

# Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund:

## Using Flexible Funds to House Youth and Young Adults Equitably and Sustainably

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A WAY HOME  
WASHINGTON



# Pathway to Sustainability: HPDF Impacts YYA Housing Stability Long-Term

In August 2020, A Way Home Washington launched the Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund (formerly referred to as the Centralized Diversion Fund) in four Anchor Communities: Walla Walla, Yakima, Spokane and Pierce counties. The HPDF has since become a key tool in each community's system change work – profoundly impacting the way they house young people. The HPDF is housing more young people than any other housing program in each county it is operational in.

# 441

youth and  
young adult  
households  
served

In its second year of operation, the HPDF has doubled the number of young people housed. Between May 2020 and May 2021, 220 youth and young adult (YYA) households were housed, compared to 441 YYA households housed from May 2021 and May 2022. Of those housed in 2021-2022, 55% were Young People of Color.

The HPDF was the first centralized diversion fund program specifically for youth/young adults launched and made available in the aforementioned 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 and Building Changes. Where other diversion projects situated the

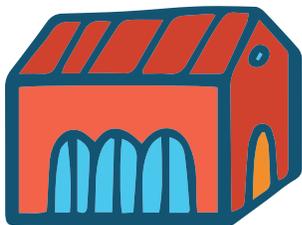
resource directly in a singular organization or program, the “centralized” approach instead identifies a fiscal administrator in a given county to process requests. A broad, intersecting group of community members is then trained to access the fund on behalf of the young people they serve. More than 200 HPDF providers are certified to access the fund, including not only youth homeless providers, but McKinney Vento Liaisons, dispute resolution centers, tenant advocates, youth advisory board members, Tribal centers and more. This creates a “no wrong door” culture where young people get the support they need from the people and places they already know and trust, which is essential for young people’s continued stability.

# 55%

POC households  
served

“ This intervention is the embodiment of the truth that young people know what they want, and more importantly know what they need. The HPDF fund allows service providers and clients to come together and create a housing solution that, as the data shows, will work.”

**Gage Spicer**, Community Engagement Specialist,  
Volunteers of America

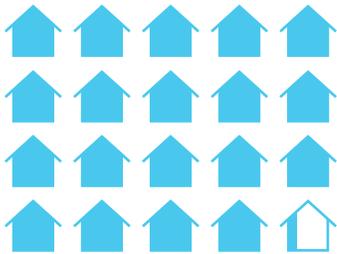




Almost all young people stayed housed after accessing the HPDF. Of the 441 households served, 95% of households were successfully prevented or diverted from homelessness. Of those successfully diverted, 93% stayed housed within 12 months of accessing the HPDF. HPDF is proving that despite the centralized diversion approach being a light-touch and short-term housing first intervention, young people are not only able to be housed immediately outside the homeless response system, but stay housed with this resource.

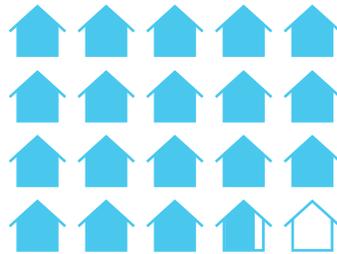


## Almost all young people served by the HPDF remained housed 3, 6 and 12 months after being served.



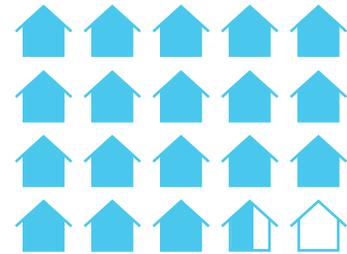
# 96%

of young people stayed housed within **3 months** of being diverted.



# 94%

of young people stayed housed within **6 months** of being diverted.



# 93%

of young people stayed housed within **12 months** of being diverted.

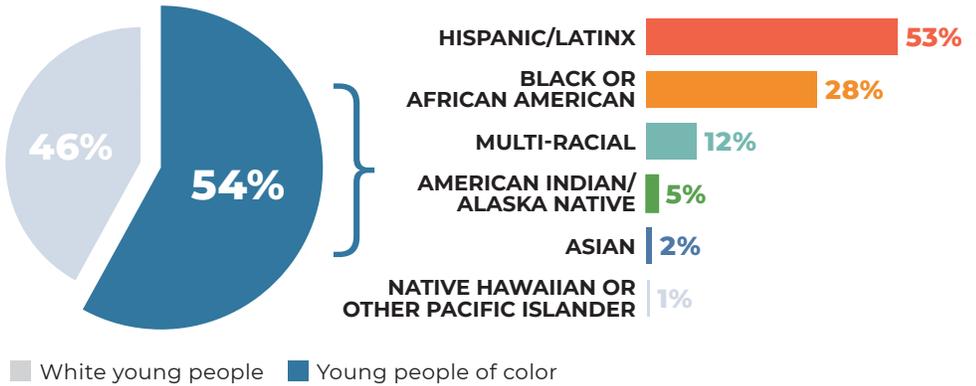
“ It was very easy to access and very simple to navigate. Funds went directly to the apartment so there was no middle man. Very good communication!”

**Young person in Spokane**



Existing diversion programs required YYA to already be “literally homeless” before providing flex funds. However, the HPDF continues to be a meaningful prevention resource for YYA in the state. Almost three quarters (72%) of YYA served by the HPDF in May 2021-22 were either at risk of homelessness (33%) or unsafely/unstably doubled up or couchsurfing (39%). This is highlighted further when considering that of that 72% who used HPDF as a prevention resource, 54% were young people of color.

### Young People at Risk of Homelessness or Unsafely Doubled Up/Couchsurfing



### Housing young people through the HPDF is much quicker than other interventions and much less costly than Rapid Re-housing:

The HPDF costs only \$273 more on average than Emergency Shelter, however it only takes 2 days for a young person to be housed through the HPDF, compared to 43 days to be exited from Emergency Shelter. Furthermore, exits from emergency shelters do not necessarily equate to a young person being housed.

Intervention	Cost
AWHWA Diversion <sup>1</sup>	\$1,926
Emergency Shelter <sup>2</sup>	\$1,653
Rapid Re-housing <sup>3</sup>	\$8,827



### Young people diverted by HPDF spent significantly less time experiencing homelessness, when compared to other interventions:

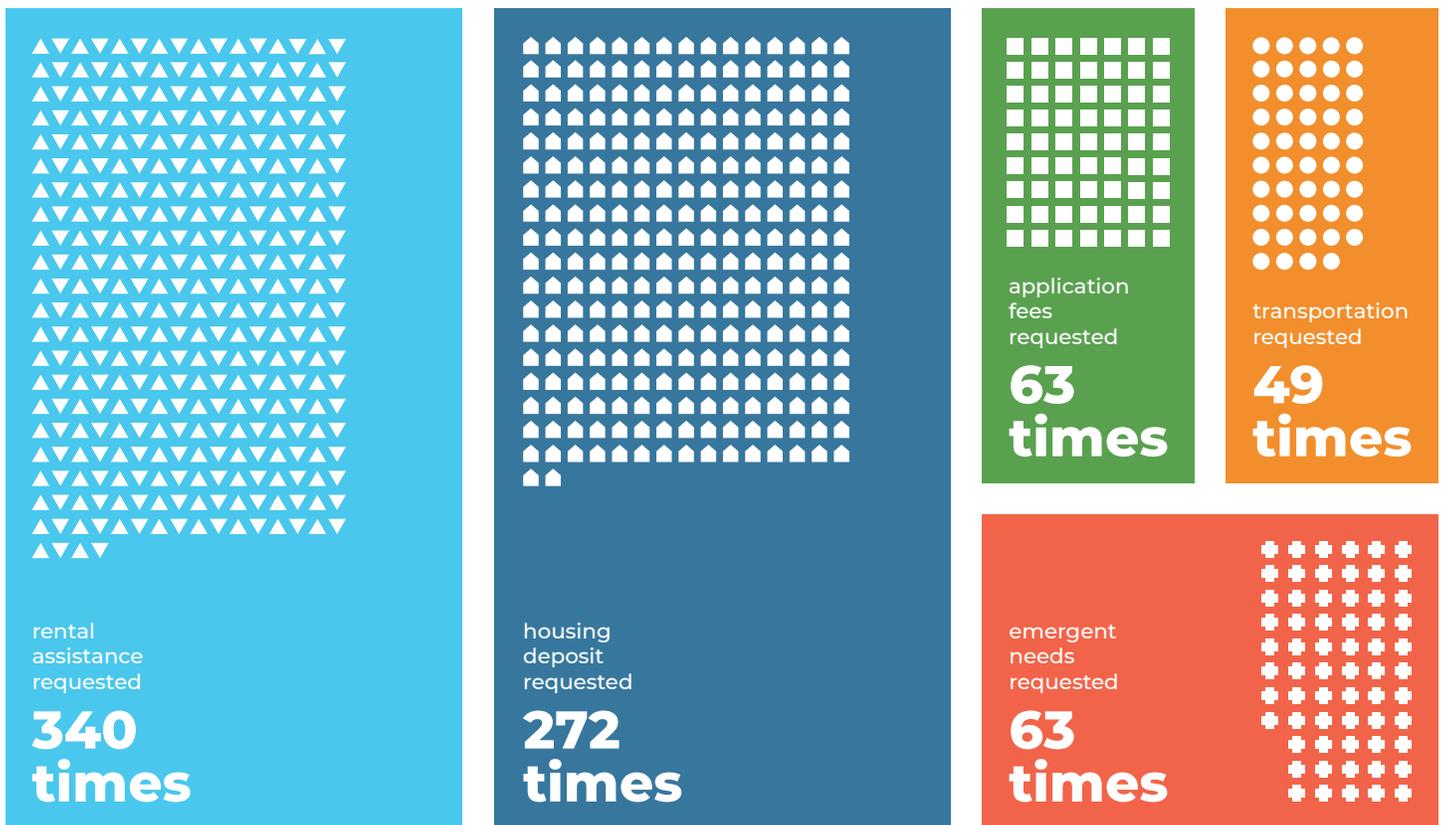
Intervention	Time
AWHWA Diversion <sup>4</sup>	2 days
Emergency Shelter <sup>5</sup>	43 days
Rapid Re-housing <sup>6</sup>	131 days

<sup>1</sup> AWHWA HPDF Public Dashboard  
<sup>2</sup> 2021 Department of Commerce Golden Report averaged across Anchor Communities for youth and young adult serving projects  
<sup>3</sup> 2021 Department of Commerce Golden Report  
<sup>4</sup> HPDF Requests Median Processing Time  
<sup>5</sup> 2021 Department of Commerce Golden Report



The most common ways that the HPDF supported young people’s housing needs outside of the homelessness system was through rental assistance and housing deposits. However, HPDF’s flexibility also means that young people’s emergent needs can be met through gift cards and travel costs.

## Most Frequent Fund Types Requested by Young People



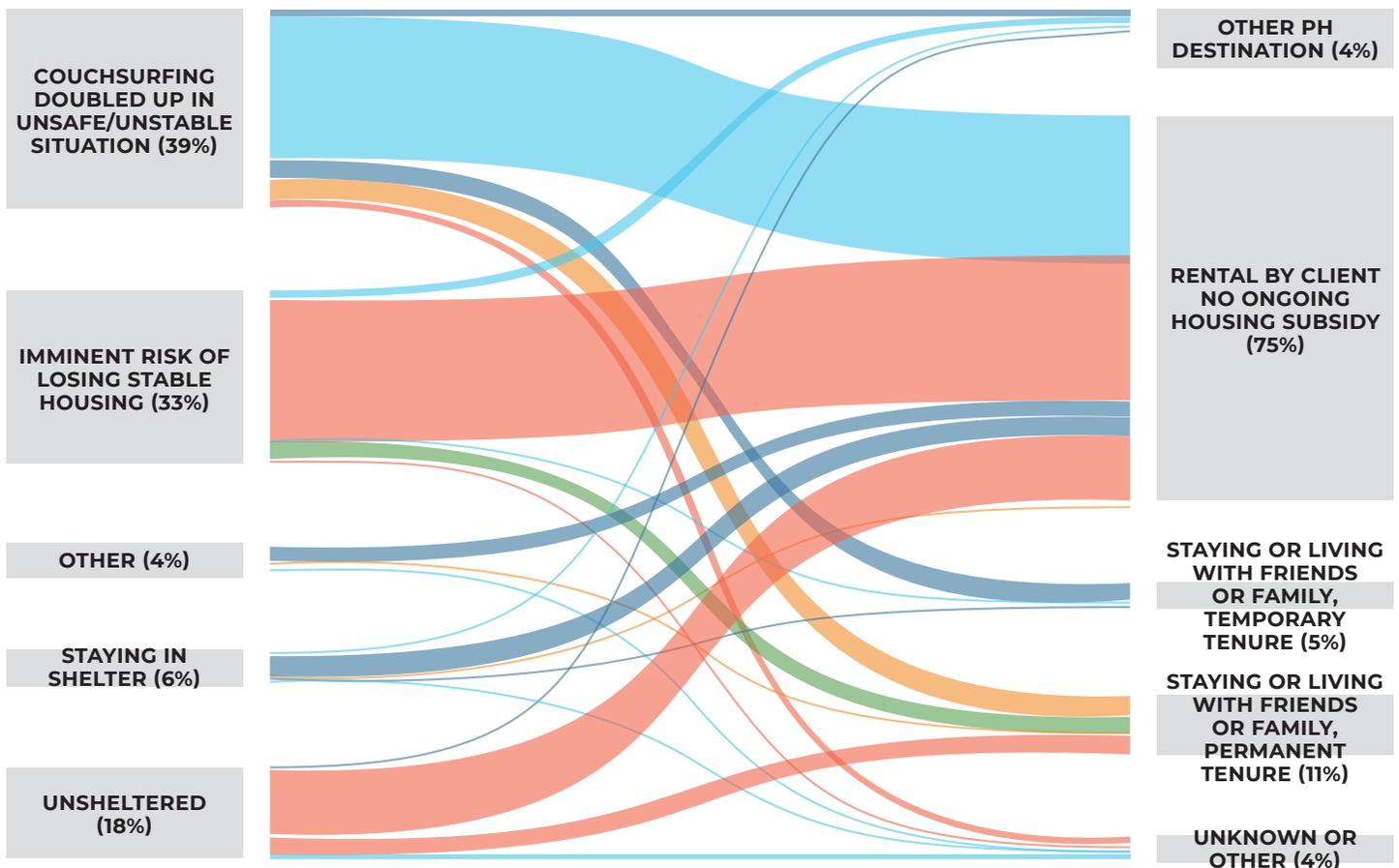
“Traditional avenues for support often come with additional barriers and are slow to access. I think the key to what makes HPDF such an effective response to homelessness is its ability to move flexibly and quickly. I have seen several housing options fall through for young people due to other programs inability to quickly disperse funds. I have also seen stringent requirements, walkthroughs and inspections from other programs scare away potential landlords that would not have been an issue if HPDF was used.”

**Michael Woolson, Homeless YYA Services Navigator, Blue Mountain Action Council, Walla Walla**



The Sankey chart below illustrates the relationship between young people’s experience of homelessness or housing instability and what types of housing they move to after being served by the HPDF. The width of the paths indicates the rate by which young people move between a certain Living Situation at Entry and their Exit Destination. The majority of young people served by HPDF are either unsafely/unstably doubled or couchsurfing, or at imminent risk of losing stable housing, and the majority of young people are exiting to their own rental with no ongoing housing subsidy.

## Journey of Young People Through Diversion: From Entry to Exit\*



\*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

“ HPDF impacts youth by empowering them to create and follow through with solutions. A lot of programs we work with can create a sense of powerlessness. They have to wait to be enrolled, wait to access the funds and are at the mercy of the system. With HPDF we are able to work in partnership with youth to create housing solutions.

**Bryan Carbullido, HPDF Fiscal Administrator for Pierce County**



# Using the HPDF to Address Inequity and Injustice

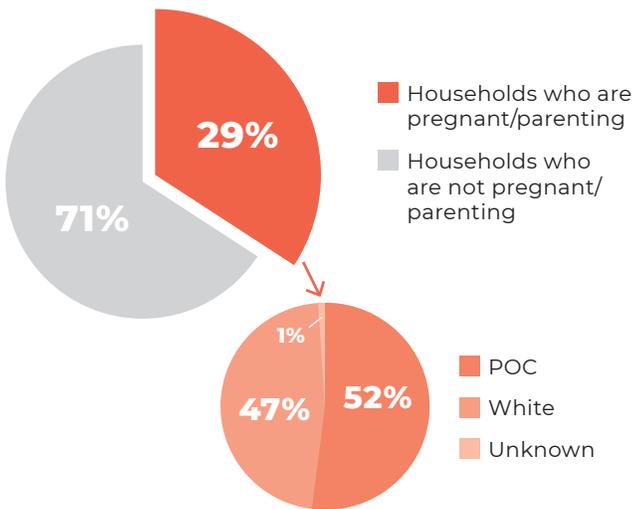
The HPDF is undergirded by extensive real-time data collection and multiple data dashboards that provides a backdrop of continuous quality improvement and accountability to dismantling disproportionality in the youth and young adult homeless response system. With expansive eligibility requirements and a centralized model that allows for resources to be moved directly to community-based organizations, the program is able to reach young people in historically marginalized communities. Continued training and technical assistance that embeds racial justice and equity frameworks and skills ensures that the HPDF providers are using the data to see the gaps in services and pivot.

## Pregnant/Parenting:

HPDF’s flexible eligibility requirements continue to fill a critical service gap for young families and young people who are pregnant, especially young people of color. 29% (127) were pregnant/parenting.

Of those households who are pregnant/parenting:

- 52% were POC
- 1% unknown
- 47% white.

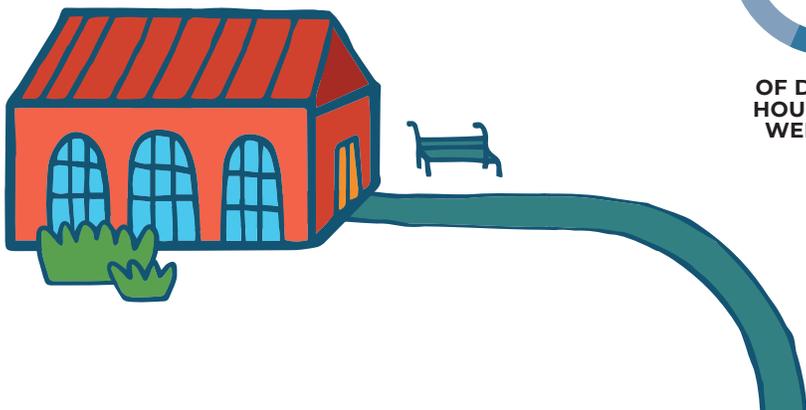
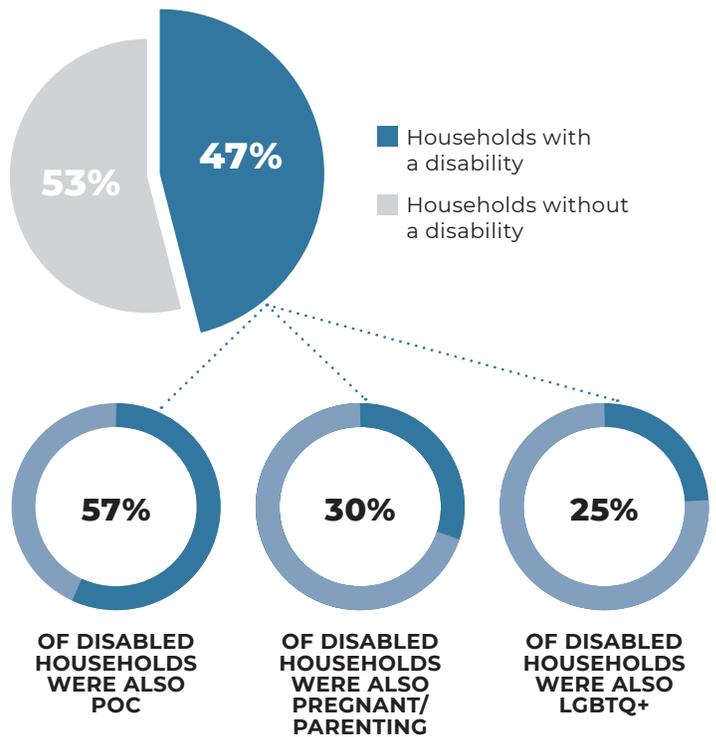


## Disabilities:

Disability data was collected for 92% of households, an increase from 79% last year. At least 47% of young people housed with HPDF identified as having a disability (209 out of 441 households).

Of those households with disabilities:

- 57% were also POC
- 30% were also pregnant/parenting
- 25% were also LGBTQ+





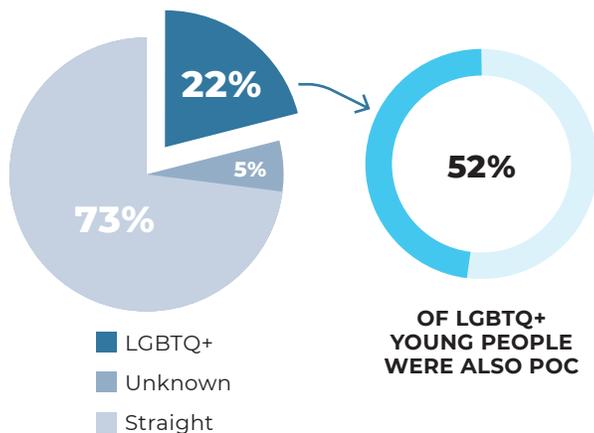
## Sexual Orientation:

The HPDF is housing LGBTQ+ young people, but we still believe that our data is an undercount given the national data says that 20-40% of all young people experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

Additionally, the HPDF exists in communities who may not have had pre-existing practices around collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data before working with A Way Home Washington. As such, continued work is underway to both explore causes for the undercount and provide technical assistance.

- 22% LGBTQ+, 5% unknown, 73% straight
- 52% of LGBTQ+ young people were also POC

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION



It is important to note that exits to temporary housing destinations outside the homelessness system are also considered successful diversions (eg. staying or living with friends/family, temporary tenure). This creates an environment where providers are encouraged to explore all creative temporary and permanent housing solutions with young people and young people are able to move along the spectrum to permanent housing in a way that best meets their needs.

## Stable Housing Rates Show Positive Impact for Young People of Color:

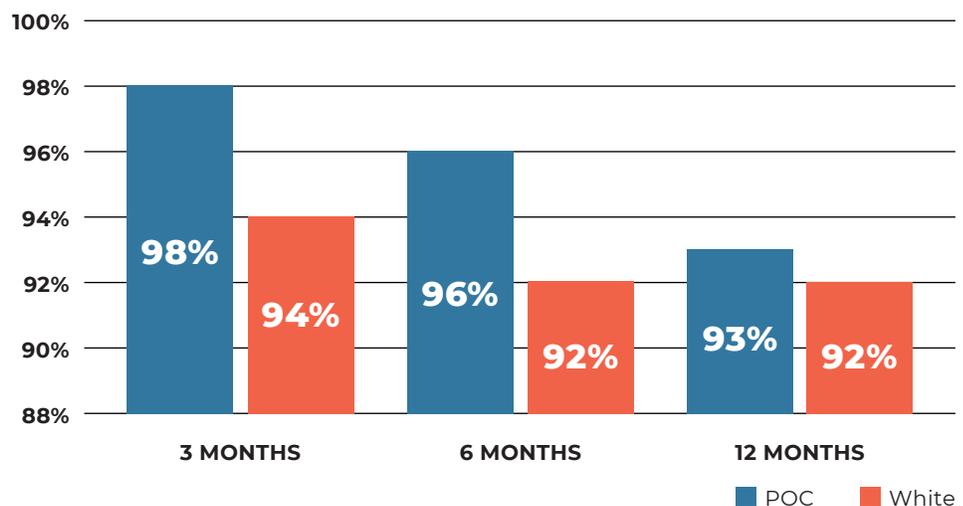
In its second year of operation, HPDF continues to be a crucial tool for housing young people of color.

Of the 441 young people housed with HPDF, 55% were young people of color. When checking at the 3, 6 and 12 month mark after being successfully diverted with HPDF, young people of color successfully diverted by HPDF are staying stably housed at higher rates than their white counterparts (see graphic below).

Young people have greater self-determination with HPDF because diversion is used as a tool that puts young people in the driver's seat as the creator and decider of their own housing journey. This flips the traditional provider-young person relationship on its head. Young people can also access HPDF through trusted providers, allowing them to avoid the housing/homelessness system which is rife with systemic and institutional racism.

Moreover, with broad access to certification and training, community-based organizations, advocacy groups and youth action boards can access the resource on behalf of young people they serve directly. Young people from historically marginalized communities are thus able to more easily access the resource from people and places they already have relationships with.

## Rate of Staying Stably Housed at 3, 6, 12 months





# Recommendations



## Programs must be designed to prevent and end homelessness system-wide:

As was found last year, flex fund projects like prevention & diversion continue to be effective where there is infrastructure for cross-sector and system-wide collaboration for preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness. We recommend this for the following reasons:

- Flex fund programs are most effective where there is a community-wide infrastructure of identifying and addressing YYA homelessness, such as communities with Youth By-Names Lists. This allows for real-time data integration to measure progress and pivot strategies to prevent and end YYA homelessness.
- Homelessness can't be ended without also ending disproportionality, thus infrastructures for real-time data and strategies for case conferencing who's actively experiencing homelessness need to be integrated community-wide and across sectors.
- Flex fund programs should be continually iterated and improved to meet the needs of and move money more directly to young people. Leveraging pre-existing structures from HPDF can provide the state with known pathways to put other resources such as those contemplated by House Bill 1905, Direct Cash Transfers, and Guaranteed Basic Income into young people's hands. These are essential for ensuring young people have many options to choose from to meet their unique housing needs.



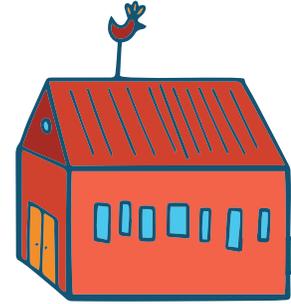
## The sustainability of justice-driven flexible fund programs rests on foundational infrastructure:

HPDF is working within the AWHWA model to dismantle system oppression and racism in the youth/young adult homeless housing system because we know that we cannot end homelessness without ending disproportionality too. In our second year of operating, we've proven the following combination of infrastructural elements are essential for sustaining efforts toward that goal:

- Population-specific, anti-racist training curriculum
- Ongoing technical assistance and training for fiscal administrators on data collection and program eligibility
- Real-time data infrastructure disaggregated by key demographics
- Regular data cleanup and monitoring to ensure quality and completeness
- Continuous improvement methodology that centers client needs

“Traditional avenues for support often come with additional barriers and are slow to access. I think the key to what makes HPDF such an effective response to homelessness is its ability to move flexibly and quickly.”

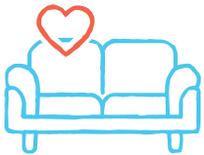
**Michael Woolson, Homeless YYA Services Navigator,  
Blue Mountain Action Council, Walla Walla**



## Programs should move resources to community-based organizations:

HPDF is a cost-effective way of housing young people long-term, with 93% of young people still housed 12 months after using the resource. This is, in part, because the centralized approach to diversion means that young people are able to learn about and access the resource in the spaces and with the people they already know and trust.

- Young people are able to access the resource wherever they are already receiving support and with who they already know and trust. Situating flex funds in this structure allows for a broad group of non-traditional providers and community-based organizations to access the different program types on behalf of the young people they are working with.
- Organizations led by and for the populations they serve may not always qualify for YYA specific resources, as they often have to be everything to their people. The centralized approach allows for these organizations to get direct access to funding to house the young people in their community, by-passing an overtaxed YYA homeless housing referral system.



## Flex fund programs must have broad eligibility requirements to target prevention strategies.

Eligibility requirements, including what qualifies as a housing crisis, must encompass the wide variety of situations young people are in. AWHWA includes couchsurfing/doubled up and in unsafe situations, as well as imminent risk of unaccompanied homelessness, in the definition of housing instability and homelessness.

- These low-barrier and broad eligibility requirements allow young people to access HPDF before they ever enter into the homeless response system. Sometimes one experience of homelessness can be a tipping point for continued crisis. Preventing that experience means ending the cycle before it begins.
- Given that a majority of young people served by the HPDF who were at risk of homelessness or couchsurfing were Black/African American and Latinx (72%), broad eligibility requirements and honing prevention strategies is a racial justice best practice.
- Public funding requirements on how funds can be used should be broadened to reflect the lived experience of young people and their needs. For instance, being able to cover things like gift cards, motel vouchers and other core elements essential for making young people's housing plan come to fruition. Currently, this gap is being filled by private philanthropy.

“ The HPDF has provided a sense of hope for many heartbeats further than the client the funds were set out to be used for - from family, friends, pets, and more.”

**Bryan Carbullido, HPDF Fiscal Administrator for Pierce County**



# Acknowledgments



## Schultz Family Foundation

## Office of Homeless Youth, WA Dept of Commerce

Over the last two years, the AWHWA Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund has created a bedrock of flex fund best practices that is galvanizing the state’s efforts to house young people in creative and innovative ways. This tool is able to meet the unique needs of young people across Washington through vital public and private support. Key funders include the Washington State Department of Commerce (Office of Homeless Youth).

The Schultz Family Foundation has been a dedicated investor and advocate for the HPDF. We are particularly grateful for their leadership in ensuring the continuation of the HPDF, hallmarked by an additional \$20,000 matching grant that ignited local energy to ensure the sustainability of the HPDF in Walla Walla.

The Office of Homeless Youth have been stalwart partners in their commitment to house young people with flex funds like the HPDF. Their collaboration and support is crucial in our efforts to elevate prevention and diversion best practices and access statewide.

Fiscal Administrators continue to be the keystone for bringing the HPDF to life on the ground in communities. From the technical assistance they provide to HPDF providers to the dedication for housing young people as fast as possible, Fiscal Administrators go above and beyond to meet their communities’ needs. Together, our certified providers and Fiscal Administrators are culture shifters, change makers, and leaders in their communities. We are incredibly grateful to them and the young people they serve for building the HPDF house as we know it.

## Our Fiscal Administrators:



“ HPDF is about collaboration and pulls in all components of the community to foster strength in addressing needs as a unit as opposed to one individualized service.”

**Amanda Vasquez, HPDF provider in Pierce County**