is not necessarily the absence of reentry programs, but their intensity, availability, and quality. Evidence based transition programs exist. For example, Family Integrated Transitions, which provides a 24/7 therapist to support youth and their families when a youth is exiting custody with a dual chemical dependency and mental health diagnosis, is available in just four counties statewide.

5. WITHOUT INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY REMAINS REACTIVE

In many regions throughout the state, organizations are often the sole youth-provider in a particular system (homeless, employment, mental health), and are not part of a cross-system coalition of youth providers. A sense of being the "square peg" in a system designed for adults is prevalent.

Many organizations also face challenges recruiting and retaining employees. Agency leadership repeatedly voiced concern that these structural barriers, as well as the absence of youth-focused coalitions with dedicated support staff, rendered them less able to innovate.

6. BARRIERS TO DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ASSESS PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS

There are areas where Washington has very strong analytical resources: HMIS participation, an integrated state administrative database, and the data team at DSHS-RDA. However, the significant data blind spots noted on slide 7 impede efforts to know what is and is not working.

7. A COHERENT STATEWIDE STRATEGY AROUND EQUITY IS NECESSARY

In Washington, African Americans are 4% of the population but 24% of the youth served in the homeless system. Native Americans make up 4% of HMIS users, but 2% of the state's population. Various state sources suggest that between 22 and 24% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.[1] Individual regions and organizations have adopted piecemeal approaches to these disparities, but training and services targeting these inequities are not available in most of the state.

1 RHY data: https://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis/custom_reports.jsp; King County Count Us In 2015 report: https://tf008v2.storage.googleapis.com/Count-Us-In-2015-Rpt.pdf ; Whatcom County Report: http://www.nwys.org/wp-content/uploads/gates-pride-recommendations-report.pdf

Strategy 1: Increase diversion from child welfare and justice systems

Policy:
- Support more consistent statewide access and broader eligibility for front-end services that prevent youth from entering justice system including street outreach, non-secure alternatives to detention and mental health crisis receiving centers.
- Reform status offense laws to reduce disproportionate over-representation of minority youth incarcerated for such crimes.
- End detention for truancy.

Practice:
- Increase training on adolescent services in DSHS's Family Assessment Response (FAR) initiative.
- Increase availability of holistic family interventions for minors and young adults, including Family Reconciliation Services, conflict mediation, counseling, and more intensive therapeutic interventions.
- Increase justice diversion programs for youth involved in intra-family domestic violence, so that youth are not charged and families are not separated.

Model Program: Family Intervention and Restorative Services Program

Provider: King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, King County
Service Domain: Permanent Connections
Program Description: Law enforcement takes youth involved in familial domestic violence to a 24/7 center and instead of being booked into detention, youth are assessed by a Master's level social worker specializing in family violence. Youth receive respite care, a cooling off period, and are reconnected with family in a planned and structured manner designed to help change family dynamics. Youth who participate in these services will not have their cases referred to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.
Outcomes: New in 2016; program model in Pima, AZ, saw juvenile DV bookings drop from over 1,000 to 82 in 6 years.

Strategy 2: Ensure that the child welfare system has an appropriate response for older youth, including effective transition services

Policy:
• Extend eligibility to enter Extended Foster Care (EFC) from age 19 to age 21.

Practice:
• Enhance training and oversight efforts to ensure EFC is available to all eligible youth.
• Evaluate effectiveness of Independent Living (IL) interventions at supporting housing stability amongst youth exiting care. Clarify CA caseworker versus IL case manager roles and responsibilities in securing housing options.
• Strengthen the appeal process for youth denied services through the child protection system.
• Reinstate adolescent units so state caseworkers who specialize in meeting the needs of older youth can focus on this population.

Data:
• Quantify number of youth accessing the homeless system who are (either pre or post entry) denied protections and services of the child welfare system.
• Monitor numbers of youth in EFC who become homeless due to lack of available placement or upon exit; compare to existing data on youth aging out at 18.
• Monitor numbers of youth in state custody placed in Crisis Residential Centers due to lack of available placements.

Model Program: Foster Care Transition Program, YV LifeSet

Provider: YMCA, King County
Service Domain: Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Housing Stability
Program Description: YV LifeSet is an intensive, individualized and clinically focused model of Independent Living services for youth aging out of foster care. A model created and administered by Youth Villages in eight states, King County is the first region in the country to deliver the service through a partnership model.
Outcomes: In a randomized trial of 1,300 18-24 year olds who received the LifeSet intervention in Tennessee, the program produced statistically significant effects in three domains, including a 22% decrease in homelessness, a 17% increase in earnings from employment, and a 13% decline in mental health problems versus a control group.

Strategy 3: Monitor the relationship between homelessness and discharge from detention, and improve consistency of transition services

Practice:
• Build relationships between shelters and county detention staff. Encourage collaboration across systems through joint projects and blended grant funding.
• Increase availability of post-release transition services for youth who exit detention without outside support, and the availability of evidence-based intensive transition services. Develop recommendations on eligibility and standards for receiving these services.

Data:
• Improve integration of county juvenile detention data to increase understanding of prevalence of youth discharged into homelessness. If integration is not possible, require compilation and public disclosure of statewide data re: release of youth from detention to shelter or unknown destinations.
• Explore real-time data sharing options for youth involved in the juvenile justice, child welfare and education systems to increase case coordination.

Model Program: Juvenile Court and Detentions Transition Program

Provider: Community Youth Services, Mason and Thurston Counties
Service Domain: Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Housing Stability
Program Description: Case management and mental health services for juvenile justice involved-youth. Youth can be referred into the program by detention staff, probation officers, parents or school staff. A CYS transition therapist meets with the youth regularly while in detention, and when the youth exits detention the transition therapist will help coordinate with family members, the probation officer, and other service agencies that might be involved with the youth. Originally funded through the Thurston-Mason RSN, the program recently received funds through County sales tax treatment funds to double in size.
Outcomes: CYS serves over 150 youth per year in this program, with a goal of enrolling 30% of clients in Medicaid mental health services post-release.

Strategy 4: Increase housing options for youth

Policy:
- Expand eligibility (and funding streams) for beds and services currently limited to foster youth (such as IYHP, RLSP, Independent Living) to serve a broader population of youth experiencing homelessness.
- Assess whether current licensing requirements and standards used for shelters, host homes, and Extended Foster Care placements are appropriate and overseen by the appropriate body.

Practice:
- Increase funding and support services available to family/kin and other natural supports.
- Improve communication with youth service providers about existing licensing requirements.
- Expand availability of developmentally-appropriate housing for homeless youth who are parenting.
- Increase housing placements for youth in care under 18 with behavioral health needs and the number of Supervised Independent Living Placements for youth in Extended Foster Care.

Data:
- Work with providers to identify ways to reduce homeless system exits to unknown destinations.

Model Program: Host Family Program

Provider: Ryan's House for Youth, Island County
Service Domain: Education and Employment, Housing Stability
Program Description: The Host Family Program addresses the housing needs of homeless youth ages 14 to 24 on Whidbey Island by connecting them with caring adults from their community who are willing to provide safe housing and support. Ryan's House provides case management services to the youth and host family. Referrals into the program come from many sources, primarily McKinney Vento liaisons. In 2015, Ryan's House expanded its programing to better serve LGBT youth, establishing a place for LGBT youth to be supported if they are at risk of being expelled from their home. The agency began a host family recruitment effort to both specifically recruit host families that could provide housing and support to LGBT youth, and to increase the visibility of the needs of homeless LGBT youth in the community.
Outcomes: In four years, the host family program has served 26 youth. 100% of youth participants who were eligible for graduation did so.

Strategy 5: Support education system in identifying and responding to the needs of homeless and highly mobile youth

Policy:
- Introduce flexible "barrier funding" to address education-related unmet needs amongst youth participating in Open Doors.
- Explore the continuation of K-12 Open Doors funding beyond age 21 for some groups of students, including homeless and formerly homeless youth.

Practice:
- Ensure Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) immediately follow students who transfer schools.
- Reduce suspensions in high schools and middles schools with elevated rates of homelessness and racially disproportionate levels of school-based discipline. Adopt practices that reduce disengagement, including trauma-informed discipline and in-school suspension.
- Explore a housing model for unaccompanied homeless students (such as host homes) that can be a resource for McKinney Vento liaisons in regions (primarily rural) that lack outside supports such as shelters, housing, and foster care placements.
- Leverage early warning systems (tracking attendance, behavior, performance) to identify youth who are experiencing housing struggles.
- Expand school-based health clinics, and strengthen their referrals to behavioral therapy and substance abuse programs.
- Partner with Superintendents to advance the important role their districts play in identifying homeless youth.

Data: Set a statewide goal for graduation rates amongst homeless students. Create opportunities for learning among schools with high rates of student homelessness to build knowledge of what is working.

Model Program: Trauma Informed Discipline

Provider: Lincoln High School, Walla Walla County

Service Domain: Education and Employment

Program Description: In 2009-2013, a systematic effort was made by teachers and staff at Lincoln High to transform the culture at the school to become supportive of heavily traumatized youth, and to increase the youth's resilience and their capacity to learn. In response to research on the long term effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), staff at Lincoln focused on reducing post-traumatic stress and general mental health symptoms, and increasing adaptive and social skills. The Lincoln High approach was not designed to resolve a student's homelessness, though an experience of homelessness would be one of the factors assessed in establishing a youth's ACE score.

Outcomes: In the first two years of implementation, Lincoln High's suspension rate dropped by 85% and graduation rates almost tripled. A 2015 study showed an improvement in student resiliency for the majority of Lincoln attendees, and associated, statistically significant better school outcomes on various measures of school performance: fewer absences, better reading and math scores on standardized tests and higher grades.

Strategy 6: Improve integration of and access to behavioral health services

Policy:
• Simplify the chemical dependency licensing process for individuals with a preexisting mental health license.

Practice:
• Integrate more harm-reduction services with mental health services.
• Explore barriers to cost – effectively delivering mental health services to Medicaid-eligible homeless youth in housing or shelter settings.
• Confirm availability of resources to conduct immediate mental health and substance abuse screenings at alternatives to detentions and Crisis Residential Centers, as well as beds to receive youth experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
• Build capacity of homeless youth providers to provide mental health services on-site, either through mental-health professionals on-staff, or through enhanced partnerships with local behavioral health providers.
• Scan chemical dependency residential facilities, waitlist lengths and transition plans for youth exiting these facilities. Determine barriers to creating a system of on-demand, developmentally-appropriate detox treatment beds for youth.

Model Program: Behavioral Health Transition Services, LifePoint

Provider: Excelsior Youth Center, Spokane County
Service Domain: Housing Stability, Social and Emotional Wellbeing
Program Description: Comprehensive transition service for Medicaid-eligible youth ages 17-21 who are exiting from higher levels of care without support system resources. Transition services were a longstanding community need for those individuals aging-out of psychiatric hospitalization, juvenile justice and child welfare systems, who often experienced this transition as an abrupt change in the level of available support. Excelsior began LifePoint to address this gap in 2015, receiving its first clients from Eastern State Hospital.
Outcomes: While still a new program with limited data on the youth who have transitioned from services, in its first 12 months of operation, LifePoint clients spent 72 days in acute care beds (in-patient hospitalization, treatment facilities, etc.). In the 12 months prior to entering LifePoint, the same clients had spent 1,066 days in acute care beds.

Strategy 7: Increase incomes of youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Policy:
- Increase the number of certified pre-apprentice training programs throughout Washington, and provide state resources to fund these programs.

Practice:
- Monitor expanded connection with publicly funded workforce programs through WIOA. Ensure that homeless youth providers are engaged with workforce boards and as partners to fulfill Out of School Youth requirements under WIOA funding.
- Create engagement programs that help prepare homeless youth become ready for higher barrier job training programs.

Strategy 8: Strengthen and elevate voices of homeless youth and those serving them

Policy:
- Expand state health professional student loan forgiveness program to include mental health and chemical dependency professionals serving in rural areas.
- Establish recommended staffing models for safely and sustainably serving youth with high levels or trauma and behavioral health challenges. Increase organizational support to allow agencies to meet these guidelines.

Practice:
- Support continued development of a shared policy for the agenda of the homeless youth provider sector.
- Support youth providers' full participation in continuums of care and capacity to compete for HUD funding.
- Build pathways to allow homeless and formerly homeless youth to provide meaningful input and leadership in systems reform.

Model Program: Youth Advocates Ending Homelessness (YAEH)

Provider: Mockingbird Society, King County
Service Domain: Advocacy
Program Description: Created and run by the Mockingbird Society, YAEH engages youth who have experienced homelessness or housing instability in building leadership skills and utilizing those skills in advocacy activities that generate positive system reforms. YAEH ensures that current and formerly homeless youth have a voice in the civic and policy discussions that affect them. Youth conduct direct advocacy, and connect with a wide variety of other organizations to brainstorm and bring their input to the table.

Strategy 9: Put equity at the forefront of planning

Practice:
• Apply a racial equity lens to evaluate any substantial programmatic changes or new investments, including engaging youth who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.
• Scale up trainings on LGBT competency for homeless youth providers in regions where not currently available.
• Ensure collective efforts are diverse and inclusive, and include culturally specific strategies.
• Consider housing strategies that are designed by and for members of over-represented groups.
Data:
• Disaggregate any statewide outcome reporting by race to ensure equity in outcomes.
• Work with Safe and Affirming Care project to improve data and competency of state agencies in serving LGBT youth.

Strategy 10: Pursue a shared research and data agenda

Data:
• Develop a dashboard to monitor progress against statewide cross-system benchmarks.
• Collect comprehensive HMIS data on minors through a clarification of law on minors' ability to consent to data collection, and through the integration of data from state-funded beds into HMIS.
• Remedy data gaps around county detention.
• Develop capacity to support the research and development of promising practices for the homeless youth population.

Model Program: Early Assessment and Mental Health Support for Transition Aged Youth (TAY)

Provider: NW Youth Services, Compass Health, Whatcom County
Service Domain: Social and Emotional Wellbeing
Program Description: In 2016, NW Youth Services and Compass Health received a small grant to launch a new partnership to (1) provide on-site mental health assessment and outpatient treatment to homeless youth at NWYS and (2) measure the prevalence of Early Psychosis in Whatcom youth between the ages of 18-24 to establish a baseline for future program development. Partners will use a client's vulnerability score (using the TAY triage tool), ACE score and mental health assessment data to establish baseline prevalence data, which will be used to inform future efforts to fund comprehensive and targeted program interventions for this most vulnerable group.

To assess which communities in the state might be best poised to leverage new opportunities, a rating matrix was applied to assess each community's need, infrastructure, innovation and leadership. Several communities emerged that contain the resourceful service providers, passionate advocates and resilient youth necessary to catalyze transformation.
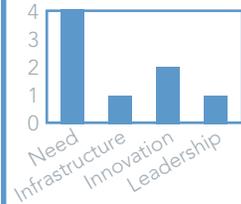
RURAL HOST HOME REGIONS

Could include Clallam, Island, Skagit, Okanogan and Pend Oreille Counties
Status: Many of the more rural regions of the state lack any housing options for homeless youth, and have few resources schools can access to support homeless students.
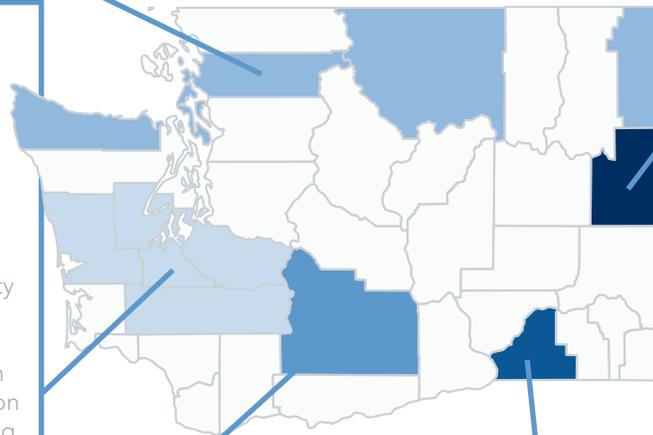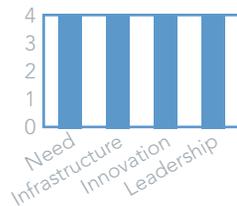**Potential Strategy:** Establish a cohort of regions with some infrastructure and experience or interest in the host home model to serve as host home incubators to support youth and McKinney Vento liaisons.

SPOKANE COUNTY

Status: Spokane serves the fifth most youth in the homeless system statewide, and has the second most youth ages 15-17 in foster care. Native American Youth are disproportionately overrepresented in both systems. The County has strong infrastructure and sophisticated service providers.
Potential Strategy: Build cross-system infrastructure. Given the size and complexity of their system, a coordinated effort to share data, develop common outcomes and pursue resources collaboratively would be extremely productive. Ideally a leader with dedicated capacity would spearhead this cooperation.

SOUTH SOUND

Pierce, Thurston, Mason, Lewis and Grays Harbor Counties
Status: The South Sound serves the largest number of homeless youth outside of King County. Community Youth Services delivers a range of services to youth throughout the region in an integrated way, including a variety of transition services open to youth exiting foster care and detention, depending on county and available funding streams.
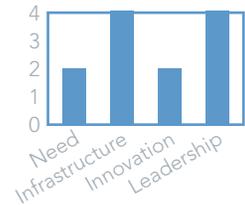**Potential Strategy:** Scale up cross-system transition services. Facilitated coordination between Community Youth Services and smaller homeless youth providers in Mason and Grays Harbor Counties, along with RSNs and detention centers, could allow for the expansion of successful cross-system programming to better serve youth throughout the region as a whole.

Map by Free Vector Maps

YAKIMA COUNTY

Status: Yakima serves around 300 unaccompanied homeless youth in its homeless and education systems each year, with Native American youth disproportionately overrepresented. Of all the potential regions of focus, Yakima is the region most in need of additional resources, particularly for youth with multiple vulnerabilities. Service providers operate largely in a reactive mode, and have limited bandwidth to coordinate across agencies or systems, or to successfully advocate for real improvements to their system. The leadership and potential for a strong homeless youth network exist, given slightly more capacity.
Potential Strategy: Expand services and develop a collaborative system.
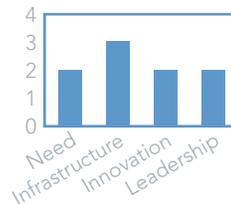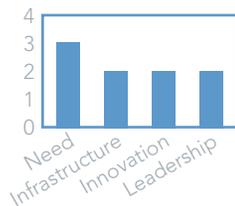
WALLA WALLA COUNTY

Status: Walla Walla has lower documented rates of youth homelessness, but also houses a collaborative community of innovative providers committed to serving youth. The 2016 opening of the multi-partner Walla Walla Teen Center, which will offer youth counseling, recovery services, free medical assistance, childcare, employment services, and overnight shelter for homeless minors in a single location, presents an opportunity, within a region that is limited in scale and population, to evaluate the effects of delivering integrated interventions for high risk school-age youth.
Potential Strategy: Enable use of data to measure effectiveness of service integration. Partnerships with research or evaluation experts could lead to improved understanding of the benefits of an integrated service model for homeless youth with multiple traumas.

A range of discretionary and formula-based funds are available to serve Washington's homeless youth. Below is a high-level snapshot of federal and state funds specifically targeting homeless youth or youth at high risk of homelessness, as drawn from publicly available budget documents.

FY 2017 State Budget			Category	FY 2015 Federal Budget		
Program	$	Source		Program	$	Source
Street Youth Services	$1.3 million	OHY	Outreach	RHY Street Outreach	$700,000	HHS
Crisis Residential Centers	$5.1 million	OHY	Shelter	RHY Basic Center	$875,000	HHS
HOPE beds	$1.9 million	OHY				
Young Adult shelter beds	$420,000	OHY				
Independent Youth Housing Program	$900,000	OHY	Transitional Living	RHY Transitional Living	$1.318 million	HHS
				RHY Maternity Group Homes for Pregnant and Parenting Youth	$200,000	HHS
Young Adult Housing Program/ Consolidated Homeless Grant	$787,000	DOC	Housing (multiple types)	Continuum of Care and ESG, youth-specific programs	$2.8 million	HUD
Homeless Student Stability Act	$2 million	OHY/ OSPI	Education	McKinney Vento	$1 million	ED
Truancy Reform (Community Truancy Boards)	$350,000	OSPI		Prevention for Neglected and Delinquent Youth	$1.7 million	ED
Education Training Voucher state match	$200,000	DSHS-CA		Education Training Voucher	$1 million	HHS
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program- State Match	$500,000	DSHS-CA	Child Welfare and Family Stability	Chafee Foster Care Independence Program- Title IV-E	$2 million	HHS
Responsible Living Skills Program	$725,000	DSHS-CA				
Family Reconciliation Services	$1.1 million	DSHS-CA				

*Due to their size and complexity employment and justice system funds are excluded from this snapshot, though they are discussed in the full report.

Opportunity: The state could use larger proportions of Federal Chafee and ETV funds for housing costs.

Opportunity: Most Federal discretionary grants are won for Western WA. As infrastructure grows for homeless youth in Eastern WA, grants should follow.

child welfare & family stability $4.3m

outreach $2m

shelter $8.3m

transitional living $2.4m

education $6.3m

housing (multiple types) $4.3m

Opportunity: Many youth have multiple caseworkers from multiple systems. Streamlining would increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Opportunity: Far more state funding supports shelter for minors than family reconciliation.