

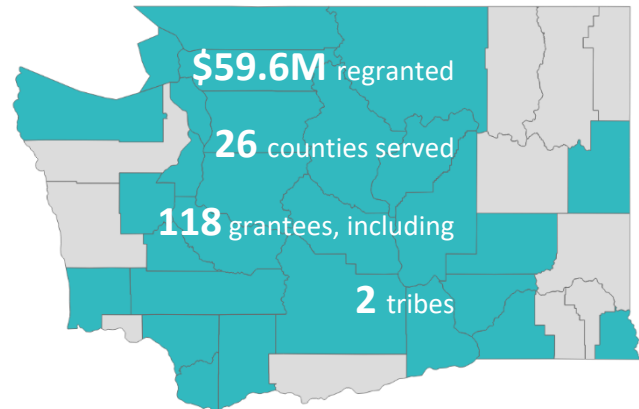


## About the Washington Youth & Families Fund

### What is the Washington Youth & Families Fund (WYFF)?

WYFF is a combination of public and private dollars awarded to organizations and tribes to provide support for youth and families experiencing homelessness in Washington State. It was created by the state legislature in 2004 and was amended in 2014 to include youth.

Building Changes administers WYFF by awarding these funds as grants and providing technical assistance for organizations and tribes across the state. To date, we have awarded **\$59.6 million in funding to 118 grantees**—including **two tribes**—across **26 counties**.



### How does WYFF work?

Through WYFF funding, Building Changes and grantees utilize data, research, and best practices to develop, implement, and advance strategies that help youth and families move out of homelessness. Strategies are developed with input from people with lived experience and built off other promising work Building Changes has done with grantees. Most recently, Building Changes and WYFF grantees used enhanced Rapid Re-Housing to support families and Critical Transition Coaching (CTC) to support youth. Past WYFF grantees are now training new grantees through peer-to-peer learning and on the ground work. Building Changes is dedicated to forming meaningful partnerships and helping organizations and tribes increase capacity through WYFF grants.

### Why is continued WYFF funding important?

- COVID-19 continues to have devastating impacts on youth and families experiencing homelessness.
- People of color and those who identify as LGBTQ are continually overrepresented in homeless populations.
- Youth and families experiencing homelessness are often not prioritized or ineligible for many homeless and housing programs and funding sources.
- More flexible, creative, and data-driven strategies are needed to equitably address housing crises across geographics areas.
- More cross-systems collaboration is needed to comprehensively address the complex and unique needs of youth and families experiencing homelessness.



## How do recent WYFF grants tailor services to families and youth?

Using WYFF funding, grantees who serve families used strategies that enhanced and complemented Rapid Re-Housing. Rapid Re-Housing is a model that utilizes housing placement, case management, and rental assistance to quickly move families out of homelessness and into permanent housing. WYFF grantees used an enhanced Rapid Re-Housing model that strengthened and adapted Rapid Re-Housing to better serve high-barrier families, by providing culturally enhanced services and flexible funding. Services through this enhanced Rapid Re-Housing model are also available for up to 12 months after case management and rental assistance ends. Thus, the three key elements of enhanced Rapid Re-Housing in WYFF's work are:



### Culturally-Enhanced Supportive Services

Funds are used to implement culturally-specific practices to better support families of color. This method furthers racial equity in homelessness and housing systems by holistically addressing the needs of families experiencing homelessness.



### Flexible Funding

Funds provided are adaptable to the needs of each family. Flexible funding allows grantees to address families' unique and complex needs to maintain housing permanency. Examples of flexible funding use include child care costs, health-related costs, or transportation costs.



### 12-Month Safety Net

Families of color are more likely to return to homelessness within the first 12 months of exiting homelessness. To help families maintain stable housing, they can access grantees' services for 12 months after they have secured housing.

Using WYFF funding, grantees who serve youth and young adults used a case management model based off Critical Time Intervention (CTI)<sup>1</sup> called Critical Transition Coaching (CTC). While CTI was originally designed for adults, CTC focuses on helping young people who are exiting public systems to develop skills, find employment, identify education goals, and build a support network before and during their transition. Building Changes' lead WYFF manager developed CTC by combining what she heard from people with lived experiences, outreach and engagement work by the REACH Center in Pierce County, and CTI. This work aligns with Washington State's 2018 commitment in Senate Bill 6560<sup>2</sup> to ensure that no young person is discharged from public systems into homelessness. We believe that CTC can be applied to support other populations and within Coordinate Entry Systems as a whole. The three key components of CTC are:



### Housing Supports

Grantees work in collaboration with Coordinated Entry Systems to strengthen initial assessments, referral services, and community infrastructures. Grantees also use Diversion to help young people come up with and act on their own plans to secure permanent housing.



### Flexible Funding

Funds are adaptable to directly meet the needs of young people transitioning out of public systems. Examples of flexible funding use include hygiene supplies, identification documents and licenses, and apartment furnishings.



### Holistic Service Model

CTC is designed to support youth and young adults transitioning out of public systems by providing individualized and responsive support. It takes into account the needs of a young person as a whole by helping them develop skills, access jobs, build a support network, and gain the confidence to live independently.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, please visit <https://www.criticaltime.org/cti-model/>.

<sup>2</sup> Substitute Senate Bill 6560, 65<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2018): <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=6560&Initiative=false&Year=2017>.

## Recent WYFF Grants (2018-2020)

### 2020

Building Changes awarded WYFF funding and partnered with tribes—Samish Indian Nation and Cowlitz Indian Tribe—for the first time last year. We believe it is important to focus on tribes because Native American people are disproportionately represented in homeless populations.<sup>3,4,5</sup> The Department of Housing & Urban Development has also acknowledged that Native American homelessness looks different than the homelessness they largely fund.<sup>5</sup> However, federal funding has many restrictions that may not meet the needs of Native Americans well.

#### *Samish Indian Nation*

Through WYFF funding, Samish Indian Nation is serving their people across county lines and providing traditional services that emphasize holistic concepts of wellness and community-based treatment models. We recognize that Samish Indian Nation knows how to serve its own people best and that their approaches can decrease barriers for their people to maintain housing. Some examples of services they are delivering during COVID-19 include: virtual beading; surveying community members to measure levels of depression, domestic violence, and anxiety; and connecting people to healers.

#### *Cowlitz Indian Tribe*

Using WYFF dollars, Cowlitz Indian Tribe received two grants – one for families and one for youth. For the family grant, they are establishing two centers to serve their people across county lines and provide services that best lead to stable, permanent housing for Native American families. WYFF funds are also being used by Cowlitz Indian Tribe’s health, wellness, and healing programs and clinics to identify and meet the needs of Native American families and individuals facing homelessness in their communities. They are also applying enhanced Rapid Re-Housing and CTC models to help those families, youth, and young adults under Indian Child Welfare in Washington State.

### 2019

Since WYFF was created, this fund has collected monetary interest in the state WYFF account. The Department of Commerce allowed Building Changes to use that money to award a grant in 2019. Through our recent learnings and excitement over how Diversion was helping many people who were experiencing homelessness, we saw this grant as an opportunity to see whether Diversion worked for some families more than others and whether this was impacted by racial equity. We released a competitive request for proposals for an organization that would partner with us on service delivery, as well as the research and evaluation component of this work. Yakima Neighborhood Health Services answered this call.

#### *Diversion Comparison Study: Yakima Neighborhood Health Services*

Through the 2019 WYFF grant, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services launched their Diversion project to support families in their community. They are helping families experiencing homelessness by offering problem-solving conversations, light case management, and flexible funding to help them identify and realize quick solutions to their homelessness crisis. This WYFF grant also covers staff capacity, direct financial assistance to families, and data collection and evaluation work. Currently, 179 families have been served through this grant, of which 84% of participants have exited to permanent housing. More than half of the families’ heads of household were female and 67% of the heads of household were

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Office of Community Planning & Development. (2020). *The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR)*. U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=American%20Indian%20and%20Alaska%20Native&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B02003&hidePreview=true>.

<sup>5</sup> Pindus, N., Kingsley, G., Biess, J., Levy, D., Simington, J., Hayes, C., & Urban Institute. (2017). *Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas: A Report from the Assessment of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Needs*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Office of Policy Development & Research: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/HNAIHousingNeeds.pdf>.

Latina. As part of the research and evaluation component of this grant, we have partnered with Clarus Research to do a comprehensive landscape scan across the state with an interest in learning how Diversion has affected families of color. We also wanted to learn how Diversion is being implemented, who it is helping, and how providers define Diversion and its services. The purpose of this evaluation work is to assess the impact of Diversion services from a county and family level across Washington State and to examine whether Diversion services and outcomes are equitable for families of color.

## 2018

In our 2018 WYFF grants, we focused on organizations that provide services to young people and families, with an emphasis on addressing any racial or gender/sexual identity disparities through funded partnerships with community-based providers. We asked grantees to build on their strengths and identify specific needs in their communities that will help improve housing outcomes for young people and families.

### Family Grants

#### *Council for the Homeless (Clark County)*

Council for the Homeless is using WYFF dollars to provide housing support for families by using Diversion and Rapid Re-Housing models. With WYFF funding, Council for the Homeless is able to expand their capacity and add culturally-tailored services to help families of color more easily access the supports they need. They are achieving this by working with new partners, such as the NAACP-Vancouver, Latino Community Resource Group, YWCA Clark County, Partners in Careers, Evergreen and Vancouver School Districts, and the Chuuk community. Through this grant, the organization has currently served 275 families, of which 73% have exited to permanent housing so far. An overwhelming 90% of the families they serve are families of color, while 23% of their participants are members of the LGBTQ community.

#### *Quality Behavioral Health (Asotin County)*

There is a severe lack of affordable housing, including the absence of homeless shelters, in Asotin County. Through WYFF funding, Quality Behavioral Health is working in partnership with community organizations to provide Diversion, Rapid Re-Housing, flexible funding, and other housing support services to families. They are also partnering with Celebrate Love, an LGBTQ advocacy organization, to ensure young people have access to safe spaces that are welcoming to LGBTQ folks. To date, Quality Behavioral Health has been able to serve around 20 families through their programs.

#### *Catholic Charities (Spokane County)*

Catholic Charities is using WYFF dollars to hire community health workers from the Marshallese community in Spokane County to help provide counseling services and housing support in four schools with high rates of homelessness and housing instability. Housing supports include providing flexible funding, assistance with navigating multiple systems, rental assistance, and Rapid Re-Housing. Catholic Charities also partnered with a Marshallese advisory group, who they are compensating for their expertise and counseling. Through this model, Catholic Charities is helping Marshallese families receive the services and resources they need. In Spokane County, the Marshallese community is overrepresented in the doubled-up population. They also make up one of the largest populations among communities of color in Spokane schools. So far, Catholic Charities has served 182 families, of which 76% have exited to permanent housing. In partnership with Eastern Washington University, Catholic Charities is obtaining data beyond the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to understand the impact of their work through a whole child approach. Since 2018, Catholic Charities has been able to garner additional support for their work, allowing them to expand their services to three more elementary and high schools with high rates of homelessness and housing instability.

## Youth & Young Adult Grants

### *REACH Center (Pierce County)*

Using WYFF funding, the REACH Center in Tacoma is partnering with schools and jails to do mobile outreach that connects young people to housing and other services, including: Diversion, legal advocacy and representation, host home placement, employment services, LGBTQ support services, and information about the Coordinated Entry System. This project includes regular cross-agency and cross-sector meetings to provide collaborative case management to participants. The REACH Center also created a hotline number and during COVID-19, they moved their whole referral system online so that more people can access services and REACH can make referrals faster. REACH is also doing direct cash transfers to help young people purchase basic needs items, such as food and hygiene products. As part of the grant, they were able to provide direct cash transfers, allowing needs to be met more quickly, something that is often not allowed with federal money.

### *Coffee Oasis (Kitsap County)*

Coffee Oasis is using a host home model and partnering with organizations that are run by and for specific communities, such as the Bremerton African American Ministerial Alliance (BAAMA) and Girls Empowered through Mentoring and Service (OurGEMS). Through this grant, host families are trained and matched with a young person to provide stability to the young person as they gain the skills and resources to become independent. By partnering with GEMS and BAAMA, Coffee Oasis is better able to place youth of color with families of color and increase the number of youth of color they serve. Through these partnerships, the organizations share trainings around Diversion and racial equity with each other. During COVID-19, Building Changes found that families served by this grant are being hit hard financially. This has been especially challenging because many mainstream funding sources for housing support services often do not include funding for host homes. With WYFF dollars, Coffee Oasis is using funding from the grant to ensure young people continue staying with their host families, preventing further trauma.

### *Serenity House (Clallam County)*

Through WYFF funding, Serenity House purchased a van to do outreach and provide services for youth experiencing homelessness on the federally defined tribal land of the Ellwah people. They used the funds to provide backpacks and cellphones with pre-programmed contacts to services and to hire case managers from the reservation. Through their work, they are closing gaps in access to housing services between those living on the reservation and those living outside the reservation. The flexibility of WYFF funding allows young people to use the money for food, which many other grants do not cover. Serenity House is also very excited to try out direct cash transfers to young people and sharing with other organizations the importance of this flexible and critical strategy. To strengthen their work in racial equity, Building Changes is having candid conversations with Serenity House about race, encouraging them to take risks for change, and helping them address the barriers youths face to access support services.



***Our Vision:*** Communities thrive when people have safe and stable housing and can equitably access and use services.

***Our Mission:*** Building Changes advances equitable responses to homelessness in Washington State, with a focus on children, youth, and families and the systems that serve them.