



Housing Out of the Box:

Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Fund

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT - MARCH 2024

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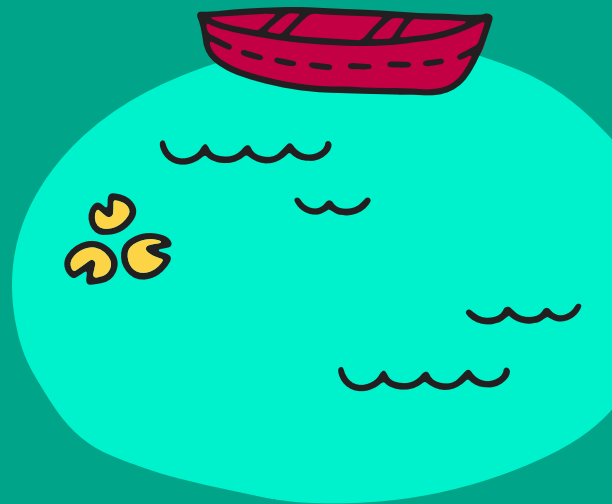

A WAY HOME
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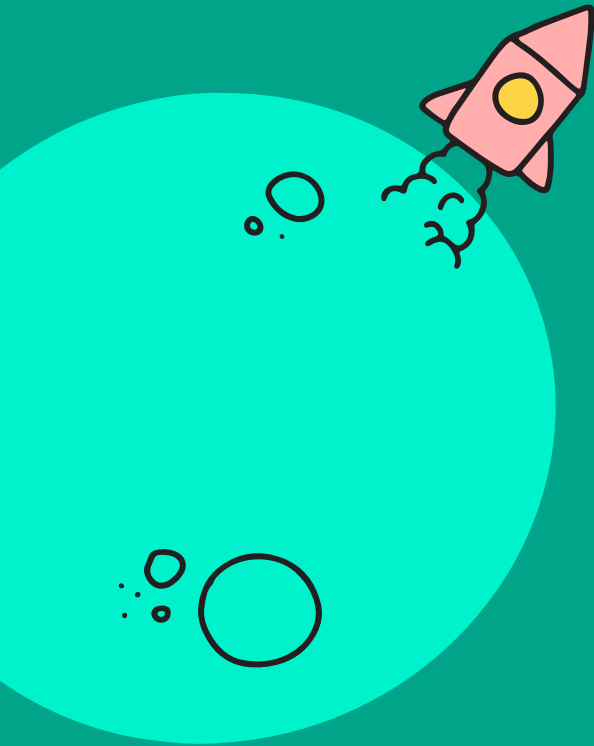
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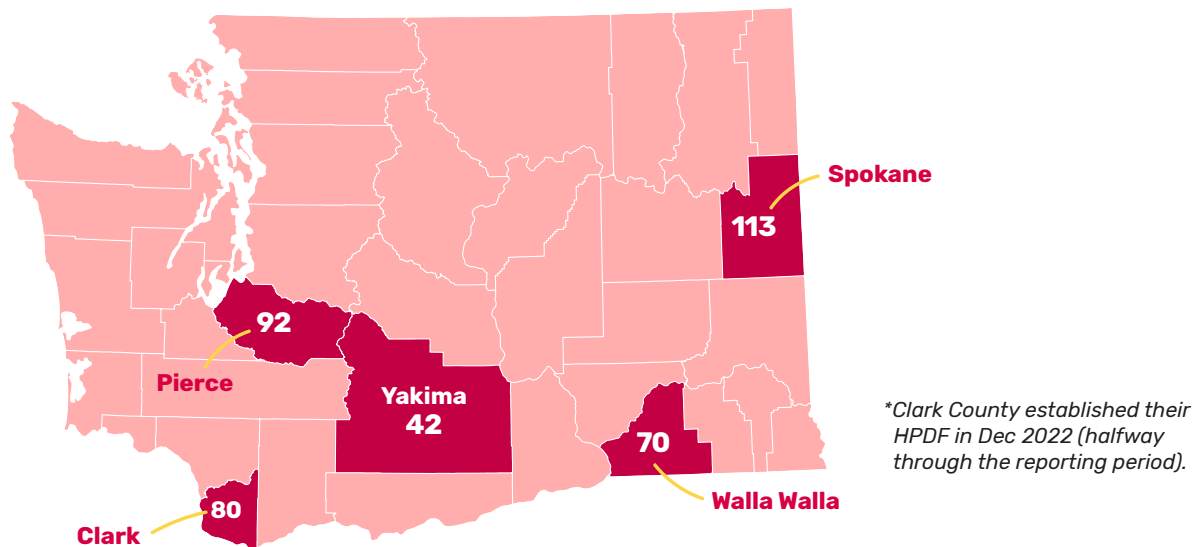


HPDF Remains Effective in Preventing & Reducing Homelessness for Young People

From high barriers in eligibility requirements to strict definitions of what counts as housing, traditional housing resources have struggled to meet the needs of young people most impacted by homelessness. After its third year of operation, the Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Fund (HPDF, previously known as the Centralized Diversion Fund) demonstrates that homelessness prevention and housing stability are possible when we put young people in the driver's seat of their housing decisions.

A Way Home Washington (AWHWA) created the HPDF in 2020 as a tool for the Anchor Community Initiative to prevent and reduce homelessness for unaccompanied youth and young adults (YYA) between the ages of 12 and 24. **HPDF served 397 households from May 2022 to May 2023 across five communities: Clark, Pierce, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties.** That brings the total number of YYA households served since the HPDF launched to 1,093, with over a third (36%) of those served from May 2022 to May 2023. Of the 397 young people housed in this reporting period, 60% were young people of color.

FIGURE 1 Households Served by the HPDF by County, 2022-2023



In December 2021, AWHWA welcomed Clark County into the Anchor Community Initiative, and in December 2022, they became the fifth community to establish the HPDF with the Council for the Homeless. AWHWA trained and certified 33 diversion providers in Clark County from November 2022 to May 2023. Those providers served 80 youth and young adults households in the first six months of the fund operating, with 68.75% identifying as BIPOC (55) and 31.25% identifying as White (25). The quick adoption and immediate utilization of the HPDF in Clark County demonstrates how easily scalable and applicable the program model is.



Flexible, Low-Barrier Approach Essential in Supporting Young People's Unique Housing Needs

The HPDF was the first centralized diversion fund in Washington that served unaccompanied minors as well as young adults and expanded the definition of homelessness to include at-risk and unstably/unsafely housed and/or doubled-up/couchsurfing YYA. Previous diversion funds only served unsheltered or literally homeless young adults.

The HPDF is built on two core elements: 1) exploring and identifying housing solutions that are driven by the young person, and 2) providing low-barrier, flexible, and immediate funding to make those housing plans happen when funding is needed. The goal of diversion is to prevent and divert people away from the homeless response system by utilizing points of connection already in the client's network. The philosophy underpinning diversion is that people experiencing homelessness know what housing will work for them best - and not all young people need to go through the suite of homelessness services to be housed. Folks shouldn't have to continue experiencing homelessness to wait for resources to become available. Instead, the HPDF proves they can be, and are being, housed in their own communities when resources make it possible.

AHWA understands that funds alone do not lead to housing stability - it also takes a deliberate housing plan that the young person leads. The HPDF process begins with a creative housing conversation between trained diversion providers and clients. Working as thought partners to explore all housing solutions available, the young person ultimately identifies the option(s) that work best for them.

Successful housing solutions are those that exist outside of the homeless response system, can happen within 30 days, and last at least three continuous months. Funding can be spent on almost anything, so long as there is a direct line to housing. This encourages young people to get creative and identify options for housing that might not have otherwise been identified through traditional housing resource pathways. The HPDF shows how a centralized diversion model is an instrumental tool for moving young people along a continuum toward more permanent housing.



“

HPDF is super flexible and at times that is what we need when working with YYA as not all situations are the same and not everyone enters homelessness the same.”

Elvis Montiel, Spokane Fiscal Admin



HPDF Leads to Long-Term Housing Stability for Youth and Young Adults

Nearly all young people served by the HPDF stayed housed: Of the 397 households served last year, there is exit data for 72% of households. Among these exited households, 97% were successfully diverted, with 95% of those young folks still housed three months later.

The overall project goal for the HPDF is that at least 75% of all young people served stay housed within three months after successfully being diverted. A successful diversion includes both temporary and permanent housing placements lasting at least 3 months. Successful diversions also include placements where the young person is living either independently or with friends and family, encouraging creativity and intentionality when they determine what housing solution will work best for their unique situation.¹

HPDF Remains a Crucial Prevention Resource

Because the HPDF includes YYA at risk of unaccompanied homelessness and unaccompanied YYA who are unsafely and/or unstably housed or doubled-up/couchsurfing, the **HPDF remains an important prevention resource. Almost three-quarters (71%) of unaccompanied YYA served by the HPDF from May 2022 to May 2023 were either at imminent risk of homelessness (38%) or unsafely/unstably doubled-up or couchsurfing (33%), similar to findings in previous years.** This is highlighted further when considering that of the young people who used the HPDF as a prevention resource, almost two-thirds (62%) were young people of color, an increase of 8 percentage points from last year.

FIGURE 2 Housing Retention Rates of Young People Served by the HPDF, 2022-23

Almost all young people served by the HPDF stay housed.



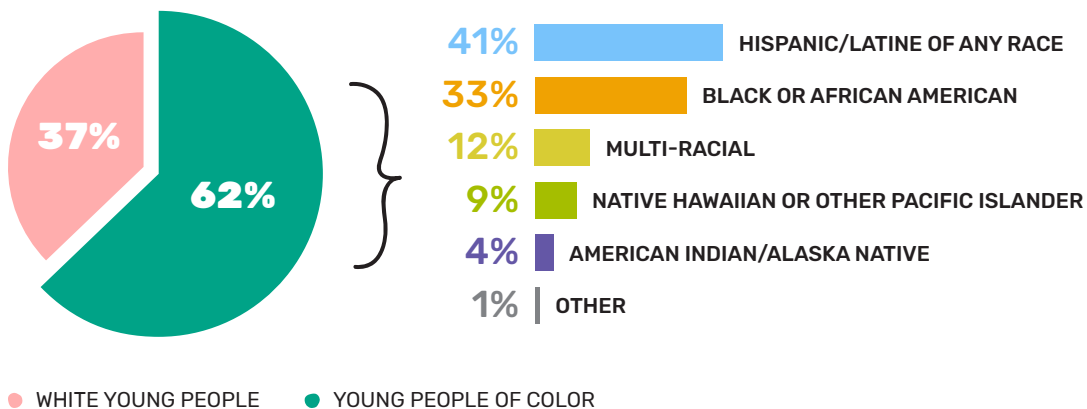
1 Diversion exits to a hotel or unsheltered living situation are extremely rare and aren't considered a successful diversion because the client is still experiencing homelessness/housing instability.
2 With exit data reported in the HMIS.



Housing Retention Data Limitation

Housing retention rates are calculated using exit data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is entered by diversion providers. A limitation of exit data is under-reporting: only 72% of all YYA households served by the HPDF showed associated exit destinations. Diversion providers sometimes don't formally exit clients and/or update their exit destination in the HMIS upon the client receiving funds. AHWHA is implementing new strategies to strengthen exit data collection in 2024. Due to HMIS access limitations, AHWHA could not determine the housing retention rates by race/ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation for this reporting period. AHWHA is implementing new strategies to strengthen exit data collection in 2024.

FIGURE 3 Young People at Risk of Homelessness or Unsafely Doubled Up/Couchsurfing Served by the HPDF, 2022-23



Pierce, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima Counties depleted public funding halfway through the fiscal year. This lapse in funding impeded the utilization of the crucial resources of the HPDF for over a month, hindering the service providers' ability to house YYA. Thanks to the Schultz Family Foundation, which stepped in with much-needed money to fill the public funding gap, the counties could resume serving young people through the HPDF until public funds became available again on June 1, 2023.

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I was able to set money aside so when assistance was over I could easily pay my rent afterward."

Anonymous Young Person, Spokane County





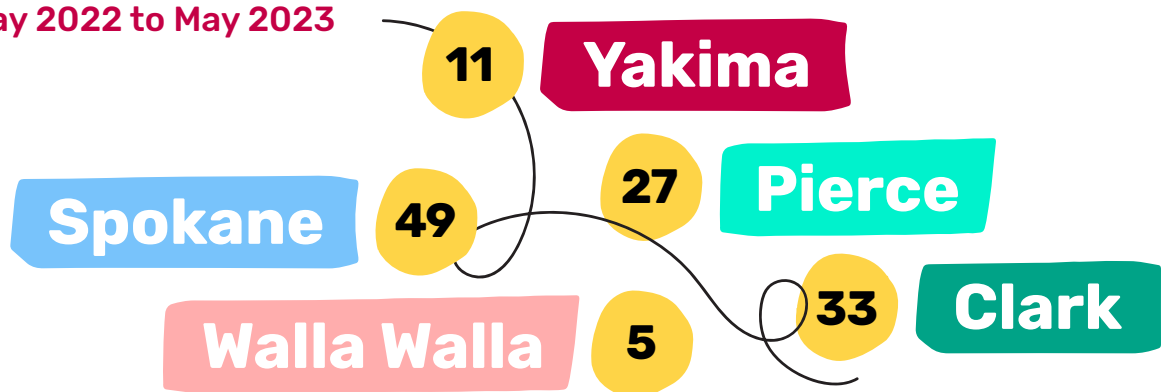
HPDF Bridges Community, Disrupts Referral-Based Status Quo

The centralized model of the HPDF continues to bridge communities across agency lines and disrupt the referral-based nature of the traditional homeless response system. The “centralized” approach situates a pot of money at a central location in a county but allows for a broad and intersecting group of certified providers to access the fund on behalf of the eligible young people they serve. This allows young people to both learn about and access the resources in the spaces they are already in and with people they already trust. AWHWA adapted this model from Building Changes’ centralized diversion fund work with AfricaTown in King County.³

Anyone can be trained and certified to access the HPDF in their community, so long as they interact with potentially eligible young people in some capacity and attend AWHWA’s Diversion Certification Training. This approach allows the HPDF to be used as a community-wide resource instead of a program resource at any single agency.

As of May 2023, 448 providers have been trained in diversion conversation and skills, accessing the fund on behalf of eligible young people they serve across the four counties the HPDF operates in. Of that, 125 diversion providers were trained and certified from May 2022 to May 2023 alone. This includes individuals from across roles and agencies interacting with eligible young people, including housing agencies, resource centers, juvenile justice programs, child welfare organizations, advocacy groups, schools and education systems, youth advisory board members, and others.

FIGURE 4 Number of providers trained across counties from May 2022 to May 2023



Clark County established their HPDF in Dec 2022 (halfway through the reporting period).

³ Learn more about AfricaTown’s Centralized Diversion Fund in King County here: <https://africatowninternational.org/cdf.php>



HPDF Cost-Effective in Addressing Unique Housing Needs of Young People

The HPDF experienced an increase in average cost per household of about \$400 from the previous reporting year. Many factors could be at play here, including increasing living expenses due to rising inflation rates and the end of COVID-era emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention resources. Despite this, **housing young people through the HPDF's one-time resource remains much less costly when compared to other housing interventions:**

\$2,419

AWHWA Diversion⁴

\$4,354

Emergency Shelter⁵

\$15,791

Rapid Re-housing⁶

One of the barriers the HPDF seeks to address is the long wait times that young people experience after applying for traditional housing resources. The HPDF has shaped the culture around processing times in the communities where it is active due to the program requirement to process requests and administer payments within 72 hours, with local administrative agencies showing it is possible to not only house people immediately but to see long-term success as a result.

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

2 days⁷

43 days⁸

131 days

4 AWHWA HPDF Public Dashboard

5 2023 Department of Commerce Golden Report averaged across Anchor Communities for youth and young adult serving projects

6 2023 Department of Commerce Golden Report

7 HPDF Requests Median Processing Time

8 2023 Department of Commerce Golden Report

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HPDF has been able to serve primarily LGBTQIA2S+ and/or BIPOC identifying young people [compared to] other programs available in my community that may not see such high successes in historically underserved communities. HPDF trainings and learning opportunities amongst our By-and-For partners are offered and communicated regularly and because many of our By and For partners have been trained to access, we have been able to collaborate with them in serving young people in a greater capacity than in other areas. Because the HPDF funding source is more flexible with data entry and documentation, this has allowed our various partners to mobilize in ways that wouldn't otherwise be possible."

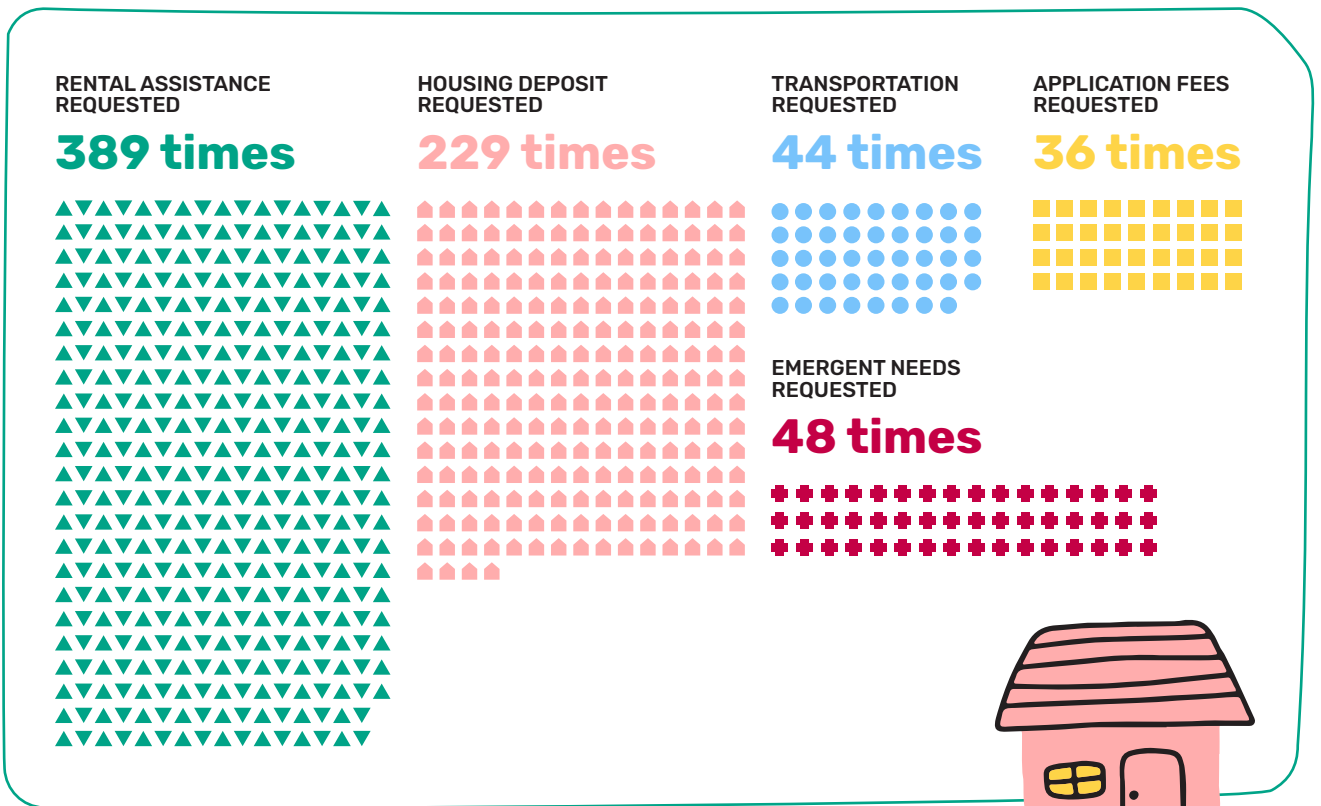
- Morgan Valentine, HPDF Clark County Fiscal Administrator,
Coordinated Entry Service Manager at Council for the Homeless



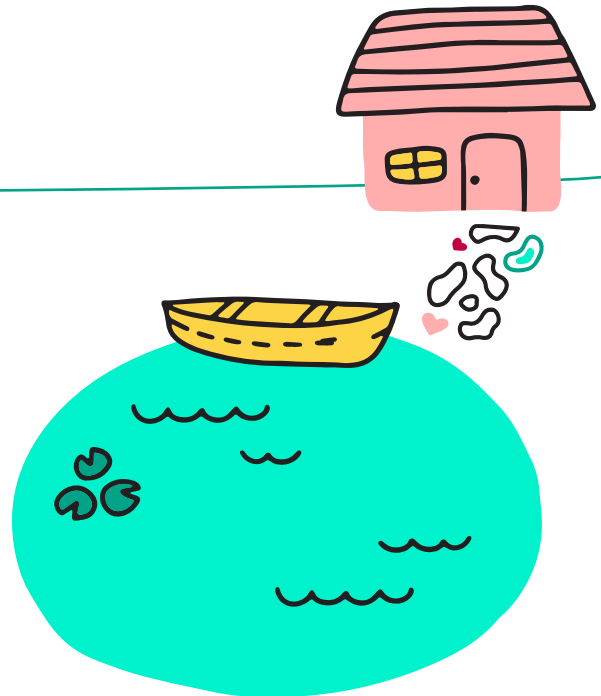
Top Funding Uses

Rental Assistance/Arrears and Housing Deposits continue to be the two most common assistance types requested from the HPDF, with many young people requesting funds for multiple categories of housing needs. The HPDF does not limit how much funding a young person can request for their housing situation, emphasizing housing solutions that plan for both short- and long-term housing solutions that meet the young person's immediate housing needs.

FIGURE 5 Top funding uses year three (May 2022 to May 2023)



The HPDF's flexibility allows funding to be used creatively to meet young people's unique and diverse housing needs. Eligible young people can use the funds for almost anything, provided the funds lead directly to permanent or temporary housing in 30 days or less.





“Out of the Box” Housing

Creativity is key to a flex fund project like the HPDF. The flexibility allows for housing solutions that are as unique as each young person and their individual housing needs and situation.



FIGURE 6
Creative ways the HPDF was used in 2024

Lin⁹, a young person from Yakima, had court fines that caused them to fall behind in rent. The HPDF was used to pay off the court fines and cover the late rent so Lin could maintain their housing.

Nahema lives in Walla Walla and had never experienced a housing crisis before when her landlord unexpectedly sold her apartment complex and evicted everyone. Nahema wasn't able to cover move-in costs on such short notice. The HPDF was used to prevent Nahema from experiencing homelessness and transition to a new apartment.



Lorri and her children lived in their car when their local housing provider in Pierce County connected her with the HPDF. She recently got a full-time job and needed help with move-in costs. The HPDF was used to immediately house Lorri and her children.

⁹ While each example and the details are true, the real names of the clients have been changed to protect their privacy and anonymity.



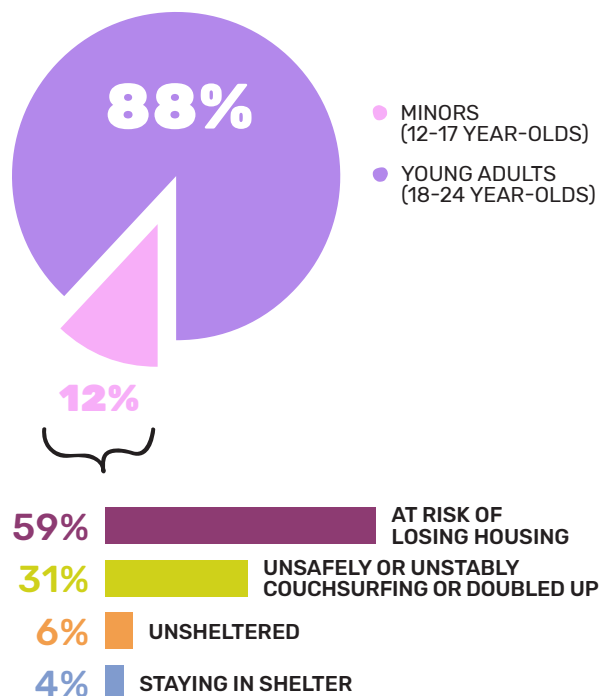
Demographic Breakdown: Diversion is a Tool for Ending Disproportionality in YYA Homelessness

Youth and young adult homelessness is an equity issue disproportionality experienced among young people of color, young people of color who are also queer or trans (QTBIPOC), YYA who are pregnant/parenting, and YYA living with disabilities. These disparities require flexible, low-barrier resources to meet the specific and unique needs of the populations more impacted by homelessness. There will never be an end to youth and young adult homelessness if resources don't also address the high rates of homelessness among young people of color, LGBTQIA2S+, QTBIPOC, pregnant/parenting, and disabled YYA. All demographic data collected through the HPDF are self-identified by young people, with informed clients who can choose if, what, and when they want to share.

Age:

Services for unaccompanied minors (under 18) were identified as a critical gap in the recent OHY-AWHWA [Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan](#), which makes the HPDF a critical intervention, filling a need in communities that have limited housing supports for this population. It is more common for youth under 18 years old to be unstably housed, doubled-up, or couchsurfing instead of being unsheltered, which often makes their experiences of homelessness more invisible.¹⁰ This is further illustrated by **Figure 7**, which shows that over half (59%) of the minors served through the HPDF were at imminent risk of losing their housing, and almost one-third (31%) were couchsurfing, doubled-up, or in an unsafe or unstable situation. Only 6% were unsheltered, and 4% were staying in shelters.

FIGURE 7 Age Groups and Living Situations of Minors Served by the HPDF, 2022-23



¹⁰ Harding Chao, L., and Castro, L. (2024). "Yes to Yes" WA: Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan. Office of Homeless Youth and A Way Home Washington.

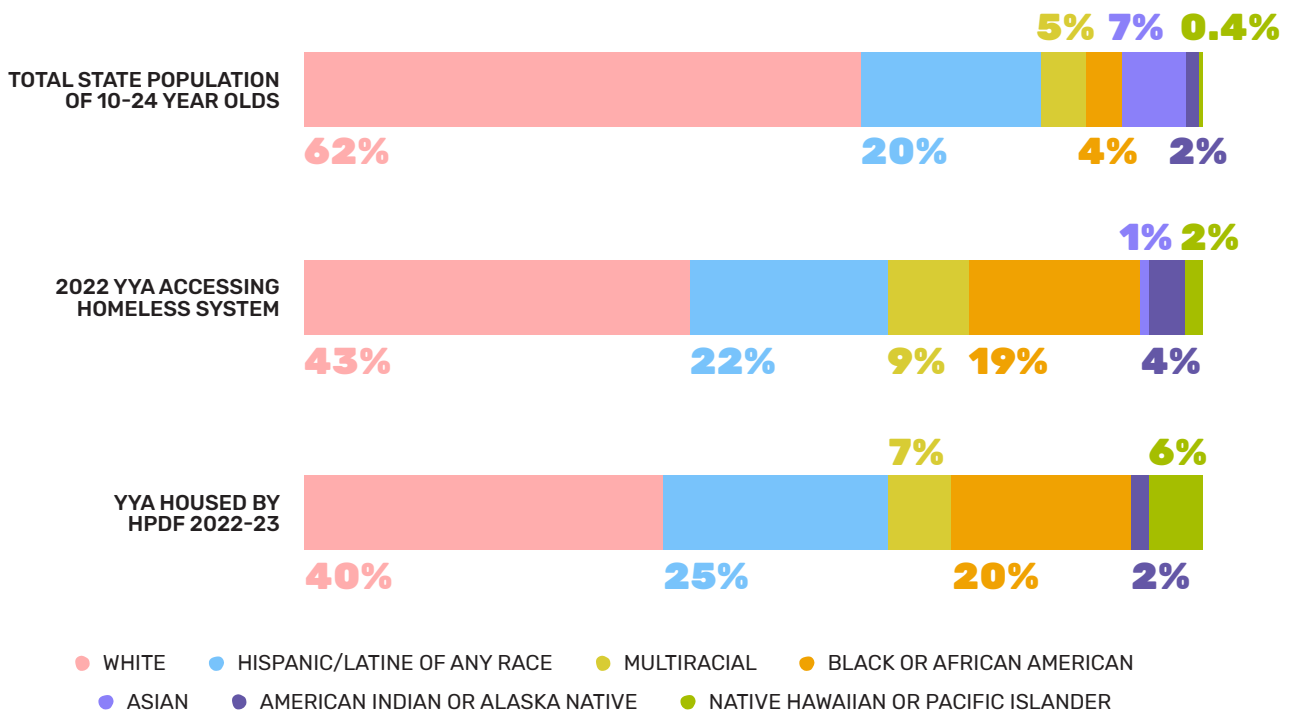


The HPDF is powerful because minors don't need to wait until they are "literally homeless" or unsheltered before they can receive support, which isn't the case with many other traditional programs. Minors have access to diversion while they are unsafely or unstably housed, doubled-up, couchsurfing, or at risk of losing their housing. Preventing homelessness before it happens lessens the amount of trauma that youth experience, ensuring they don't need to spend even one night on the street.

Race/Ethnicity:

The HPDF continues to be a crucial tool for housing young people of color, with the core elements of self-determination, flexibility, and community-wide access establishing a solid foundation for equitably responding to the unique needs of young people, especially those of color.

FIGURE 8 Racial Disproportionality in Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult Homelessness



*Recreated from the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY)-AWHWA 2024 Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan
 YYA = unaccompanied youth and young adults. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. Our population of interest is 12-24-year-olds, but Census data on 10-24-year-olds is used as best available data. HPDF = Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund.*

Census data was used to compare the general population of 10-24-year-olds to the population of unaccompanied young people served by the HPDF. 2020 Census Estimates by the WA Office of Financial Management (OFM) were available for the age ranges 10-14, 15-19, and 20-24. These age groups were combined to create a population estimate for young people aged 10-24, even though our population of interest is 12-24-year-olds. While this should be considered when comparing the populations, including 10 and 11-year-olds should not alter the race/ethnicity proportion significantly.



HMIS data from the OHY-AWHWA [Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan](#) was used to compare the proportions of the races and ethnicities of young people who accessed the homeless system in 2022 to the proportions that were housed through the HPDF.

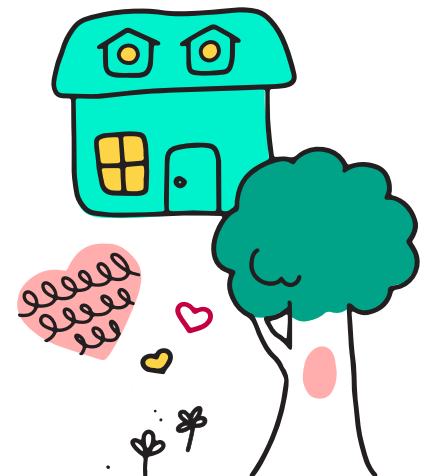
Of the 397 young people housed through the HPDF this reporting period, 60% were BIPOC, an increase of 6 percentage points from the previous reporting period. This is contrasted to the general population of 10-24-year-olds in WA, where only 38% were BIPOC. In comparison to the population of unaccompanied YYA that accessed the homeless system across WA in 2022, the proportion of BIPOC young people who accessed the HPDF was similar. However, there were notable differences for American Indian or Alaska Native young people and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) populations.

NHOPI young people experience some of the highest disproportionality in unaccompanied YYA homelessness,¹¹ but the HPDF is proving to be a powerful tool in effectively reaching this population. The HPDF is housing NHOPI young people at 15 times the proportions that they are present in the general population of 10-24-year-olds in WA (6% compared to .4%). The HPDF is also housing NHOPI young people at three times the proportion that they accessed the homeless system across the state in 2022.

In contrast, while American Indian and Alaska Native young people also experience significant disproportionality, the HPDF is not serving these young people in the same proportion that they accessed the homeless system in 2022. The HPDF served American Indian and Alaska Native young people less than they accessed the homeless system (2% served by the HPDF compared to 4% in the homeless system), but at the same proportions that they are present in the general population of 10-24-year-olds. This suggests that more could be done to reach American Indian and Alaska Native young people. AWHWA is working with local fiscal administrators and Anchor Community Initiative Core Improvement Teams to identify engagement strategies to strengthen relationships with local tribes and other American Indian and Alaska Native serving agencies to be able to utilize the HPDF.

Intersecting Identities

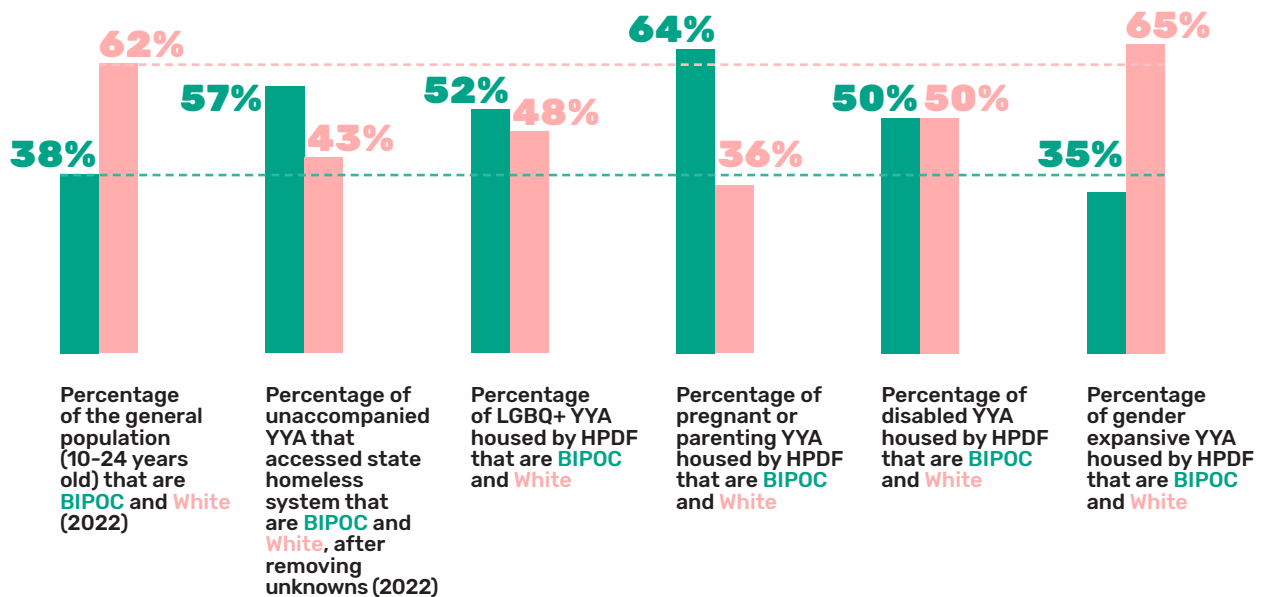
At its core, diversion centers community by putting the decision-making power in the hands of the young people accessing it. The HPDF's structure as a "centralized" model creates a process where young people can have creative conversations about housing and access the funding they need in the spaces and places they already trust. This allows for the tool to be used intentionally to address disproportionality in a community-based way.



11 Harding Chao, L., and Castro, L. (2024). *Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan*.



FIGURE 9 Disproportionality by Intersectional Identities of Youth and Young Adults 2022-23



Data sources: WA Office of Financial Management and AHWHA. YYA = youth and young adult. LGBQ+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Asexual, Demi-sexual, Pansexual, and Other (doesn't include trans, non-binary, or gender-expansive YYA because gender data is collected separately). BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Gender-expansive = trans, non-binary, and gender-fluid YYA. Our population of interest is 12-24-year-olds, but census data on 10-24-year-olds are used as best available data.

From 2022-2023, 60% of the YYA that were housed through the HPDF were BIPOC and 40% were White. **Figure 9** compares the proportions of YYA that hold intersecting identities across WA's general population of 10-24-year-olds and unaccompanied YYA with intersecting identities that accessed the HPDF. BIPOC YYA are overrepresented across all categories when comparing the proportion that accessed the HPDF to the proportion of BIPOC in the general population of 10-24-year-olds. But the most apparent disproportionality is for pregnant/parenting BIPOC YYA and disabled BIPOC YYA. BIPOC YYA comprised 65% of all pregnant/parenting YYA, but only 38% of the general population of 10-24-year-olds. Similarly, BIPOC YYA made up 56% of all disabled YYA, which is almost 20 percentage points higher than the proportion of BIPOC 10-24-year-olds in the general population.

It could also be interpreted from the data in **Figure 9** that QTBIPOC YYA are much less inclined to identify themselves to homeless service providers due to fear for their safety and intersecting queer/transphobia and racism. Only 42% of gender-expansive YYA that accessed the HPDF were BIPOC, which is much less than the overall percentage of BIPOC YYA that accessed the HPDF (60%). Similarly, fewer BIPOC LGBQ+ YYA identified themselves than would be expected. 43% of LGBQ+ YYA were BIPOC, which was less than the overall percentage of BIPOC YYA that accessed the HPDF (60%). Instead, there is an overrepresentation of White LGBQ+ and gender-expansive YYA.



Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data are divided into two separate categories (LGBQ+ and gender-expansive) because they describe different identities and are collected separately in the HMIS. However, in reality, many LGBQ+ young people identify as gender-expansive and vice versa.

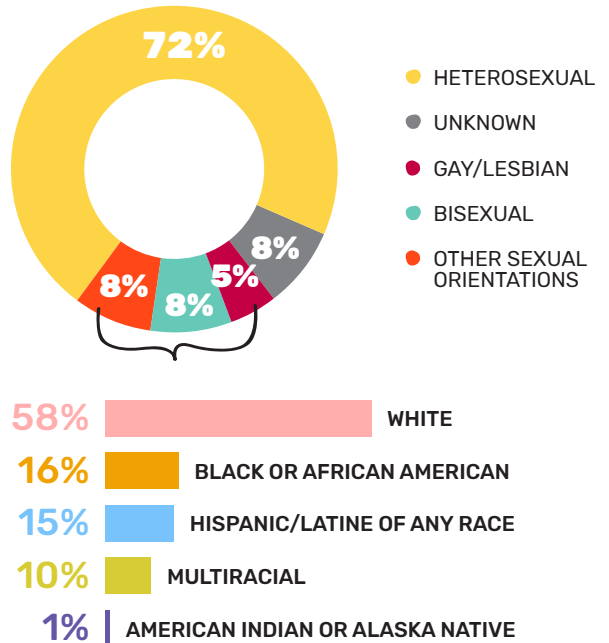
The “Voices of Youth Count” by Chapin Hall (2017)¹² found that LGBTQIA2S+ youth and young adults had a 120% increased risk of experiencing homelessness, with 20-40% of all young people experiencing homelessness identifying as LGBTQIA2S+. A recent study by System Change Partners using Census data showed that 41% of young adults in WA identified as LGBQ+ in 2022.¹³ Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that one-third of students in WA identify as LGBQ+.¹⁴

While the HPDF has always served LGBTQIA2S+ young people, each community with access to the HPDF is unique in many ways, with varying experience collecting data, particularly data regarding sexual orientation. Given national data that suggests between 20-40% of young people identify as LGBQ+, the HPDF sexual orientation data is likely an undercount. In the OHY-AWHWA Unaccompanied YYA Landscape Scan Report, qualitative data gathered from LGBTQIA2S+ lived experts showed that LGBTQIA2S+ young people often feel unsafe talking to service providers

about their SOGI because they fear discrimination, especially in smaller communities and at faith-based providers.¹⁵ To remedy this, AWHWA continues to work with communities to improve data quality by providing further training and technical assistance.

Of the 397 households served from May 2022 to May 2023, 20% (80 YYA) identified as LGBQ+:

FIGURE 10 Sexual Orientation of Youth and Young Adults Served by the HPDF, 2022-23



“Other sexual orientations” includes: Demisexual, Pansexual, Asexual, Queer, and Questioning. “Unknown sexual orientation” includes: client refused, client doesn’t know, and data not collected.

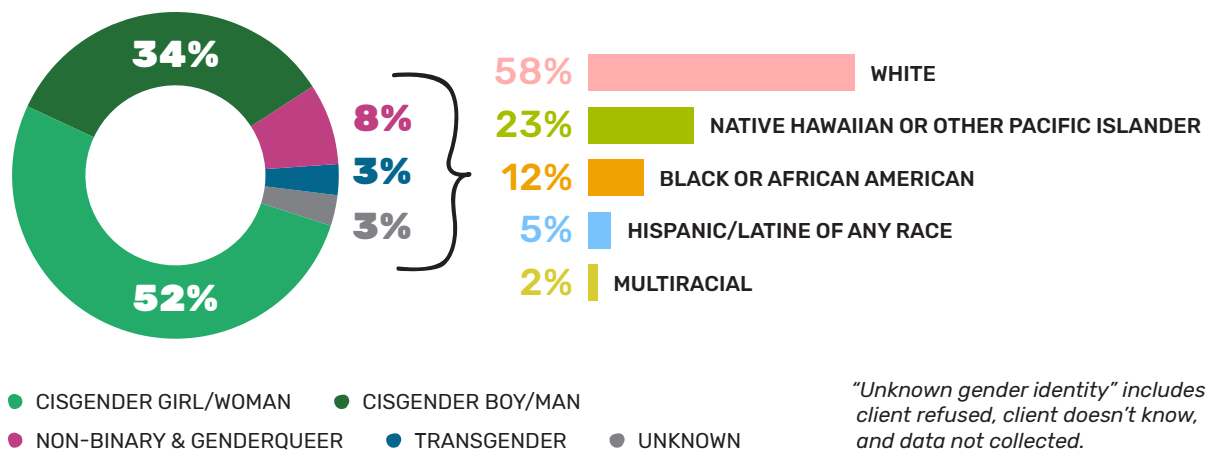
12 Chapin Hall (2017). *Voices of Youth County*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/project/voices-of-youth-count/>
 13 Harding Chao, L. (2023). *New tool by System Change Partners Shows Over One Third of Young Adults in the United States are LGBTQ+.* <https://www.systemchangepartners.com/blogs/lgbtq-blog>
 14 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Adolescent and School Health.* https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrb/supplemental-mmwr/students_by_sexual_identity.htm
 15 Harding Chao, L., and Castro, L. (2024). *Unaccompanied YYA Homelessness Landscape Scan.*



In Washington, census data show that as many as 1 in 10 young adults are both gender-expansive and LGBTQ+¹⁶ and more than 1 in 10 young adults are gender-expansive.¹⁷ However, some estimates for Washington are much lower: 1% of youth aged 13-17 and 2% of young adults aged 18-24 identified themselves as transgender.¹⁸ Of those served by HPDF, 11% of households identified as gender-expansive – which is much higher than some population estimates – suggesting that gender-expansive young people experience homelessness and are accessing the HPDF at much higher rates than they are present in the general population. On the other hand, this could also show an undercount due to young people not wanting to or not being able to share their true gender identity due to safety concerns, fear of discrimination, and/or retaliation.

Of the 397 households served, 11% (43 YYA) identified as non-binary, transgender, or genderqueer:

FIGURE 11 Gender Identity of Youth and Young Adults Served by the HPDF, 2022-23



Even though the number of gender-expansive young people served by the HPDF is relatively small (43), it is notable that the majority of these YYA were BIPOC and almost one quarter (23%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders.

¹⁶ Harding Chao, L. (2023). *Over One Third of Young Adults in the United States are LGBTQ+*

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. (June 2022) *How many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States?* <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>



Part of growing up is learning to problem-solve, but, for young people there can be a lot of shame about housing instability. The HPDF enables young people to vulnerably and safely ask for help, and promotes creativity when that happens. Even if a housing solution doesn't work out, the self-confidence instilled for the young person, and trust that's built between that young person and their community, can grow."

Dimitri Groce, Strategic Advisor of Housing Initiatives at Building Changes

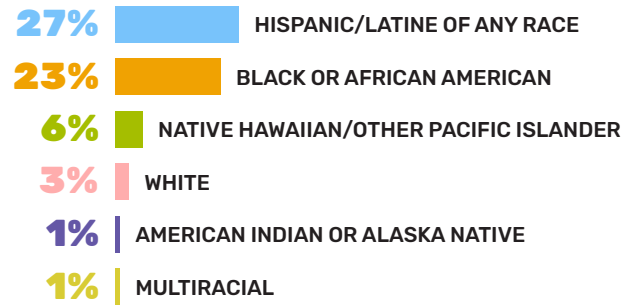


Pregnant/Parenting:

Young families that include youth and young adults who are pregnant and/or parenting utilized the HPDF at rates consistent with previous reporting years. Of the 397 YYA households served from May 2022 to May 2023, 25.4% of those who used the HPDF for diversion purposes were currently pregnant and/or parenting upon requesting funds.

FIGURE 12 Race/Ethnicities of Pregnant/Parenting Youth and Young Adults Served by the HPDF, 2022-23

**Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

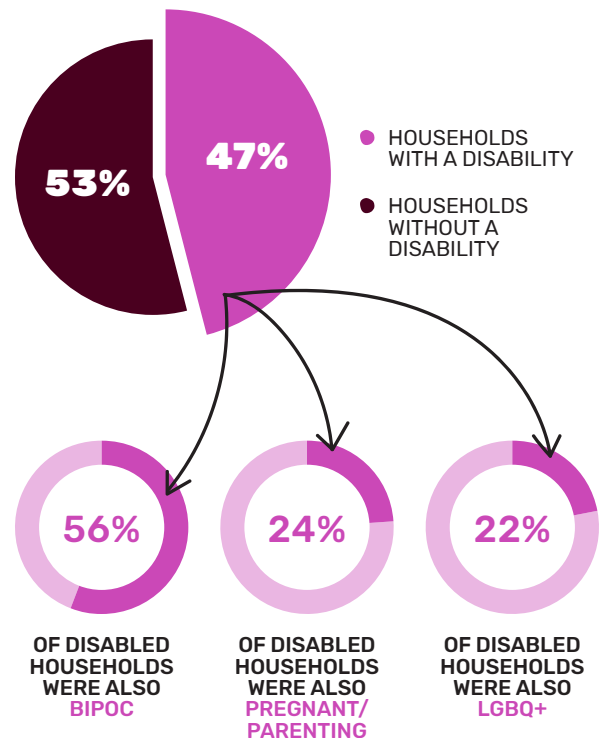


Disabilities:

Youth and young adult disabilities include any physical or medical conditions, diagnoses, and/or debilitating symptoms, situations, and/or experiences they live with. Disability data was collected for 74% of the total households served.¹⁹ Almost half of the young people (47%) successfully diverted by the HPDF identified as having a disability for this reporting period. But this is likely an undercount, given that exit data was not collected for almost a quarter of all households.

FIGURE 13 Disability Status of Youth and Young Adults Served by the HPDF, 2022-23

BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
LGBQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Asexual, Demi-sexual, Pansexual, and Other



¹⁹ Disability data is gathered from HMIS data reports and is only available for clients who have been exited in the HMIS.



What's Next: Learnings, Impacts, & Growth

The HPDF experienced a pinnacle year of growth and innovation that continues to have myriad statewide impacts and reach. A Way Home Washington welcomed Clark County to the HPDF in December 2022. Expanding the HPDF's reach to southwest Washington, Clark joined Pierce, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties, making the HPDF operational in five counties.

Scaled resources through advocacy:

AWHWA led successful advocacy efforts in 2022-2023 aimed at expanding the HPDF to all nine Anchor Communities and closing funding gaps to prevent lapses in HPDF utilization where the program is currently operational. With the support of community partners across the state, AWHWA successfully secured a 400% increase in public funding for the HPDF – bringing the total budget up from \$1 million for 2021 and 2022 (\$500,000 annually) to \$5 million for 2023 and 2024 (\$2.5 million annually). With these expanded dollars, AWHWA is working with the Office of Homeless Youth to expand the HPDF to five additional counties: Clallam, Jefferson, Skagit, Thurston, and Whatcom. With this expansion, the HPDF will be operational in 10 counties across Washington in total.

Supported young people exiting systems of care:

The HPDF has had state-level impacts in housing first and diversion opportunities, laying the groundwork and proving the success of the centralized approach to diversion for young people. In 2022, House Bill 1905 established prevention and diversion dollars for young people exiting systems of care (child welfare, behavior health, and juvenile rehabilitation) in need of housing – inspired in part by the HPDF's proven successes from its inception in 2020. In August 2022, AWHWA and Building Changes partnered to design and implement the new diversion pilot project, the Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project (YDIP). Active since February 2023, YDIP demonstrates the potential for iterating the centralized diversion model for even more specific populations within youth and young adult homelessness.

Improved data security:

AWHWA and its fiscal sponsor, Third Sector New England (TSNE), became aware of a situation where sensitive data from the HPDF was potentially accessible to outside parties. This data was temporarily accessible through online dashboards designed to help the organization and communities learn and improve on the success of the program. AWHWA immediately secured the data and worked with specialists to investigate the situation thoroughly. Based on the findings, AWHWA subsequently worked with the Department of Commerce and the Office of Homeless Youth to update data policies and procedures to ensure this never happens again. AWHWA continues to work with a team of legal and data security experts to further improve policies and practices to ensure data collection, storage, and analysis prioritize the privacy and security of all data.



Recommendations

Ensure flexible payment structures that center youth and young adult choice:

The HPDF's successes can be directly traced to young people as the ultimate deciders regarding what housing solution(s) work best for them and how the funds to help them get used. AHWHA provides intensive training and ongoing technical assistance to ensure this philosophy is central to how all diversion providers work with young people. Flex fund programs like diversion should integrate youth choice and decision-making into their structure, including ways to move money more directly to young people. In 2024, AHWHA is prioritizing strategies for young people to request and receive funds from the HPDF directly rather than through a third party.

Integrate and fund the HPDF as a permanent and long-term program through legislation:

The HPDF has proven itself since its inception as an evidence-based, cost-effective, and sustainable practice to successfully house young people while reducing strain on existing overburdened homeless response systems. AHWHA recommends that the state fully integrate and fund the HPDF as a permanent program. The HPDF currently operates on a competitive procurement cycle for public dollars through the Office of Homeless Youth. Since this process restarts every two years, uncertainty remains about sustained funding for future cycles. This creates a tenuous situation where communities must commit immense time and resources to continuously advocate for this vital resource, which is housing more young people more cost-effectively and sustainably than other resources in their community.

Allocate more funding for technical assistance programming to meet increased demand:

AHWHA continues to see increasing demand for ongoing technical assistance for sustaining and growing the HPDF operations in communities, particularly with the program doubling its reach in 2024. Program operational costs are greater than originally anticipated and planned for when the HPDF was conceived in 2020, impacting both AHWHA and the fiscal administration agencies. AHWHA has sought and used private funding to mitigate the deficit between budgeted and actual costs for program operation to meet the increased demand and ensure technical support continues. However, private funding is not guaranteed long-term. AHWHA recommends full and distinct funding allocation to cover the program operational costs of the HPDF and similar centralized diversion projects. This will ensure quality and continuous technical training, assistance, and support for flex fund fiscal administrators who play a significant role in the HPDF's successes and statewide impacts.



Prioritize resources for data programs and access to allow for the ability to measure housing retention rates by race, sexual orientation, and gender:

AWHWA does not have access to housing retention data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. AHWWA can determine overall housing retention rates at one month, six months, and 12 months post-diversion, but we can't determine housing retention rates for particular focus populations. For example, AHWWA will be unable to determine how the HPDF impacts long-term housing stability for young people of color. AHWWA's model for ending youth and young adult homelessness includes ending disproportionality for young people of color, QTBIPOC young people, and LGBTQIA2S+ young people. The HPDF is a demonstrated equity tool, and not being able to analyze this critical factor causes a gap in determining the overall success of this project in meeting the needs of populations most impacted by youth homelessness. AHWWA seeks to work closely with the Department of Commerce and local fiscal administrative partners to create a process to analyze and use these data subsets to ensure the program is tracking disproportionality. This underscores the need for fully funded data programming and infrastructure technical assistance.

Increase flexible funding for housing first prevention programs:

Each year, AHWWA sees how centralized diversion is particularly crucial as an intervention in addressing prevention for youth and young adults on the verge of homelessness. As a housing first resource, young people can access funds and be housed immediately within their community outside of the homeless response system. Consistently, 71-72% of all households served by the HPDF use the program as a homelessness prevention resource. Previously, it's been rare to see housing resources able to serve young people who were not already experiencing literal homelessness or otherwise tied to the homeless response system. The HPDF has proven since its inception that flex fund projects are a key part of reducing inflow into a community's homelessness system, particularly when the diversion programs center flexibility, broad eligibility requirements, creativity, immediacy, and client choice.





Acknowledgements

The Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Fund is a cutting-edge resource that continues to meet the needs of young people each year because of the work and dedication of the community members on the ground who bring the project to life. When a young person accesses the HPDF, they won't remember the project name or A Way Home Washington. Instead, they remember the person who had that crucial creative housing conversation with them and helped them find the best solution for them. With those diversion providers on the frontlines of this work and the fiscal administrators providing the operational infrastructure to make it all work, the HPDF has impacted the lives of over 1,000 young people in Washington State.

Our Fiscal Administrators: Volunteers of America (Spokane), Blue Mountain Community Foundation & Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington (Walla Walla), Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (Yakima), Y Social Impact Center (Pierce), Council for the Homeless (Clark).

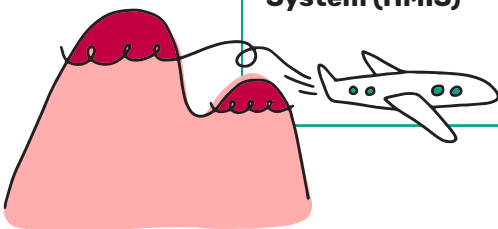


The HPDF more than doubled the amount of money available across Washington state to meet the growing utilization needs in current communities and expand the project to five new counties in 2024. A combination of public and private dollars created the foundation for the implementation and success of the HPDF. **This program continues to be made possible by the stalwart leadership of The Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth, providing \$5 million for the next biennium, and The Schultz Family Foundation which provided \$500,000 to close funding gaps in 2023. Additional operational support was made possible through the Raikes Foundation.** A special acknowledgment to the AHWHA Advocacy Team who fought for these increases: Sam Martin Consulting, Jessa Lewis (AWHWA Advocacy Consultant), Julie Patino (AWHWA Executive Director), Ben Henry Sung (AWHWA Director of Strategic Communications), Deonate Cruz (Strategic Communications Manager), and Sheila Babb Anderson (AWHWA Board Member, President of Housing & Homelessness at Campion Advocacy Fund).



Key Terms & Definitions

Term	Definition
Anchor Community Initiative (ACI)	The Anchor Community initiative is the flagship project of A Way Home Washington. The goal is to prevent and end unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness in local communities by supporting them to reach functional zero or “Yes to Yes.” The focus population is youth and young adults who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and between the ages of 12-24 years old.
By-and-For Organizations and Groups	Organizations or programs that are created by community, for community. Specifically, we are interested in knowing more about the integration and collaboration your homelessness system has with LGBTQIA2S+, QTBIPOC- and BIPOC-serving organizations that are also run by LGBTQIA2S+, QTBIPOC and BIPOC leaders. Also referred to as by/for organizations.
By-Name List (BNL)	A By-Name List is a real-time accounting of young people who are experiencing unaccompanied homelessness in a community. The list is used to triage the needs of young people experiencing homelessness, match them with the appropriate interventions to permanently end their homelessness, understand needs relative to resources, and measure progress toward ending homelessness for young people.
Cisgender	People who identify as their sex assigned at birth.
Diversion Conversations	An exploratory conversation between a certified diversion provider and a young person that explores, identifies, and creates a plan for housing young people using resources and points of connection in the young person’s own network. The conversation should be led by the young person, with the diversion provider as a thought partner.
Gender-expansive	Young people who identify as transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, culturally-specific gender such as Two-Spirit, gender non-conforming, or gender fluid.
Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)	Refers to the Washington State Balance of State Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) maintained by the Department of Commerce as well as data from independent HMIS’ maintained by Spokane, Pierce, and Clark Counties. HMIS is used by service providers to collect and manage data gathered while providing housing assistance to people already experiencing homelessness and households at risk of losing their housing.





Key Terms & Definitions (continued):



Term	Definition
LGBQ+	LGBQ+ is used to differentiate sexual orientation from gender identity because these are collected separately in the homelessness and other data systems. When in reality, many queer young people are also gender-expansive and vice versa.
LGBTQIA2S+	Young people who identify on the LGBTQIA2S+ spectrum, including, but not limited to, young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning, intersexual, asexual and Two-spirit or other culturally-specific gender.
Office of Homeless Youth (OHY)	The Washington State Office of Homeless Youth, a key partner of AHWHA based in the Washington State Department of Commerce and the primary funder for the HPDF.
QTBIPOC	The term stands for Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous People of Color and was developed as a way to highlight the specific needs of BIPOC people within the LGBTQIA2S+ community.
Unaccompanied	Young people who are not in the care of a parent or legal guardian; young people who are experiencing homelessness while disconnected from their families.
Youth	A minor between the ages of 12-17.
Young Adult	A young person between the ages of 18-24.
Youth and Young Adult Homelessness	Young people between the ages of 12-24 unaccompanied by a parent or guardian who are unsheltered or living in places unfit for human habitation, in shelter, or unsafely or unstably housed. This includes young people who are fleeing domestic violence and trafficking and those who may be unsafely or unstably couchsurfing or doubled-up.
Young People of Color	Young people who identify as Hispanic or Latine (of any race), Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian, Multiracial, and American Indian or Alaska Native.