

## Restore Funding for Youth Early Intervention Programs

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**Critical Early Intervention Programs Were Recently Cut:** The 2025-2027 Washington State Operating Budget removed almost all future funding for youth early intervention programs (formerly known as “Becca programs”). Previously these intervention programs had been allocated \$14,000,000 per biennium to distribute to all 33 juvenile court jurisdictions. Funding has now been reduced to \$4,000,000 per biennium.

**Statewide Impact:** Washington’s Juvenile Courts have provided essential services to at-risk, runaway, and truant youth and their families since 1995, following passage of the “Becca Bill”. This bill was named in response to the 1993 murder of 13-year-old victim of human trafficking Rebecca Hedman, after which the state provided uninterrupted funding to counties to implement youth early intervention services. Over the past three years, these intervention programs, in collaboration with local school districts, have served more than 24,000 vulnerable youth and families, with over 8,000 supported in the last year alone. Early intervention reduces youth involvement in the criminal justice system and offers youth support that positively changes the trajectory of their lives.

As a direct result of funding cuts, Juvenile Courts have eliminated support staff, reduced programming and case management services, and limited participation in local Community Engagement Boards led by schools. In a recent survey conducted by the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), 74% of responding school districts indicated a reduction or total loss to support absentee students and families.

**Juvenile Court Intervention is Not About Punishment.** Early intervention programs provide critical prevention-focused programming aimed at breaking cycles of poverty and delinquency, reducing future costs of incarceration or unemployment, and empowering young individuals to contribute positively to their communities.

- **To restore full funding,** Youth Early Court Intervention Programs will need an additional \$5 million per year above the current funding (\$10 million per biennium).
  - **The Administrative Office of the Courts request** is for \$1.25 million above the base in FY 2026, and \$5 million above the base in FY 2027.
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## **Youth Early Intervention Program Services**

Youth Early Intervention Program funding is utilized across Washington State for case management services and prevention programming for youth behaviors related to truancy, at-risk youth (ARY), and children in need of services (CHINS).

Examples of effective case management and prevention include:

- Facilitating communication among court staff, families, and schools to address truancy issues.
- Assisting parents in enrolling youth in behavioral health or medical support services.
- Connecting families to housing resources to ensure stability.
- Exploring educational alternatives and identifying barriers to education to create tailored solutions.
- Supporting and coordinating initiatives like Girls' Groups, substance use disorder and Success in Academic Connections programs through the local Educational Service Districts (ESD).
- Guiding parents in accessing services for their children to meet unique needs.
- Collaborating with the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to ensure child safety and provide essential family support.
- Engaging with or facilitating Community Engagement Boards to connect families and youth with community resources.
- Educating schools about available resources, such as Running Start or GED.
- Conducting home visits to locate and reconnect students who have disengaged from school, whether due to homeschooling struggles or lack of school engagement.
- Transporting youth to essential appointments, including medical, dental, behavioral health, and school-related commitments.
- Helping families to navigate any aspect of the juvenile justice system.
- Providing parents with tools and guidance to implement effective reward/consequence programs at home that foster student success.
- Celebrating milestones, such as students earning diplomas or GEDs, and helping identify next steps like joining the workforce or pursuing higher education.
- Delivering positive incentives to youth to encourage progress and engagement.
- A small portion supports judicial officer time, clerk time, attorney representation for youth in cases where contempt is filed (noting that detention is no longer an option under E2SSB 5290 (2019), and staff time for administrative tasks such as opening cases and managing summons.