

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1905

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Children, Youth & Families

**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:** 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:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children, Youth & Families: 1/19/22, 1/26/22 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute 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.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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*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.*

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Harris-Talley, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Eslick, Goodman, Klippert, Ortiz-Self, Wicks and Young.

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

**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;
- 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.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

*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 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.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill adds to the list of individuals who may refer a youth or young adult to the rapid response team to include an educator, a law enforcement officer, an employee of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) or the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (OHY), and a service provider contracting with or licensed by the DCYF.

The substitute bill requires the DCYF, in coordination with the OHY, to provide a report to the Legislature and the Governor including data and recommendations related to the rapid response team.

The substitute bill delays the effective date for the section involving the creation of rapid response teams to January 1, 2023.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 2, relating to the creation of a rapid response team, which takes effect January 1, 2023.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The Legislature passed Senate Bill 6560 establishing a goal of not releasing youth into homelessness from a publicly funded system of care, but the Legislature has yet to increase services for this population. The services provided in this bill will prevent individuals from beginning lifelong homelessness.

This bill supports the goal that the state does not release youth and young adults into homelessness from publicly funded systems of care. Ensuring there is support of these youth and young people is the responsible thing to do.

The plan developed to support youth discharging from publicly funded systems of care has numerous recommendations that are included in this bill.

System of care grants create vital systems of communication between community supports. The community-based emphasis in these grants allow youth and young adults to thrive in their transition to adulthood. System of care grants currently help young people with costs needed to support housing.

Planning is also needed to support young people, and the rapid response teams will help ensure that this planning occurs.

This bill will create accessibility to financial resources that will allow young people to be successful.

Over many years, youth have been released from publicly funded systems of care directly into overnight shelters. When youth are released directly from jail into homelessness, this exacerbates feelings of hopelessness.

The interventions in this bill provide greater flexibility and help ensure that planning occurs before youth are released from publicly funded systems of care.

The lack of system coordination currently creates destabilization among youth. The silos need to be broken down to better serve youth. The rapid response team created in this bill is a step in this direction.

This bill will help people avoid homelessness and put the supports in place before leaving a publicly funded system of care.

There clearly needs to be a cross-system approach to youth and young people with complex needs. There needs to be a myriad of solutions available to meet the needs of young people.

This bill addresses a very serious problem. Systems of care have created homelessness especially among people of color and identifying as LGBTQ.

Entering inpatient treatment is a brave act, and this act should be supported following a youth's release. It is developmentally appropriate for young people to be involved in the decision-making process around their housing and services.

Allowing more opportunities for support, particularly housing support, can make a

difference for someone's overall health and well-being.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Tana Senn, prime sponsor; Marissa Ingalls, Coordinated Care of Washington; Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates; Kim Justice, Department of Commerce; Casey Trupin, Raikes Foundation; Haley Brunner, Y Social Impact Center; Bridget Cannon, Volunteers of America of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho; Rhea Yo, Legal Counsel for Youth and Childrenz; Sam Martin, A Way Home Washington; KC Chui and Miracle Negron, The Mockingbird Society; Emily Stochel; Liz Trautman, Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy and The Mockingbird Society; and Sarah Walker.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** Allison Krutsinger, Department of Children, Youth, and Families.