



A WAY HOME WASHINGTON

October 2021

Anchor Communities Expansion Opportunity

The Anchor Community Initiative (ACI) expansion opportunity is underway! Communities across Washington can apply to become a part of this national model to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness. We owe an enormous thanks to our peerless advocates for their skill and dedication in securing \$9 million in the 2021 legislative session to make this expansion possible!

Through the intensive work of the initial four Anchor Communities, we are identifying what works in preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness and creating a model that can be scaled and replicated in ways that fit unique communities across the state. The Anchor Community of Spokane has become the largest community in the United States to achieve a reduction in youth and young adult homelessness (read more below)!

You can see detailed information about our call to communities to apply to be a part of the Anchor Community Initiative on the AWHWA [website](#), including the [invitation](#) to communities to apply, the online [application](#) for communities to submit by November 19th, [FAQs](#), the application timeline and additional information.

We know that homelessness among young people is equally prevalent in rural communities as it is in urban communities, so we encourage communities that represent the full diversity of our state to join us, learn more, and apply.

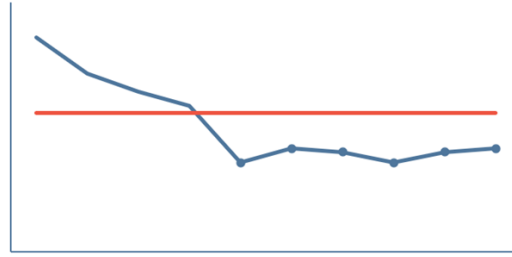
To learn more, please contact us at ACIDepartment@awayhomewa.org

Register now to join us at 3:00 PM on Thursday, November 4th for the Expression of Interest Webinar (via Zoom). You will hear insights from current Anchor Community members and can have your questions answered about the application process.

Spokane Achieves a Milestone

The Anchor Community of Spokane has become the largest community in the United States to achieve a reduction in youth and young adult homelessness! This milestone represents a "shift" in homelessness, which is achieved when data is six points below the system baseline, as seen over a period of several months to make sure it's not a random change.

Leaders in Spokane attribute the shift to a number of factors, including increased housing placements due to the Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF) and weekly 'Case Conferencing.' The CDF is a **flexible pool of money** that can be drawn on by youth workers in consultation with their clients – in this case, young people experiencing housing instability and at risk of not having a place to live.



With the CDF, anyone who works with young people can be trained to administer diversion services, coupled with help for anything that might execute a housing plan. Case Conferencing is a holistic meeting each week to ensure that all parts of the youth homelessness response system are talking and collaborating, sharing insights and lessons learned. Together, the CDF and Case Conferencing have led to a measurable reduction in unsheltered homelessness and an increase in young people with permanent housing placements. At the same time, leadership from young people in Spokane County, including the Youth Action Board, have ensured that efforts have centered the input of people with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability.

“This achievement in reducing youth and young adult homelessness is thanks to tireless work over the past few years by caseworkers, service providers, and young people with lived experience of homelessness who have given their time and expertise to improve our systems and make Spokane a more welcoming community,” said Cecily Ferguson, Spokane’s recent Anchor Community Initiative Coordinator at Spokane County United Way. “Spokane has taken a major step forward, but we still have so much work to do to finish the job and end youth and young adult homelessness.”

To learn more about how Spokane made this significant shift, please see our [Spokane Case Study](#) found on the ACI Resource Hub.

Watch & Share Our New Video

We’re excited to share our new video! This brief piece highlights the A Way Home Washington movement, explains the Anchor Community Initiative and the innovative and effective approaches the communities are taking to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness. It also encourages more communities to learn about the ACI expansion opportunity and to submit an expression of interest to join this national model.



Please watch, let us know what you think, and share the video with others who are dedicated to our shared goal of ending homelessness for all young people.

Centralized Diversion Fund Report

Our new report on the Centralized Diversion Fund is both a primer and a report on its effectiveness after the first year of it being utilized in the four Anchor Communities.



The A Way Home Washington (AWHWA) Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF) is a cost-effective, youth and young adult centered solution to homelessness and housing instability that is already transforming Anchor Communities.

Diversion is a core component of AWHWA's strategy to end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in WA. The AWHWA diversion model is a person-centered and strengths-based approach that assists individuals or households to quickly secure housing outside of the homeless response system. Together, the young person and trained provider tailor strategies that lead to safe and stable housing, coupled with one-time financial assistance when needed.



At a time when the global COVID-19 pandemic is severely impacting the emotional, physical and economic well-being of young people, the CDF is also reducing racial and other disparities in services and housing for young people of color (POC), pregnant and parenting and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and/or Questioning (LGBTQ+) young people. CDF is more flexible than most housing programs and ensures there are little to no barriers to housing.

Young people can access CDF at their college, mental health provider or LGBTQ+ center without ever needing to make direct contact with the homeless system.

Flexible housing resources are particularly important in rural areas where young people rely heavily on informal supports. YYA homelessness is just as prevalent in rural areas as it is in urban areas but it is less visible. Youth in rural areas are twice as likely to seek shelter with others and half as likely to be staying in shelters as youth in urban areas. The CDF brought flexible diversion funds to Walla Walla for the first time and has been a catalyst for Spokane's shift toward a diversion-first system.

[Read the Report](#)

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Or visit the A Way Home Washington website - awayhomewa.org

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