



A WAY HOME WASHINGTON

December 2021



The 2021 Journey



Julie Patiño, Executive Director
A Way Home Washington

This month, I celebrated my **one-year anniversary** with A Way Home Washington. What an amazing, whirlwind journey it has been! The commitment, knowledge, and incredible determination of our team and many partners is beyond inspiring.

I'm highlighting some of the many accomplishments achieved this year and providing a preview of what's planned for the year ahead.

2021 in the Rearview

Through the intensive work of the four Anchor Communities, we are collectively making measurable progress in preventing and ending unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness. 2021 milestones include the remarkable achievement of **Spokane** becoming the largest community in the United States to achieve a sustained, measurable reduction in youth and young adult homelessness. As well, **Walla Walla** was able to reduce homelessness for young people by 20% within a six-month period. We also saw the **Centralized Diversion Fund** (known to us as **Homeless Prevention and Diversion**) house **426 households**, including **84 young people in the month of June** alone. We have trained and certified well over 200 people to access this fund on behalf of young people who are facing or experiencing homelessness, underscoring the value and efficiency of flexible, immediately available funds and personalized support leading to creative housing solutions. The average cost of this intervention is a mere \$1,782, which pales in comparison to the human cost of homelessness. You can read more about the fund [here](#).

Of course, all of this work took place against the chaotic, challenging backdrop of the continuing pandemic. With the release last month of AWHWA's [COVID-](#)

[19 dashboard](#), we learned that the pandemic's impact on young people was devastating – **young people fared worse than every other age group in Washington state**, with **young people of color being most severely** and disproportionately impacted. Clearly, our collective efforts are needed more now than ever before.

Driving to Statewide Presence in 2022

The good news is that this need, together with the progress being made in Anchor Communities, is being recognized and acted on by state, philanthropic, and community leaders. Thanks to our many dedicated champions during the 2021 legislative session, we collectively secured resources to **expand the Anchor Community Initiative to new communities** and deepen our **partnership with the Office of Homeless Youth**. Additionally, our incredible philanthropic founders and partners greatly scaled up their support, allowing us to truly expand our efforts statewide and offer resources to all willing communities in the form of training and technical assistance. Our **new Training and Engagement department** will share key aspects of our model and what we have learned working with communities across the state. I simply don't have the words to express how grateful we are to bring this full-scale vision of Yes to Yes! to life!

In **January**, we look forward to **announcing the new Anchor Communities** and to **sharing more details about the new Training and Engagement unit** and the types of technical support that will be available to all Washington communities. We also will share **job postings as we grow** our staff to support expansion. We're excited that our evolved staffing approach is **embedding AHWHA staff members in communities across the state**, helping us to better understand local landscapes and strengthen authentic community-based connections.

I wrap up where I began – with **immense gratitude**. So much of the progress achieved this past year is due to the **incredible staff** I had the great good fortune to join, our **dedicated philanthropic partners**, including those who give their time and talent to serve on our **board**, and to our **stellar community partners**. They are wicked smart systems change agents who are committed to ending – not managing – youth and young adult homelessness. We firmly believe that by meaningfully engaging youth and young adults in this work and growing our collective efforts, we can truly make Washington a **Yes to Yes!** state – when a young person says “Yes, I need support,” a community can say “Yes, we can and will help.”

From the entire A Way Home Washington team,

we wish you a very happy holiday season and a healthy New Year!



Anchor Community Expansion Update

A BIG thank you to the communities across the state who expressed interest in joining our flagship program, the Anchor Communities Initiative (ACI), a national model for preventing and ending homelessness for young people. This first-ever expansion of the ACI offers the very real possibility of moving Washington toward a tipping point to realize our vision of functionally ending youth and young adult homelessness statewide.

Applications from communities are being reviewed by our selection committee, which includes representatives from AHWHA and the Office of Homeless Youth. We look forward to announcing expansion communities soon and hosting a kick-off celebration and initial working session in early 2022. Stay tuned for more information!

If you have questions about the ACI, the expansion effort, or an application you submitted, please contact us the ACI Department at ACIDepartment@awayhomewa.org



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