



Progress Report:

Substitute Senate Bill 6560

April 2023



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Background

In 2018, Substitute Senate Bill 6560 (SSB 6560) passed, declaring that “beginning January 1, 2021, any unaccompanied youth discharged from a publicly funded system of care in [Washington State] will be discharged into safe and stable housing.”¹

While the promise of this legislation has not yet been met, progress has been made toward achieving its goals.

In January 2020, the Washington State Department of Commerce, Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) released a report titled [*Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care*](#) (“*Improving Stability*”), which outlined recommendations toward achieving the goals set forth by SSB 6560. OHY developed the report and its recommendations in collaboration with the Health Care Authority (HCA), the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the Interagency Work Group on Youth Homelessness, the Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analytics (DSHS-RDA), community partners, and through holistic, youth-centered co-design sessions with young people.

The report recommended a three-pillar approach to preventing young people from exiting public systems of care into homelessness:

1. **System modification** to improve outcomes for young people through better transition planning and support before exit.
2. **Community connections** and development of resources to cohesively support the needs of youth and young adults when they exit from systems to communities.
3. **Development and implementation of housing** that meets the different needs of system-involved young people and includes varying levels of supportive services.

Within those pillars, the *Improving Stability* report included near-term and high-priority recommendations, as well as other important recommendations, that span across different systems of care: child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and shelter and housing programs.

With shared interest in understanding where progress has been made and what opportunities remain to fulfill the promise of SSB 6560, three youth-focused nonprofit organizations—the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC), and TeamChild—came together (with support from the Raikes Foundation²) to write this progress report. Our agencies engaged with representatives from OHY, DCYF, and HCA, as well as other stakeholders, to inform our collaborative analysis.

Our agencies did not engage directly with young people with lived expertise in the analysis and development of this report. We hope to work with OHY, DCYF, and HCA to determine how best to engage young people regarding progress made and remaining work on SSB 6560,

¹ Substitute Senate Bill 6560, <https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6560-S.SL.pdf?q=20230215155118>.

² The Raikes Foundation did not review and does not take a position on any legislative recommendations in this report.

including what changes impacted communities have seen because of the investments and policy changes made since the bill’s passage.

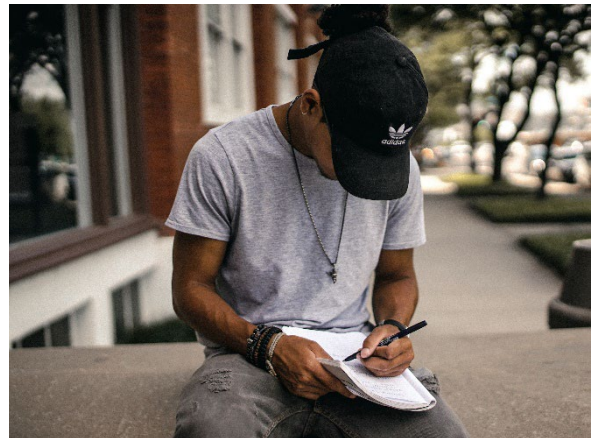
This report is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis on the progress toward achieving the promise of SSB 6560. Rather, we hope it offers a useful summary of the *highlights* of our findings, with references to “*Related Recommendations*” from the *Improving Stability* report as a way to measure and track progress. This report was released in April 2023 and does not contain SSB 6560-related funding or policy changes made during the 2023 legislative session.

6560 Progress

Based on information gathered from each agency, as well as a review of budget investments and policy initiatives, below is an overview of progress since the passage of SSB 6560 regarding (1) collective, cross-system initiatives; and, (2) agency-specific successes.

(1) Collective, Cross-System Initiatives

The work required to achieve the goal of SSB 6560 has elevated the critical need for cross-system collaboration and planning. While some of the updates below are not directly connected to the recommendations made in *Improving Stability*, the efforts highlight a shift toward collective, cross-system conversations to address youth and young adult homelessness. All collective work to prevent youth homelessness will directly impact the number of young people entering systems of care and, therefore, the number who may exit from those systems into homelessness. Prevention work is central to meeting the goal of SSB 6560.



- In the 2020 Supplemental Budget, the Legislature allocated \$75,000 to OHY to co-lead with DCYF a prevention of youth and young adult homelessness workgroup. In January 2021, the Prevention Workgroup issued its [Preliminary Strategic Plan: Prevention of Youth Homelessness](#). OHY collaborated with the Communities of Color Coalition and Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative “to identify communities in Washington who are least represented at state and local level decision making tables, and to create a trauma-informed, healing centered approach to co-design the strategy with lived experts and caregivers,”³ and recruited individuals to be part of the Steering Committee on Prevention of Youth Homelessness.

In September 2021, the Steering Committee—in partnership with OHY, Communities of Color Coalition, and Innovations Human Trafficking Collaborative—published [Shifting Services and Systems to Prevent Youth Housing Instability, Washington Strategic Plan](#).

³ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ohy-hau-shifting-services-systems-prevent-youth-housing-instability-2021.pdf>, at 5.

In the 2022 Supplemental Budget, the Legislature allocated \$200,000 to OHY to reconvene the Prevention Workgroup, co-led with DCYF. The funding in the proviso will facilitate the involvement of the Steering Committee on Prevention, which will act as component of and an advisory body to the Prevention Workgroup. The Workgroup and Steering Committee’s scope includes, but is not limited to, guiding the implementation of the recommendations made in the *Shifting Services and Systems* strategic plan. It may also include engaging in DCYF’s work to redesign Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) and other initiatives to prevent youth homelessness.

- This is promising and critical work to uphold. It acknowledges that “[p]revention of youth and young adult housing instability happens along a continuum,” and that SSB 6560 and related recommendations in *Improving Stability* are on the “[l]ater secondary and tertiary prevention” end of the continuum.⁴
- Through the passage of and budget investments connected to Second Substitute House Bill 1905 (2SHB 1905, 2022), funding was allocated to OHY to issue awards to community providers through Systems of Care (SOC) grants, [H-SYNC expansion](#), and flexible funding “to support persons under the age of 25 exiting publicly funded systems of care that need discrete support or funding to secure safe housing.”⁵
 - \$1,397,460 was awarded to community providers for Fiscal Year 2023 SOC grants. The funding is an annual amount and will continue into the next biennium (pending final budget appropriations). Providers in Pierce, Spokane, Whatcom, Skagit, Island, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Mason, Walla Walla, and Pacific Counties were awarded funds. Prior to 2SHB 1905, SOC grant awards totaled \$250,000 per year.
 - \$1,600,000 was made available in flexible funding to support young people under the age of 25 exiting publicly funded systems of care who need discrete support or funding to secure safe housing, including flexible funding for immediate needs. OHY has contracted with A Way Home Washington (AWHWA) and Building Changes to develop and administer the [Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project](#) (YDIP). In early 2023, AWHWA and Building Changes selected YDIP fiscal administrators in five counties—Spokane, Pierce, Walla Walla, Yakima, and Clark—that will distribute flexible funds.⁶
 - \$625,000 was allocated to expand the [H-SYNC](#) (Housing Stability for Youth in Courts) model, which is intended “to identify youth at risk of or currently

⁴ *Id.* at 10.

⁵ Second Substitute House Bill 1905, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1905-S2.SL.pdf?q=20230215155300>.

⁶ YDIP was modeled after AWHWA’s successful [Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund](#) (HPDF) (formerly called the [Centralized Diversion Fund](#)). “The HPDF was the first centralized diversion fund program specifically for youth/young adults launched and made available in [AWHWA’s] Anchor Communities, providing low-barrier access to flexible funds to resolve all definitions of homelessness including, couchsurfing and at-risk. It was inspired by the first-ever centralized diversion fund program in Washington state, led by [Africatown International] and Building Changes.” <https://awayhomewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HPDF-Report-2022.pdf>, at 2.

experiencing homelessness within existing processes in juvenile court systems and refer youth and their families to appropriate prevention and housing services via a stepped-care navigation model.” The YMCA Social Impact Center will act as the lead grantee, providing support and technical assistance to providers and juvenile courts implementing H-SYNC in Snohomish, Kitsap, Okanogan, and Spokane Counties, while implementing the model directly themselves in King and Pierce Counties. OHY has absorbed grantmaking responsibilities for the H-SYNC program.

- 2SHB HB 1905 also mandated the creation of a Rapid Response Team (RRT)—housed by DCYF in equal partnership with HCA, OHY, and DSHS—which will aid and support youth and young adults who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless when exiting a publicly funded system of care. The RRT will work with young people to secure appropriate housing and other supports and collect vital data of needs and barriers to help inform annual reporting to the Legislature. DCYF, HCA, OHY, and DSHS will develop a referral form and processes, as well as outreach and training materials. The group will also develop Standard Operating Procedures that will define the scope, target population, and timelines for external stakeholders as well as for RRT members. The RRT is looking to implement case conferencing principles that have proven effective in facilitating cross-agency collaboration to achieve housing solutions. Case conferencing is scheduled to tentatively begin at the end of March 2023. DCYF’s Homeless Prevention Supervisor and two RRT coordinators will work in tandem with the RRT members.
 - Related recommendations: *Assess, Connect, Serve (Community Grants); Diversion Funds; H-SYNC expansion.*

(2) Agency-Specific Successes

DCYF: Juvenile Rehabilitation

Criminal justice release was noted in *Improving Stability* as the most likely group of youth to experience homelessness within 12 months of release. DCYF integrated the Administration of Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) into its agency in 2019 and included the needs of youth exiting state prisons in all its efforts responding to SSB 6560, with a focus on providing housing navigation and funding to support housing stability. There have been meaningful investments made to address the unique needs of youth who return to the community after periods of incarceration.



- In 2021, Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1186 (E2SHB 1186, 2021⁷) passed, creating JR’s Community Transition Services program and the [Community Transition Services \(CTS\) Stakeholder Group](#), which is tasked with developing recommendations

⁷ Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1186, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1186-S2.SL.pdf?q=20230316173047>.

to improve outcomes for individuals exiting JR facilities. JR is currently developing the CTS policies and guidelines. The [CTS Stakeholder Group Recommendation Report](#) was released in May 2022.

- *Related recommendation: Effective transitions from systems of care; Assess, Connect, Serve.*
- DCYF-JR is developing a new assessment called IDEA ([Integrated Developmental Evaluation and Assessment](#)), which was beta tested in September 2022. IDEA will be used to consider a youth's needs and dynamic risk and determine which youth are eligible for CTS, including electronic home monitoring, among other services.
 - *Related recommendation: While electronic home monitoring was not identified as a specific recommendation in the Improving Stability report, it is aligned with the goal of expanding community facilities for youth serving sentences at JR, to increase access to family supports, return to home communities, and reconnect to education, vocational training, job placement, and other supports.*
- DCYF-JR developed Community Assisted Reentry (CAR) to help provide needed supports for young people transitioning to the community when exiting a residential facility. JR developed a [CAR FAQ](#) to guide JR clients and families.
 - *Related recommendation: Effective transitions from systems of care; Assess, Connect, Serve.*
- DCYF ensures that Medicaid is activated for young people exiting JR institutional settings so that they have seamless access to mental health services upon reentry. The Department of Commerce and HCA partnered to have one grant-funded WISE ([Wraparound with Intensive Services](#)) engagement coordinator position support all JR youth who have mental health needs. This position helped youth access the WISE program in the community they are transitioning into. Original grant funding ended on June 30, 2021.
 - *Related recommendation: WISE engagement (supports the goal of ensuring that youth exiting JR facilities are referred to and accepted to WISE programs in the community upon release).*
- DCYF-JR has made several investments in staffing. This includes 1 full-time Peer Support Specialist, 2.5 full-time Peer Bridgers, and 6 CAR Coordinators. The Peer Support Specialist works statewide to develop and expand partnerships.⁸ The Peer Bridgers are part of a pilot to support youth in their return from a JR facility to one of three counties (King, Pierce, and Snohomish). The CAR staff support youth exiting JR who are at risk of homelessness, including providing flexible funds to pay for the youth's basic needs.
 - *Related recommendation: Effective transitions from systems of care (supports the goal of ensuring peer mentors are an integral part of the JR release team and ensures there are staff designated to help youth navigate housing supports after release).*

⁸ Peer & Mentoring Support for Young People in Juvenile Rehabilitation, <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/news/peer-mentoring-support-young-people-juvenile-rehabilitation> (January 21, 2022).

DCYF: Adolescent Services

In 2022, DCYF restructured its Adolescent Programs (AP) unit and reallocated staff across various parts of the Division of Partnership, Prevention, and Services team and elsewhere within DCYF. The AP team's efforts to achieve SSB 6560 goals are seen in system improvements and collaboration with young people and other external partners. Investments in improving preventive supports and services for young people exiting public systems of care have been made in transition programs, housing assistance resources, and Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) redesign efforts.



- In response to Substitute House Bill 2873 (SHB 2873, 2020⁹), DCYF initiated work to make recommendations for system improvements to [FRS](#), a voluntary program within DCYF that is intended to serve runaway adolescents and youth in conflict with their families. FRS is meant to resolve crisis situations and prevent unnecessary state intervention and potential out-of-home placement. A 2022 budget proviso furthered DCYF's FRS work so that it could co-design community-based FRS with youth and families with lived experience, tribes, system professionals, and community partners. An [FRS annual report](#), that also met the goals of the 2022 proviso, was released in January 2023. This work will likely require additional attention and investments in 2023 and beyond.
 - *Related recommendation: Prevention services for non-dependent youth.*
- A 2021 budget proviso directed DCYF to develop and implement a new approach to transition planning for young people preparing to exit the child welfare system and JR institutions. In the child welfare space, DCYF engaged young people, caregivers, providers, and other stakeholders to inform its [Independent Living and Transition Planning Redesign Project](#). The [Independent Living Transition Planning Report](#) was released in December 2022. See above for JR's work on transition planning.
 - *Related recommendation: Effective transitions from systems of care.*
- The Adolescent Transitional Living Pilot (ATLP) (also referred to as the Emerging Adulthood Housing Program) is a program for young people ages 16-20 that provides housing and case management supports to ensure placement stability, promote maintenance of mental health stability and wellbeing, and prepare youth for independent living. The YMCA Social Impact Center is the implementing partner organization for the ALTP in King County and executed the first pilot contract to operate a program with 5-bed capacity, with its first residents moving in early 2023. In 2022, the Legislature allocated funding to expand DCYF's ALTP to two additional sites.
 - *Related recommendations: Additional supports for frequent placement disruption; Responsible Living Skills Program.*

⁹ Substitute House Bill 2873, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/2873-S.SL.pdf?q=20230405163755>.

- With the passage of Second Substitute Senate Bill 5718 (2SSB 5718, 2019¹⁰), DCYF launched the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program, which provides housing assistance to parents reunifying with a child and parents at risk of having a child removed. DCYF onboarded a Housing Manager to oversee the program and manage contracts for case management and supportive services for families in the pilot. The Housing Manager’s role expanded to identify housing programs and vouchers available to young people who are leaving the child welfare system. This has resulted in staff time being dedicated to map housing resources for youth leaving care, identify opportunities for future housing and supportive services investments, and build relationships between DCYF and public housing authorities, landlords, and community-based housing programs that youth may access when leaving care or while participating in Extended Foster Care (EFC).



- *Related recommendation: General system modification to improve outcomes for young people exiting a system of care.*

- In response to advocacy efforts as the COVID-19 pandemic persisted, Congress and then the Washington State Legislature provided funding for monthly stipends for young people who aged out or would age out (turn 21) of EFC during the pandemic. DCYF partnered with [Treehouse](#) to administer the EFC Extension Payments. Though not initiated by DCYF, this supportive funding is directly tied to the 6560 goals of not exiting young people from systems of care into homelessness. The funding is set to expire June 30, 2023.

- *Related recommendation: General system modification to improve outcomes for young people exiting a system of care.*

HCA: Behavioral Health

The largest number of young people exiting a system of care into homelessness come from inpatient behavioral health facilities. It is critical for HCA to design supports and interventions and to coordinate services with the other systems of care to support this population of young people.

- In 2021, HCA produced the report [Safe and Supportive Transition to Stable Housing for Youth Ages 16 to 25](#). HCA hired a behavioral health stable housing policy lead in the fall of 2022. HCA chartered and convened internal workgroups to review recommendations and next steps related to the plan. This work will continue forward with the new staff member and growing team across the DBHR and Medicaid Program Division.

- *Related recommendation: Behavioral health system improvement.*

¹⁰ Second Substitute Senate Bill 5718, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5718-S2.SL.pdf?q=20230405164819>.

- In June 2022, the HCA-Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) team launched the [Discharge Planner’s Toolkit](#), which “is intended to facilitate coordination between discharge planners in Behavioral Health crisis stabilization organizations (pilot underway) and substance use treatment facilities (pilot in very early planning stage) and the networks of housing and service providers operating in Washington to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It is also intended to help discharge planners and individuals across the state understand and identify possible options in the private housing market when possible and appropriate.”

It should be noted that the Toolkit is not specifically designed to assess and address the needs of youth and young adults. HCA intends to develop a youth and young adult-specific toolkit in 2023, anticipated to be referenced as Transition Age Youth (TAY).

- Substitute House Bill 1800 (SHB 1800¹¹) passed in 2022 and requires HCA to design and implement a parent portal to connect families to service and education infrastructure related to behavioral health services for children ages 0-17. [Behavioral Health 360](#) is the product. This product focuses on parents and is not specifically addressing discharge, but a broader information hub about all behavioral health resources. A model for online navigation for youth and young adults is still needed.¹²
 - *Related recommendation: General system modification to improve outcomes for young people exiting a system of care.*
- Funding for [Regional Youth Behavioral Health Navigators](#) was included in the 2022 budget to maintain existing work in Pierce County and add three regions per year for the next three years. Greater Columbia, Southwest, and Salish are or will begin providing services winter and spring of 2023. The next three regions are slated to begin community work in July 2023 and have services stood up by approximately January 2024. Navigation teams “focus on improved collaborative communication, service connection processes, and the deployment of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT), all of which are designed to improve access to and the coordination of services for children and youth experiencing behavioral health challenges.”¹³
 - *Related recommendations: Community connections; continuity of support and treatment.*
- In early 2023, HCA contracted with [NorthStar Advocates](#) to launch an initiative called The Bridge, a statewide collaboration between community-based housing providers, behavioral health discharge planners, other community-based professionals, and young people with lived experience. The group aims to increase the number of unaccompanied young people who return to community with safe housing and services upon exiting an inpatient behavioral health facility. The Bridge collaborators will meet monthly with the goal of providing cross-system coordination and training, coordinating case conferencing, and envisioning lasting reforms and securing

¹¹ Substitute House Bill 1800, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1800-S.SL.pdf?q=20230217105533>.

¹² HCA’s Prenatal-25 Behavioral Health Legislative Implementation Status (October 2022), <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/october-implemenation-slides.pdf>.

¹³ Kids’ Mental Health Washington, <https://kidsmentalhealthwa.org/about/>. HCA information on Regional Youth Behavioral Health Navigators, <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/regional-youth-behavioral-health-navigators-factsheet-2023.pdf>.

resources. Members of The Bridge program will also work together to ensure the gains young people make during the inpatient treatment process are reinforced by creating individualized Return to Community Plans. Each plan will include developmentally and culturally responsive safe housing options, supportive services, and enrichment opportunities to meet the young person’s needs upon being discharged from inpatient behavioral health programs.

- Related recommendations: *BH Re-entry process; continuity of support and treatment.*

OHY: Shelters & Housing Programs

OHY has made a concerted effort to build the goals of SSB 6560 into its service array, its agency infrastructure, as well as its planning, cross-system collaborative work with other public agencies and external partners.

- In July 2020, OHY launched a Transitional Living Program (TLP) Pilot (\$1 million per fiscal year) to provide 15 beds for non-dependent youth (ages 16-17 years old) who cannot return home and need longer-term housing. These TLP beds are available for young people in King, Whatcom, and Walla Walla Counties.
 - Related recommendation: *Transitional Housing.*
- During the 2022 legislative session, OHY requested the expansion of the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), which offers rental assistance and case management to young people. OHY’s request led to the passage of Senate Bill 5566 (SB 5566, 2022¹⁴), expanding IYHP eligibility to include youth who were dependent at any time before their 18th birthday and youth who are receiving EFC services—drawing a direct connection to supporting young people leaving a system of care. The expanded eligibility also came with \$4.092 million in additional IYHP funding. OHY now contracts with 19 organizations across 18 counties for IYHP. OHY also contracts with 13 organizations to administer the Young Adult Housing Program (YAHP) across 11 counties. YAHP provides resources for rental assistance, transitional housing, and case management for young adults ages 18 through 24.
 - Related recommendation: *Young Adult Housing Program.*
- OHY modified its Systems Change Manager position to be more responsive to the agency’s policy work and interagency collaborations and to ensure dedicated agency staff time and resources to uphold the state’s commitments made in SSB 6560. To that end, the Systems Change Manager convenes the 6560 Core Team—which includes representatives from DCYF-child welfare, DCYF-JR, HCA, DSHS, DSHS-Developmental Disabilities Administration, and community stakeholders—and focuses on what work is



¹⁴ Senate Bill 5566, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5566.SL.pdf?q=20230405171624>.

underway or remains to be achieved. The Systems Change Manager also leads and supports cross-sector workgroups to address youth and young adult homelessness with a focus on advancing equitable outcomes for youth who disproportionately experience housing instability.

- *Related recommendation: General system modification to improve outcomes for young people exiting a system of care.*
- Building on its prevention framework—which positions SSB 6560 on the “tertiary” or “late-stage” end of the prevention spectrum—OHY is hiring a Prevention Manager. The Prevention Manager’s role will be a part of OHY’s expanding policy team, working on prevention-based policy initiatives, staffing the Rapid Response Team (under 2SHB 1905), providing specialized technical assistance to OHY’s prevention-focused grantees (Systems of Care, H-SYNC, YDIP flexible funds, etc.) through facilitation of a learning collaborative, and supporting the Systems Change Manager in existing and forthcoming interagency collaborations around prevention (the 6560 Core Team and the Youth Homelessness Prevention Workgroup).
 - *Related recommendations: General system modification to improve outcomes for young people exiting a system of care; Prevention services for non-dependent youth.*

6560 Opportunities and Recommendations

This section is intentionally not separated out by agency, as the spirit of SSB 6560 is for agencies to work in coordination to prevent exits from systems of care into homelessness. To that end, recommendations in this section are organized by theme instead of by target agency.

Planning/Infrastructure

- Invest financial resources to support collective, cross-system planning and implementation work at both the state and at the local/regional levels. Initiatives like AWHWA’s [Anchor Community Initiative](#) and the federally-funded [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program](#) foster and fund intentional partnerships between the homelessness response system and systems of care. It is critical to invest resources so that these meaningful collaborations have dedicated time and space to plan, analyze data, and build on existing learnings and successes. Investments in this area include ensuring that state and local government staff have the capacity to engage and facilitate partnerships, offering financial support for youth, young adult, and family participation, and granting financial support for community-based agency staff to participate in collaborative work.



- Analyze the impact of DCYF’s decision to disband the Adolescent Programs division, given the long-identified call from community stakeholders to address the unique needs of adolescents in and leaving DCYF’s care. It is critical to track how DCYF’s failure to sustain the division will impact its commitment to SSB 6560 and the related recommendations and strategic initiatives—FRS redesign, Independent Living/Transition Living redesign, and EFC growth. Dismantling the division may also impact DCYF’s commitments to adolescents impacted by the [D.S. Settlement Agreement](#), which highlighted DCYF’s reliance on stay in hotels, offices, or out-of-state facilities for young people with behavioral health needs and developmental disabilities.

Prevention of Entry *into* Systems of Care

- Dedicate planning time and resources for system response work around the prevention of non-dependent youth facing homelessness—more investment is needed to understand the legal and non-legal needs of those youth, align agency and community services responsible for them, and engage external stakeholders on this issue. This recommendation was specifically called for in *Improving Stability* (page 17), and there has been little cross-system focus in this area. Due to the legal implications of minors facing homelessness and conflict with parents or legal guardians, more attention also needs to be paid to the legal support system necessary to address the unmet needs of this population.
- Develop interventions that target youth whose housing instability could lead them to entering systems of care. For example: youth facing JR sentences, but who could receive community-based sanctions if they had stable housing and supports; behavioral and mental health supports/interventions prior to youth needing hospitalization or long-term residential care; and, specific supports for LGBTQIA+ youth who feel unwelcome or unsafe at home. Front-end, meaningful interventions should parallel efforts to build up the housing options, community supports, transition planning, financial support, and other services for youth who are exiting foster care, discharging from a hospital, or being released from prison. Waiting for youth to exit the costliest and significantly traumatizing systems—foster care, inpatient treatment or hospitalization, and prison—to address housing instability is a missed opportunity. Earlier interventions should be designed to provide youth with the support and services they need in the community, by people and providers closest to the youth’s circle of care.
 - This could include looking to the Prevention Workgroup and Steering Committee on Prevention to determine whether it is possible to co-design a single-entry point to access a comprehensive, multigenerational, preventative, well-being service system available to youth and families before, during, and after a crisis.



Prevention of Exits from Systems of Care

- Conduct a review of SSB 6560 programs, services, and investments thus far and disaggregate data by population, especially youth of color, LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults, and pregnant/parenting youth and young adults. Determine whether systems' discharge responses have targeted approaches to effectively reach these populations, knowing they are at higher risk of homelessness and have been historically marginalized. Look to the work done by [AWHWA's data team](#) through the Anchor Community Initiative as an example of examining data by specific populations to determine outreach and effectiveness.
- Establish a standard definition of what it means for a youth to be homeless to ensure systems of care appropriately plan for their discharge. The current misalignment of agency and legal definitions impacts youth access to services. For example, a young person in a county detention facility whose parents or legal guardians indicate they will not pick up the youth upon discharge is “not homeless” according to DCYF or other agencies. Likewise, a youth in a hospital Emergency Room whose parents or legal guardians indicate they will not pick up the youth upon discharge may not be considered “homeless.” However, these youth are not housed either. Youth who have challenges such as pending juvenile charges, detention stays, or acute mental health issues that result in cycling through emergency rooms must be included in the common understanding of youth exiting systems of care to homelessness. Intensive intervention at this time could avoid a JR or child welfare placement or a behavioral health inpatient stay and subsequent discharge from those systems into homelessness.
- Investments are needed to increase access to civil legal aid for young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. There is no statewide planning around this work, though *Improving Stability* identified this issue as a “High Priority: Community Connection.” Individual legal aid agencies have built and/or expanded programs to respond to the growing need of young people needing tailored legal aid services to address civil legal issues, including: landlord/tenant; eviction prevention; orders of protection; record sealing; warrants; courts fines and fees; Minor Guardianship; Child in Need of Services (CHINS); emancipation; consumer and medical debt; public benefits; gender marker and name change; identifying documents and papers; navigating Child Protective Services; and more. Intentional investments in civil legal aid can prevent homelessness on the front end, as well as prevent homelessness for youth leaving systems of care.
- Invest time and resources to identify more diverse short- and long-term housing options for minors, including OHY's TLP and Host Homes. Identify what licensing and funding alignment will need to take place to advance more developmentally appropriate housing options for minors.
- Affirmatively determine whether a shared “exiting from systems of care” assessment tool across all systems is needed. Determine what interagency data sharing protocols need to be



addressed and what infrastructure investments need to be made so that systems can centrally and accurately assess and report young people’s housing status upon exit from systems of care.

- Track the implementation of the [Lifeline Support System Pilot](#) (through OHY). Determine whether it effectively supports young people leaving systems of care as a “one-stop” access point for services and what future investments should be sought to move the project from pilot status to established program.