

Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project

Year 1 Evaluation Report

August 2024



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Abbreviations

AWHWA	A Way Home Washington
BC	Building Changes
DCYF	Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families
FA	Fiscal Administrator
HB 1905	House Bill 1905
HPDF	Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund
LGBQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning, or other sexual orientation
OHY	Washington State Department of Commerce, Office of Homeless Youth
POC	people of color
SB 6560	Senate Bill 6560
YDIP	Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project
YYA	youth and young adults



Project overview

The Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project (YDIP) is a pilot project of Building Changes (BC) and A Way Home Washington (AWHWA). The project aims to serve youth and young adults (YYA) under the age of 25 facing a housing crisis and exiting systems of care in different communities throughout Washington state. YDIP combines the Diversion approach and the development of centralized diversion funds to provide YYA clients with access to one-time flexible funding sources to promote housing stability. This project is funded through the Washington State Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) as well as private funding from the Raikes Foundation and the Schultz Family Foundation. The first grant cycle began August 15, 2022, and implementation began January 1, 2023. The first YDIP flexible funding request was placed on February 16, 2023.

About Diversion

Diversion is an approach used to assist individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis to quickly move into stable housing. This is achieved by combining conversations to explore housing solutions with provision of flexible funding when needed. These conversations aim for the service provider, trained in Diversion, to listen and talk with an individual or family and collaborate to develop a housing plan in an empowering and client-led way. The goal of Diversion is to identify points of connection in one's own community to identify housing solutions that exist outside of the homeless response system. A key aspect of Diversion is that it can provide one-time flexible financial assistance, known as "flex funds," to help the individual or family obtain stable housing. Flex funds can be used for a security deposit, rental assistance, utility assistance, storage, eviction prevention, relocation costs, moving assistance, application fees, and other costs that can be tied to securing stable housing.

About House Bill 1905

The funding for this project includes public dollars appropriated by the Washington State Legislature for House Bill 1905 (HB 1905).¹ The aim of HB 1905 is to ensure youth exiting publicly funded systems of care transition into safe and stable housing. The bill took effect on June 9, 2022. HB 1905 was built upon the efforts of Senate Bill 6560, which took effect on June 7, 2018.² Publicly funded systems of care include:

- Child welfare or foster care systems
- Juvenile detention and rehabilitation centers
- Adult detention centers and jails

¹ Second Substitute House Bill 1905, Chapter 157, Laws of 2022. Retrieved from <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1905-S2.SL.pdf?q=20230517103539>

² Substitute Senate Bill 6560, Chapter 157, Laws of 2018. Retrieved from <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6560-S.SL.pdf?q=20210916145424>



- Inpatient behavioral health facilities
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Mental health crisis centers
- Substance use rehabilitation centers
- Emergency rooms for behavioral health crises
- Select OHY programs

Various models are being used throughout the state to meet the goal of HB 1905 to address YYA homelessness. Thus, OHY funded BC and AWHWA to address YYA through a centralized diversion fund model.

About centralized diversion funds and YDIP

A centralized diversion fund model aims to increase access to Diversion conversations and funding in communities while making flexible funding more available to those communities. Through this model, community-based organizations, service providers, and practitioners supporting a housing crisis from across roles and agencies are trained in Diversion and certified to access flex funds from a single Fiscal Administrator (FA) in their community. The FA's role is to quickly review, process, and disburse flexible funding once a request has been submitted on behalf of a young person. This model is intended to provide an alternative to traditional Diversion services, whereby flexible funding access and availability is dependent upon the organization and specific contract funding.

The overall goal with the centralized model is to eliminate the referral-based norm of accessing housing resources, so those in a housing crisis can get what they need from the places they already frequent, from providers with which they are working and trust. By creating partnerships between the diverse network of organizations and practitioners supporting those in a housing crisis and activating the infrastructure of FAs to manage and disburse flexible funding, this model ensures that practitioners can focus on facilitating Diversion conversations to find creative housing solutions with clients. This also promotes the best practices of Diversion to a broader ecosystem of organizations and providers; traditional housing providers; and nontraditional providers such as those in job readiness, behavioral health, juvenile rehabilitation, and more.

BC and AWHWA chose the centralized diversion fund model for YDIP because of its demonstrated success in expanding options for exiting homelessness, getting people housed quickly, addressing racial disparities and systemic racism, and ultimately simplifying and standardizing the process for community-based organizations. The first-ever centralized diversion fund program in Washington state, begun in 2019 by Africatown International and BC, the Centralized Diversion Fund, serves families and adult individuals in King County.³ Then, in 2020, AWHWA launched the Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund (HPDF) in Anchor Communities, the first centralized diversion fund program

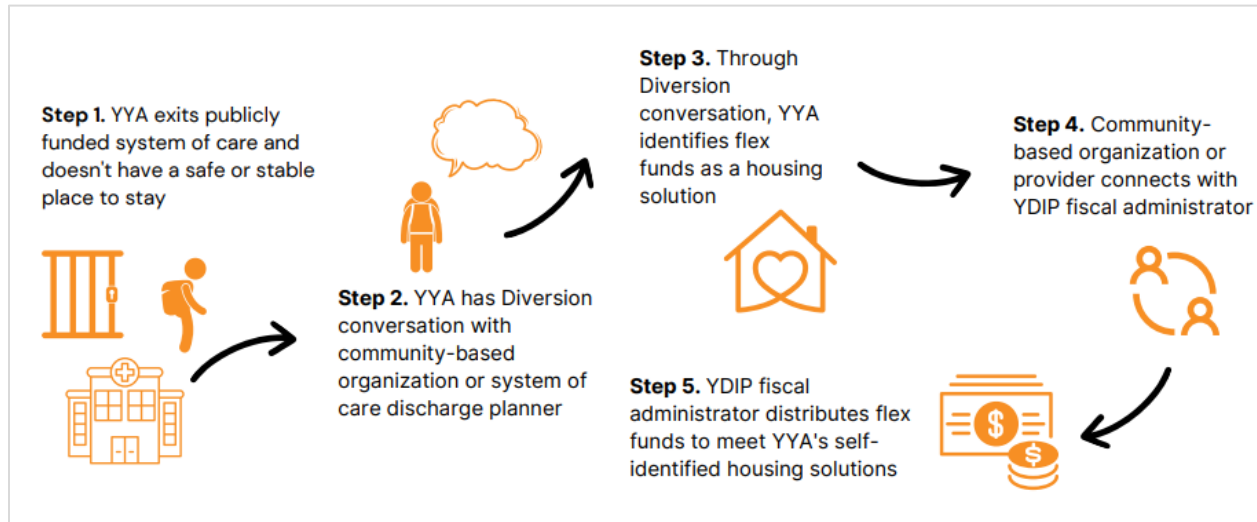
³ Building Changes. (2020). *A Centralized Approach: Using a scaled model of diversion to address homelessness in King County*. Seattle, WA: Building Changes. Retrieved from https://buildingchanges.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020_CentralizedDiversionFund_ResearchBrief_121020_v2.pdf



specifically for YYA.⁴ Both are still in operation and continue to demonstrate equitable access and effectiveness in getting people and families housed stably and quickly.

YDIP provides an opportunity to meet the goal of HB 1905 to support YYA exiting systems of care in different communities. The YDIP process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Steps taken by youth or young adults to receive funding and support through YDIP.



YYA are eligible for flexible funding from YDIP if they meet all following criteria:

- Under the age of 25.
- Currently exiting, imminently exiting, or have already exited a publicly funded system of care as defined by HB 1905.¹
- In need of safe and stable housing as defined by the young person and at imminent risk of homelessness.

Selection of Fiscal Administrators for YDIP

Building Changes and AWHWA strived to identify FAs and counties where YDIP would have the greatest impact, as well as where need was high. One tool used to identify locations for FAs was an analysis of counties through an index score created from public data. Index scores were calculated for each county through six measurements, chosen for their pertinence to YDIP and to YYA experiencing a housing crisis and exiting systems of care. Details of the index scores, measurements, and calculations are described in Appendix A.

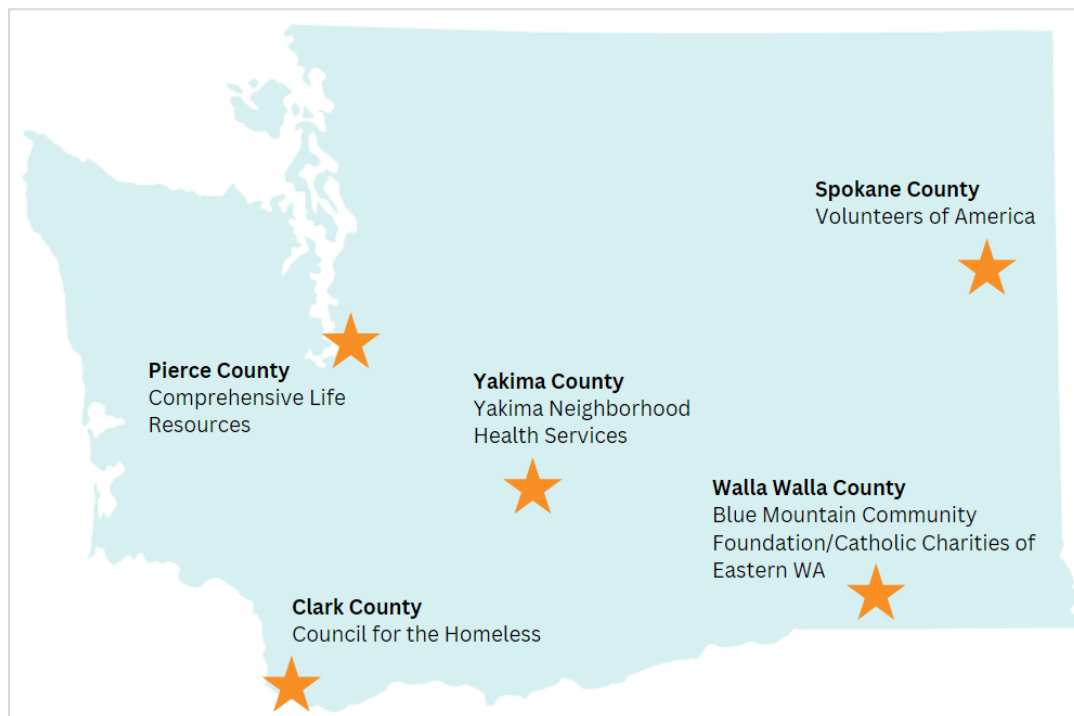
In addition to the index score for each county, BC and AWHWA identified the locations of different facilities from which YYA may be exiting based on geographic distribution and access, including urban and rural representation, and the potential costs and benefits of

⁴ A Way Home Washington. (2022). *Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund: Using Flexible Funds to House Youth and Young Adults Equitably and Sustainably*. Seattle, WA: A Way Home Washington. Retrieved from <https://awayhomewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HPDF-Report-2022.pdf>



setting up YDIP in communities that already had access to HPDF. Based on these factors, the initial five counties selected to pilot YDIP were Clark, Pierce, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima (Figure 2). These counties were able to utilize capacity built through the AWHWA Anchor Communities that helped launch HPDF in 2020.

Figure 2. Initial YDIP counties and Fiscal Administrators.



Implementation overview

Within the first year of implementation, BC and AWHWA worked tirelessly to develop and implement YDIP. Once communities and FAs were identified, statewide groups such as the 6560 Core Team and Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team were informed and presented with YDIP information. Concurrently, the process and procedures for YDIP were developed based on both organizations' past work with centralized diversion funds. BC and AWHWA then communicated and contracted with FAs and trained them in their roles and responsibilities as inaugural adopters of YDIP. Set-up consisted of development of infrastructure for the request process and data tracking and reporting requirements, and establishment of key evaluation focuses. Some of these systems were built upon the existing HPDF infrastructure to expedite implementation.

During set-up and throughout implementation, BC and AWHWA partnered with FAs to integrate YDIP within their services and troubleshoot implementation challenges; promote flex funds in the five communities and among system of care agencies, like the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation, and Health Care Authority; and train community-based organizations and providers in

accessing their FAs. By June, BC and AHWHA had succeeded in holding six virtual YDIP certification trainings and one in-person training (Clark County); monthly huddles with FAs and two learning circles for community requesters; a “Learn-at-Lunch” webinar targeted at promoting access among public system of care agency partners; and dozens of presentations and follow-ups, as well as strategy meetings to ensure that young people exiting systems of care could benefit from this new model.

King County was another community that ranked high in terms of where impact of YDIP Diversion services could be high (see Appendix A). However, due to the need to rapidly begin implementation, BC and AHWHA decided to spearhead YDIP in the Anchor Communities across Washington that already had infrastructure for a centralized diversion fund for youth with HPDF and had demonstrated need to address exits from systems of care into homelessness. The goal was to pilot the fund and gather enough data to demonstrate scalability in communities that did not already have the Anchor Communities Initiative or HPDF infrastructure.

After observing the success of the five original FAs, BC and AHWHA developed a plan to expand YDIP implementation into King County in Q3 2023 and into Q1 2024. The teams recognized that without Anchor Communities Initiative infrastructure, selected FAs need to have a deep understanding of the systems of care and youth services ecosystem in the county and be willing to collaborate and build relationships. After identifying King County FA priorities, scope of work, and recruitment approach, BC and AHWHA brought together a group of community stakeholders to identify a list of agencies to invite into a request for proposal process. The identified agencies were invited to a webinar and to respond to the proposal request, which was released in April 2024. A King County FA was selected in July 2024 after a review and interview process, and implementation work began shortly after.

A funding barrier was also identified through YDIP implementation. Success of the model depends on the ability to meet urgent and critical needs by providing flex funds to clients as soon as possible. Small, grassroots organizations may not always have the funds to meet that need through reimbursement-based contracting agreements because they may not have the cashflow to accommodate flex fund requests while waiting for reimbursement.

After identifying this as a potential challenge during the pilot year of YDIP, BC worked with OHY to develop a deliverable-based payment structure so that the volume of requests would not impact the availability of YDIP flex funds in each community. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of YDIP, this iteration can generate opportunities for OHY and other agencies to consider delivery-based payment structures as a feasible approach to promote strategies that empower and meaningfully resource smaller, grassroots organizations in the future.



Evaluation

This evaluation of YDIP covers the year following the first YDIP request submission from February 16, 2023, through February 16, 2024. It should be noted that YDIP began implementation in September 2022, with AWHWA supporting FAs in building out the data and request process infrastructure. From September 2022 to January 2023, AWHWA worked with FAs to train Diversion providers in their communities, and FAs began receiving requests for YDIP funding in February 2023. This project is currently serving YYA clients in five communities and will expand to a sixth community in summer 2024.

For this evaluation of YDIP, BC and AWHWA aimed to address three questions:

- What aspects of YDIP best meet the needs of YYA exiting systems of care?
- What areas of YDIP should be addressed to further meet the needs of YYA exiting systems of care?
- To continue the work of YDIP, what would be needed and what would continuation look like?

Evaluation design

This evaluation was cross-sectional and formative; the findings can guide improvements to this model in the future. The evaluation was informed by both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected, analyzed, and synthesized. Quantitative data were analyzed using Tableau and Excel. The qualitative data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis to identify common themes.

Data sources

Data sources for this evaluation include request form data, training data, and qualitative data from FA huddles and an FA focus group.

- **Request form data:** AWHWA extracted the data in the request forms from providers and analyzed the data for requests and YYA who received flex funds. These data include number of households served, demographic information, current living situation, system of care involvement, flex funding amount and characteristics, pregnant or parenting status, and domestic violence survivor status. Some of the data are suppressed or grouped together due to small numbers to maintain client privacy in areas that may be sensitive.
- **Training data:** AWHWA led Diversion trainings for providers to access the YDIP flex funds in the five communities and collected information on numbers registered and trained.
- **FA huddles:** BC and AWHWA conducted monthly FA huddles for YDIP, intended to foster a learning environment in which those involved in the project could support each other to work through challenges, discuss successes, and generally strengthen services. Agendas typically consisted of talking through technical



assistance needs like clarifying eligibility and alignment with Diversion principles, reviewing impact data to interpret emerging needs, and problem-solving the critical functions of an FA.

- **Provider YDIP learning circles:** FAs held learning circles for providers certified to access YDIP funds in their community. These learning circles provided a space for providers to ask questions and receive information on YDIP and generally helped to create a supportive community environment.
- **BC and AHWHA YDIP check-in meetings:** BC and AHWHA YDIP teams met weekly to discuss project implementation, track contract compliance and spend-down, and address other YDIP topics as needed.
- **Focus group discussion with FAs:** On March 1, 2024, BC conducted a one-hour virtual focus group discussion with all five FAs. FAs were asked about their experiences and perspectives on their role as an FA, strengths of YDIP, and areas where it could grow. See Appendix B for the discussion questions.
- **Survey of providers who accessed YDIP flex funds:** From May 8 to May 31, 2024, BC conducted an online survey among providers trained to provide Diversion services and make YDIP requests for their clients. Survey outreach was conducted via email and reached an estimated 247 contacts trained by BC and AHWHA. Providers were asked about their experiences with training and accessing funds. Survey respondents were offered a \$10 e-gift card for their participation. See Appendix C for survey questions.
- **Key informant interviews with YDIP clients:** Between May 5 and May 24, 2024, BC conducted three key informant virtual/phone interviews lasting up to one hour each with YYA clients who had accessed the fund. Outreach was facilitated by the FA in Spokane, who contacted providers via email with BC contact information to share with clients. Clients were asked about their experiences with YDIP services and their impact on their lives. They were offered \$100 e-gift cards for their participation. See Appendix D for client interview questions.

Data suppression and rounding

To protect client and survey respondent privacy, counts and percentages were collapsed across subcategories or suppressed when the count was ten or fewer. In cases where the count or percentage could be inferred from the totals, the next lowest category was also suppressed. For client interviews and the FA focus group discussion, identifying information was omitted to ensure anonymity.



Results

YDIP client stories

One YDIP client shared that they transitioned from juvenile detention into a group home and said, “It was stable for awhile. I was [in the group home] for two years. As that final stretch of the second year kicked in, it became a little claustrophobic. Not in the sense that it was a tight space, but more or less the same old stuff, every single day, with no freedom whatsoever.” Toward the end of their stay in the group home, staff connected the client with a YDIP provider who helped them find an apartment, obtain a Section 8 voucher, and use YDIP flex funds to cover move-in costs. The client described the YDIP experience as a success as they now live independently and comfortably (all basic needs met) and have more freedom. The client shared that they felt “more hope that there are people that are still willing to help” through the support they received.

Another client, who transitioned from an adult detention facility, described how “stable housing really, really, helped changed my life... That alone made the mental health go into another mind state, which then gave me more hope, which then gave me more motivation. So just having that—stable housing—that helped me tremendously.” The client used flex funds to pay for a car repair at a key moment in their life. They were receiving outpatient services to address a substance use disorder and going to appointments to address their mental health, on top of going to work. Being able to show up to work on time was essential, as their felony history presents a barrier to finding new employment. Having reliable transportation helped them maintain treatment and employment, which supported them in maintaining stable housing. This was a key piece in a positive feedback loop that facilitated the client addressing their mental health and maintaining sobriety while preventing re-incarceration and re-entering homelessness.

A third YDIP client shared that they had spent time in foster care as a child and were homeless from 15 to 19 years old. During this time, the client struggled with substance use disorder and gave birth to a child they lost custody of. After inpatient substance use disorder treatment, they moved into a clean and sober house. When the client was ready to move into their own place, the YDIP provider helped them get a Section 8 voucher to help with housing costs. However, the client could not afford the high move-in cost, saying, “I did not just have \$1,050 just laying around to be able to move in, that was just not an option for me. It was nice that [YDIP] could do that,” especially as another funding source they had applied for had a four-month wait time. The client was able to move into their own place and now has custody of their child. The client also discussed how having their own space supported their own and others’ sobriety, as they host an addiction support group meeting in their living space. Maintaining sobriety was essential for this client to remain stably housed and to care for their child.

All three stories highlight how YDIP flex funds allowed them to find stability through a variety of means. Furthermore, all three show the complexities these YYA faced when



exiting a system of care, as well as the long-term impact that interacting with that system of care has had on their housing journey. Another common experience among the interviewees was not having parents, guardians, or other adults in their lives who were able to support their transition from a system of care to stable housing.

Client demographics

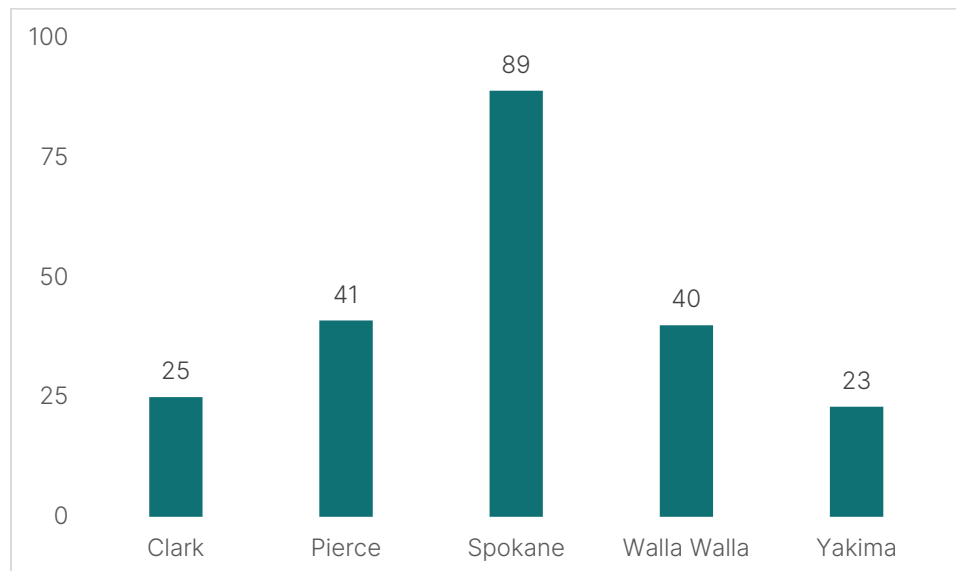
County

A total of 218 YYA households across five counties were served from February 16, 2023, through February 16, 2024, the first full year of serving YDIP clients (Figure 3). This figure represents the project's capacity during early implementation, and we anticipate a greater number of fulfilled requests when evaluating YDIP in the future, as capacity continues to build. For example, AWHWA and BC have continued to actively train and promote YDIP in the five counties since the data for this report were pulled. Furthermore, the process to select a new FA in King County began during the reporting period, and implementation in Washington state's most populated county will begin in the second half of 2024.

Additionally, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) enrollments were paused between July and September 2023 to address a data incident, which may have impacted the utilization of requests, as security systems were strengthened and policies updated.

It should be noted that more than 218 people may have benefited from YDIP in its first year as each YYA client could be part of a household, and all within that household—spouse, partner, parents, children, etc.—could have benefited from stable housing.

Figure 3. Number of YDIP clients served in each county.



Race/ethnicity and age

A large proportion of YYA served were people of color (POC) and the majority of clients were young adults over the age of 18 (30.7%, Figure 4; 68.8%, Figure 5). POC include American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and/or those who identify as Hispanic/Latinx of any race.

Figure 4. Race and ethnicity of YDIP clients.

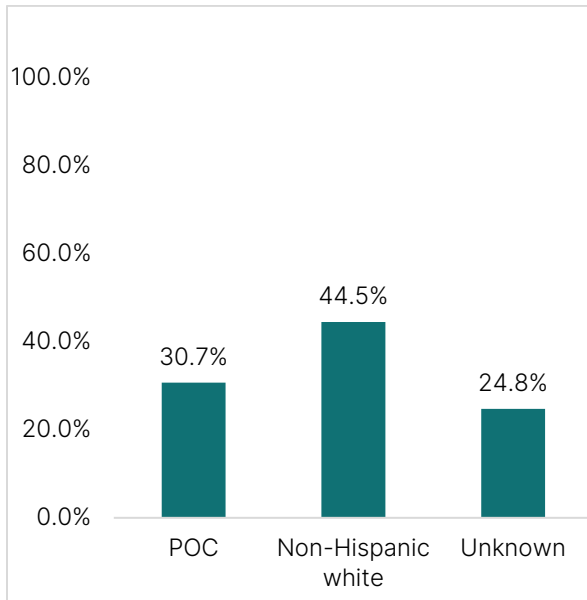
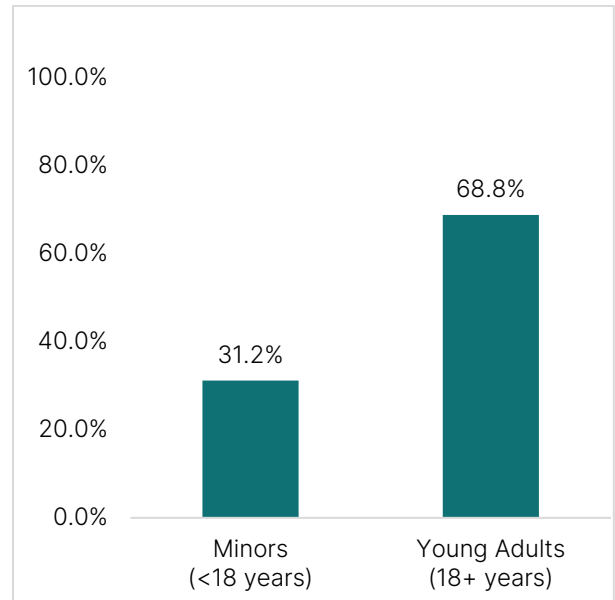


Figure 5. Age ranges of YDIP clients.



Sexual orientation and gender identity

Nearly one in every seven YYA clients served by YDIP identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning, or another sexual orientation (LGBQ+) (14.2%, Figure 6). One in twenty clients served by YDIP identified as gender expansive, which includes transgender and gender nonconforming individuals (5.0%, Figure 7).

Figure 6. Sexual orientations of YDIP clients.

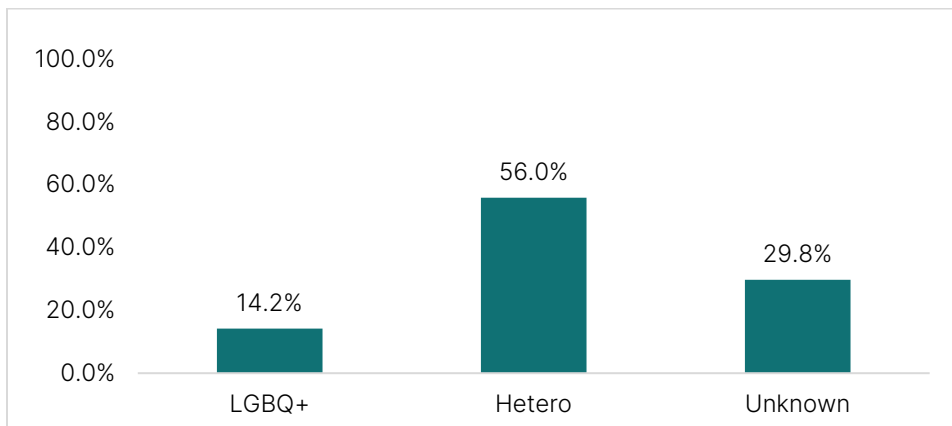
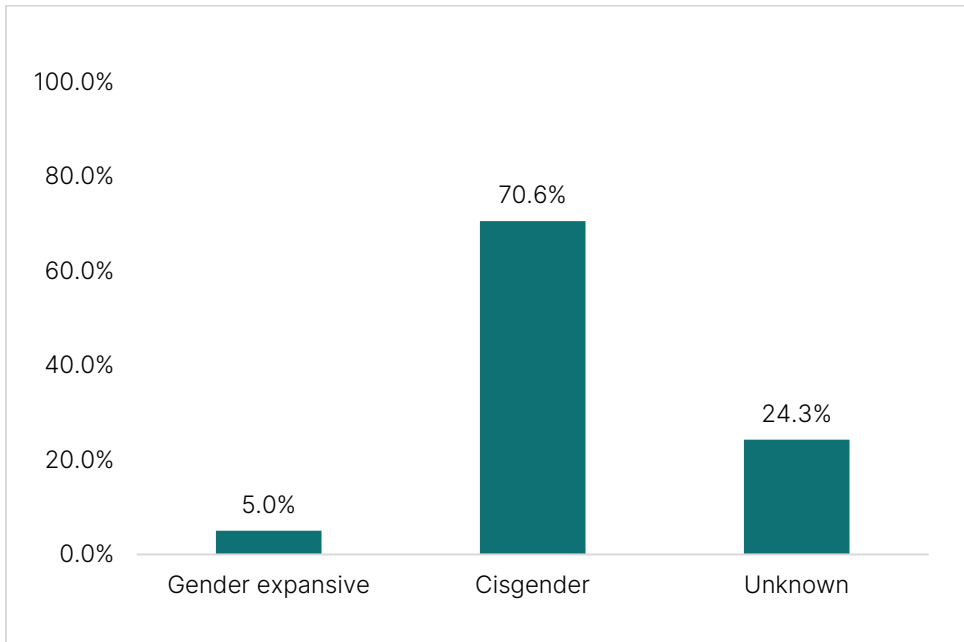


Figure 7. Gender identities of YDIP clients.

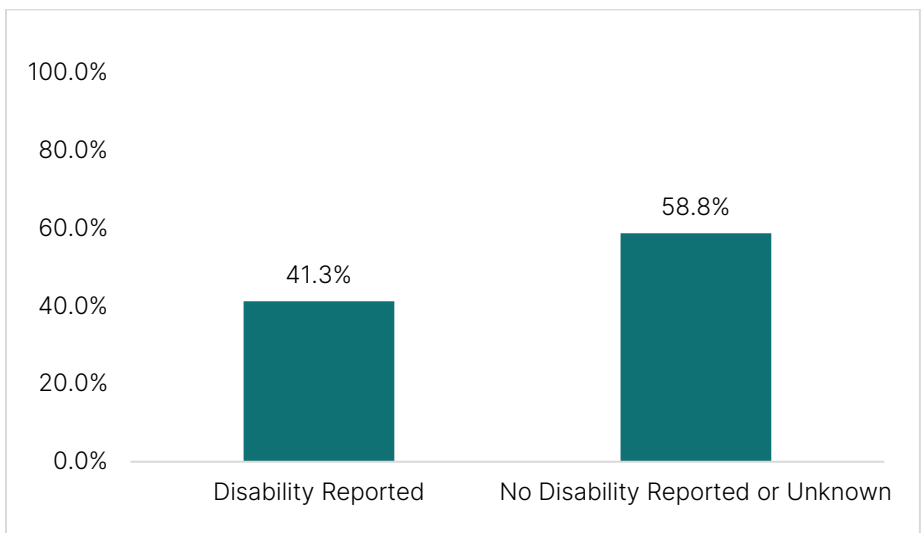


Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Disability

More than four in ten YDIP clients reported being disabled (41.3%, Figure 8). However, disability was likely underreported, as the data represent disability in all counties through October 2023, then include only clients from Walla Walla and Yakima Counties through February 16, 2024. Disability data from November 2023 and onward will no longer include Clark, Pierce, and Spokane Counties due to data infrastructure security changes.

Figure 8. Percentage of YDIP clients who reported a disability (N=83).



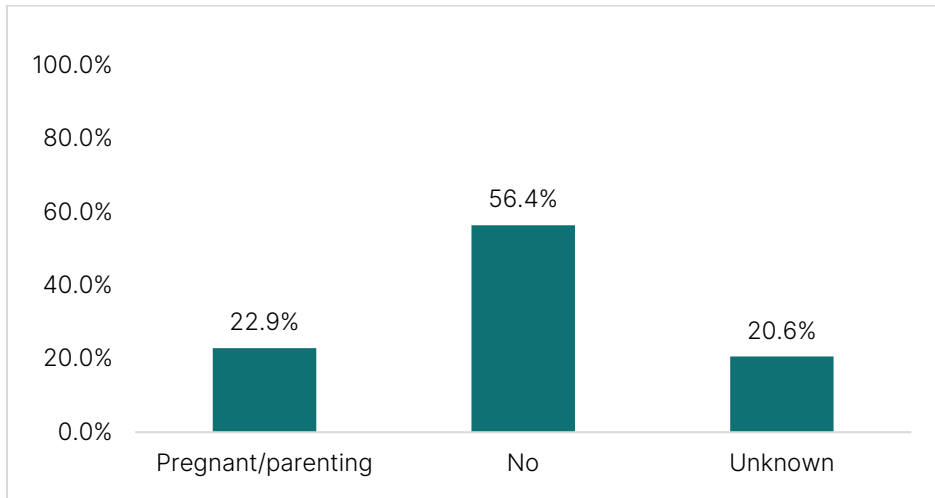
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



Pregnant/parenting status

More than a fifth of clients served by YDIP reported being pregnant and/or parenting (22.9%, Figure 9). This finding suggests that the number of individuals served by YDIP potentially exceeded the 218 reported clients.

Figure 9. Pregnant/parenting status of YDIP clients.



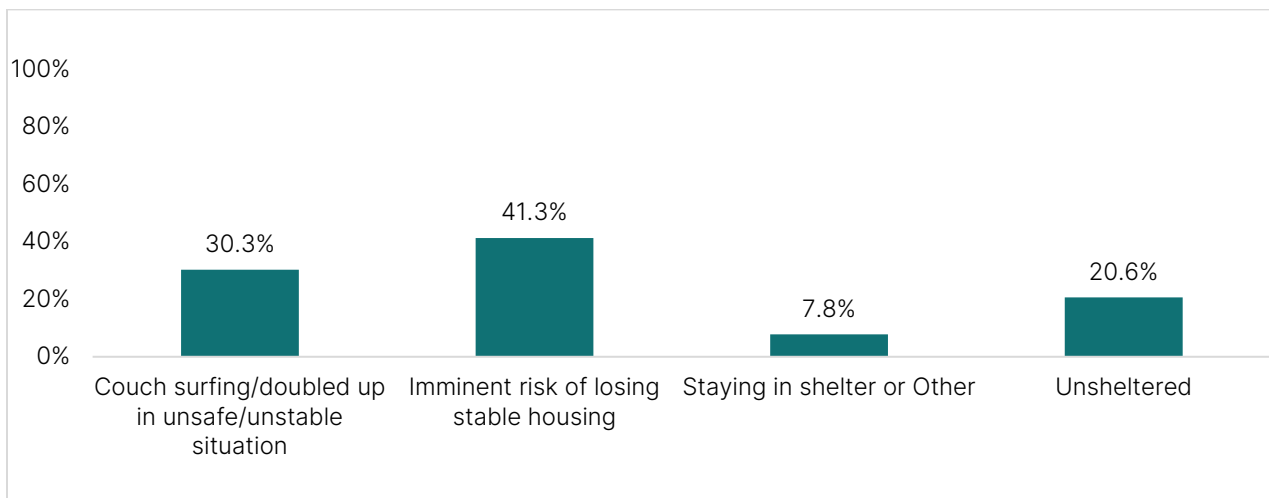
Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Client characteristics

Living situation

The largest proportion of YYA households served by YDIP were at imminent risk of losing stable housing at the time of requesting flex funds from YDIP (41.3%, Figure 10). The next most common living situation was couch surfing/doubled up in an unsafe and/or unstable situation (30.3%), followed by living unsheltered (20.6%).

Figure 10. Living situations of YDIP clients.

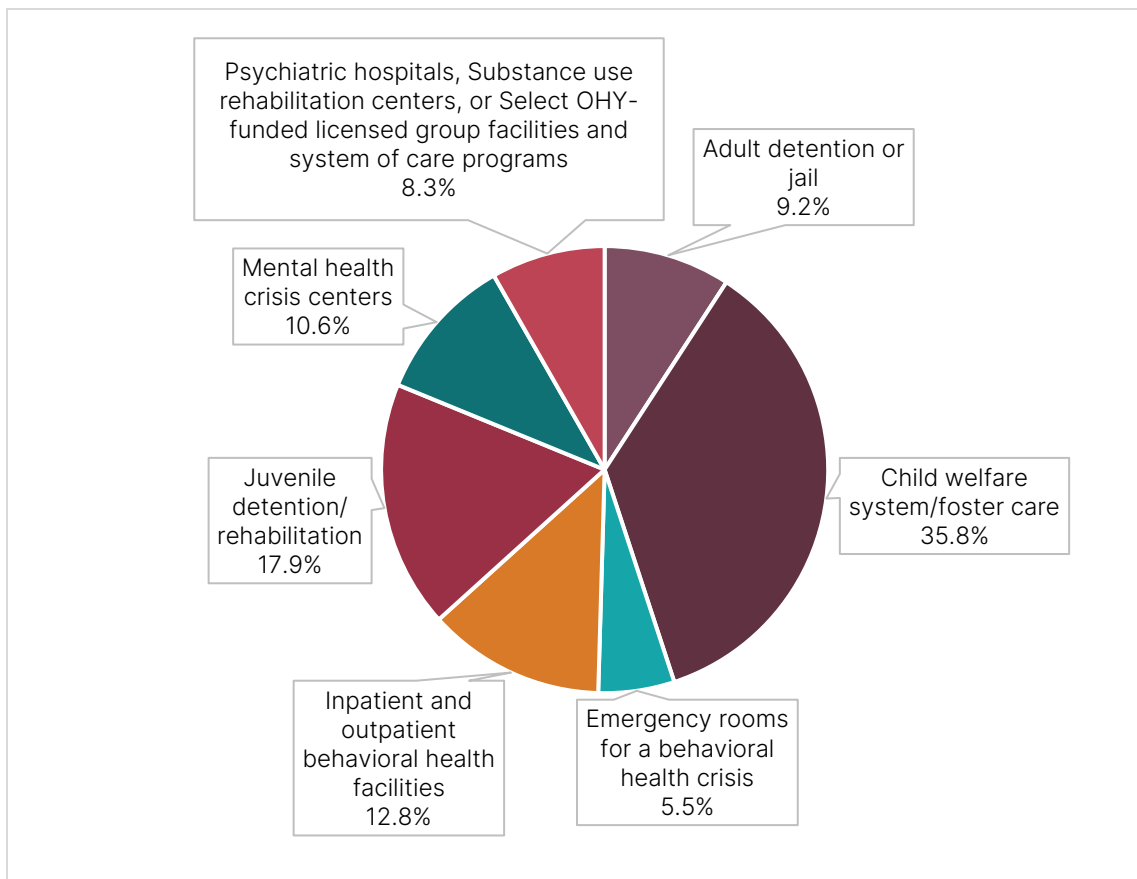


Systems of care and exit status

Figure 11 shows the systems of care YYA clients had exited, were in the process of exiting, or were about to exit, and Figure 12 shows their exit statuses. YDIP serves clients that are currently or imminently exiting a system of care or have already exited a system of care. Those currently exiting or imminently exiting can differ based on the system of care processes they discharge from. Exits in different systems are determined by the system itself, the client's birthday, or a client choosing to no longer participate/discharge themselves. Therefore, there is no set definition of what constitutes currently exiting or imminently exiting across the systems of care.

As shown in Figure 11, the largest proportion of YYA clients served by YDIP were exiting from the child welfare system or foster care (35.8%), followed by juvenile detention or rehabilitation (17.9%), inpatient and outpatient behavioral health facilities (12.8%), mental health crisis centers (10.6%), and adult detention or jail (9.2%). More than three-quarters of YYA clients served by YDIP had already exited from a system of care (81.2%, Figure 12). Of those who had already exited a system of care, nearly 20% had done so in the last month and nearly 30% had exited a system of care a year ago or longer (19.8% and 29.9%, respectively; Figure 13).

Figure 11. System of care most recently exited by YDIP clients.



Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.



Figure 12. Exit status of YDIP clients.

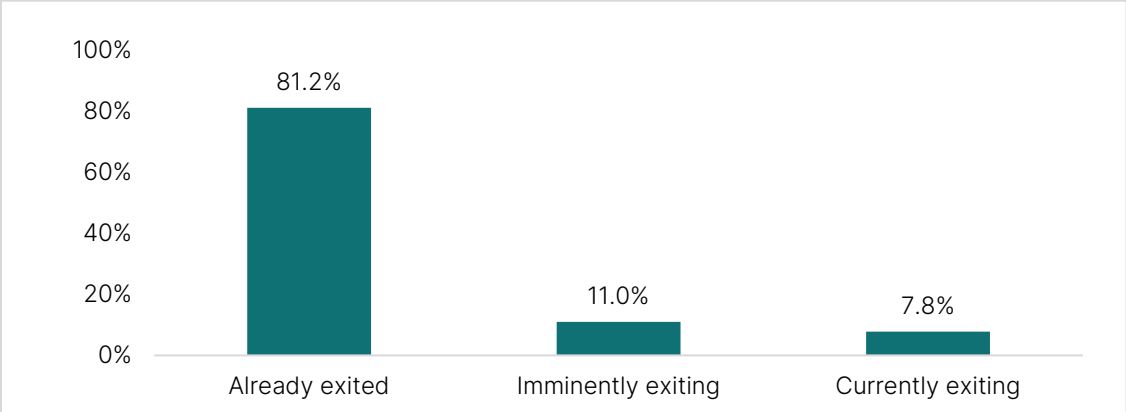


Figure 13. Time frame of system of care exits for YDIP clients who had exited (N=177).

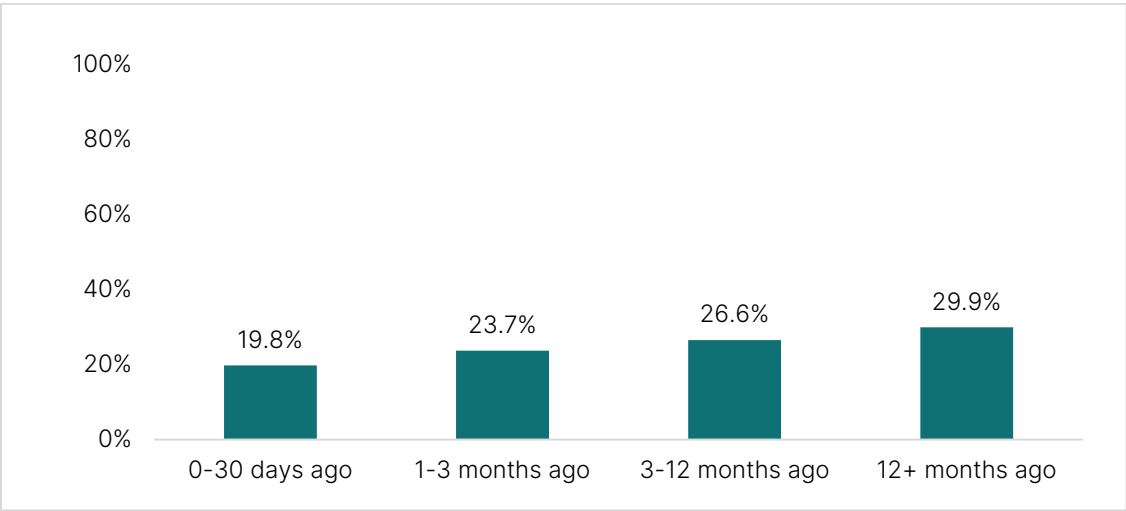


Figure 14 (next page) shows a Sankey diagram of the current living situations of YDIP clients exiting different systems of care. For most clients in the process of exiting or who had exited from the child welfare or foster care system, the most common system of care exit, were at imminent risk of losing stable housing, couch surfing or doubling up in an unsafe and/or unstable situation, or unsheltered.

Clients at imminent risk of losing stable housing was the most common living situation among all system of care exits. Among most system of care exits, clients living unsheltered or couch surfing/doubled up in unsafe and/or unstable situations was common. This suggests that YDIP reaches YYA clients across all systems of care in a way that prevents those at imminent risk of losing stable housing from doing so, while also providing support for clients living unsheltered or in precarious housing situations towards obtaining stable housing.



Figure 14. Sankey diagram of current living situations among different system of care exits.



Other - System of care: Inclusive of "emergency rooms for a behavioral health crisis", "mental health crisis centers", "psychiatric hospitals", "substance use rehabilitation", and "select OHY funded licensed group FOC" categories

Other - Current Living Situation: Inclusive of "staying in shelter", "unsheltered", and "other" categories.



Flex funds

The total amount of flex funds provided to YDIP clients across all counties from February 16, 2023, through February 16, 2024, was \$491,810. Clark County had the highest average flex funding among all clients and POC clients (\$3,724 and \$4,094, respectively; Table 1). Pregnant and parenting clients had the highest average flex fund spending compared to LGBQ+, POC, non-Hispanic whites, and overall client averages (Table 2). POC clients had higher average flex fund spending compared to non-Hispanic white clients (Table 2). More than 70% of flexible fund requests were for rental assistance or arrears or housing deposits (44.3% and 34.9%, respectively; Figure 15).

Table 1. Flexible fund spending totals and averages by county.

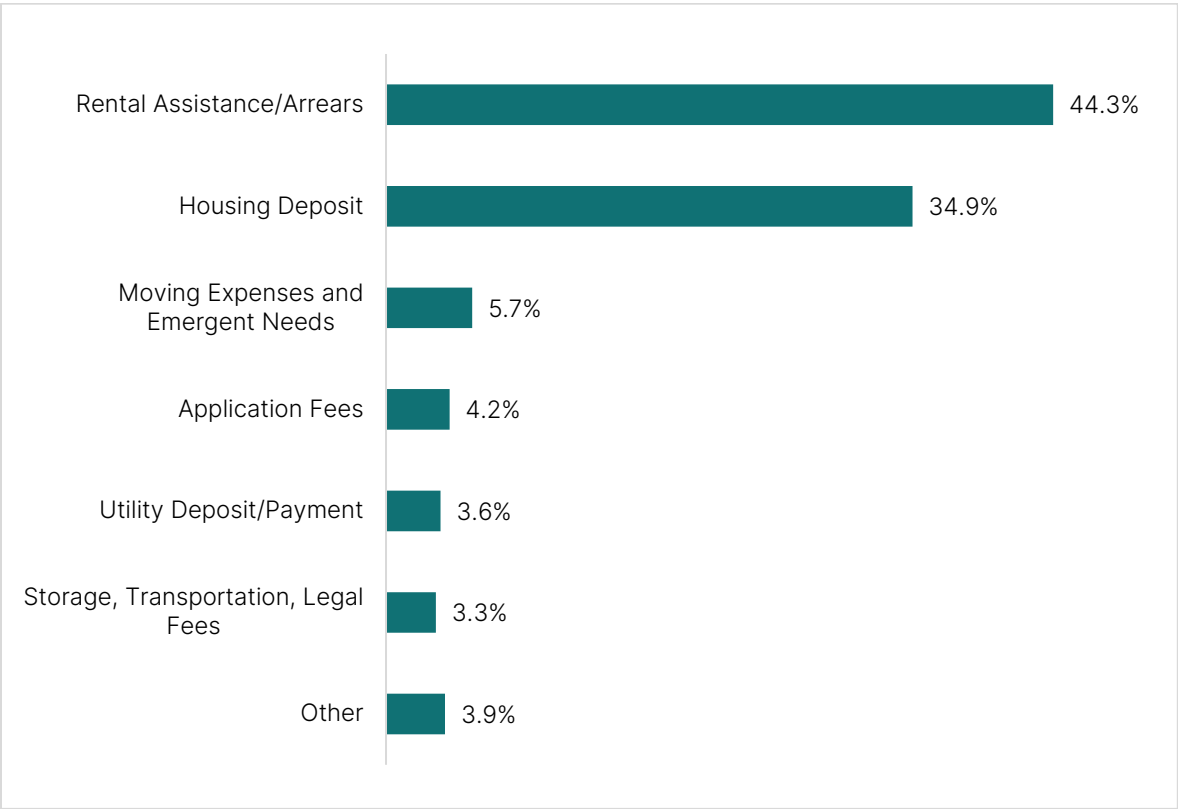
County	Total flex fund spending	Average flex fund spending (all clients)	Average flex fund spending (POC clients)
Clark	\$93,104	\$3,724	\$4,094
Pierce	\$99,499	\$2,427	\$2,218
Spokane	\$170,332	\$1,914	\$1,866
Walla Walla	\$77,809	\$1,945	\$2,231
Yakima	\$51,066	\$2,220	\$1,810
All counties	\$491,810	\$2,256	\$2,490

Table 2. Average flexible fund spending by group.

Characteristic	Average flex fund spending
Overall	\$2,256
LGBQ+	\$1,952
Pregnant/parenting	\$2,321
POC	\$2,490
Non-Hispanic white	\$1,900



Figure 15. Flexible funding request types (N=332).



Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Trainings

A Way Home Washington provided training for providers in the five YDIP communities for those interested in accessing YDIP. Training dates and the number of trainees through June 12, 2024, can be seen in Table 3. As of the June 2024 training, 297 providers had been certified to access YDIP.

System partners, providers, and community-based organizations learn the basics of facilitating the Diversion conversation and accessing and utilizing YDIP funds for their YYA clients over a 7.5-hour session that is interactive, engaging, and unique. The training covers three areas: Diversion philosophy, practice of Diversion, and the policies and procedures of YDIP. Upon completion, participants are fully certified to access YDIP funds for the YYA they serve. AWHWA takes intentional steps to ensure that those in the training understand how to meet YYA housing needs through YDIP. Additionally, AWHWA engages training participants in how to create an environment that promotes participants to want to further engage in community conversations for YYA experiencing a housing crisis and exiting systems of care. Even participants already trained in Diversion have expressed that the training was a useful refresher and they learned a lot from it.



Table 3. A Way Home Washington YDIP trainings.

Date	Registrants	Certified	Location
February 9, 2023	59	33	Virtual
February 23, 2023	37	16	Virtual
March 23, 2023	60	32	Virtual
April 19, 2023	60	24	Virtual
April 21, 2023	15	9	Virtual
May 10, 2023	17	11	In-person in Clark
June 1, 2023	43	31	Virtual
July 26, 2023	2	2	Virtual
October 26, 2023	28	21	Virtual
December 6, 2023	49	19	Virtual
February 14, 2024	46	23	Virtual
March 29, 2024	30	30	In-person in Yakima
April 17, 2024	59	27	Virtual
June 12, 2024	59	17	Virtual
Total	564	297	

AWHWA hosted the first in-person training for YDIP on May 10, 2023, in The Ripple Space in Clark County. Nine providers in the community became certified YDIP providers. Then, on May 11, AWHWA hosted a learning circle to further engage those newly or already trained in accessing YDIP with in-person assistance and community connection. Overall, this two-day event allowed AWHWA and BC time to engage with, meet, train, and assist Council for the Homeless, the FA in Clark County, and local providers that could access YDIP. It helped to promote community-driven work and excite providers to utilize YDIP for their clients' needs. AWHWA also hosted another in-person training for McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons, on March 29, 2024, in Yakima County. AWHWA plans to host more in-person trainings in the future, in addition to engaging in virtual training opportunities.

Provider survey results

From May 8 to May 31, 2024, an online survey was available to providers trained in Diversion with access to YDIP. Survey outreach was conducted via email and reached an estimated 247 contacts trained by BC and AWHWA, for a survey response rate of 21.5% (N=53).

As illustrated in Figure 16, the largest share of survey respondents was in Pierce County (N=15), followed by Spokane (N=13), and Clark, Walla Walla, Yakima, and Other (N=25). Many respondents worked in the education system and homeless- and housing-focused agencies (N=17 and 11, respectively; Figure 17). Nearly one in four agencies in which the respondents worked or worked closely with were system of care agencies targeted by HB



1905 (N=16). Survey respondents were able to select multiple types of agencies, which is why there are 68 data points among 53 respondents.

Figure 16. Counties in which YDIP providers (survey respondents) worked.

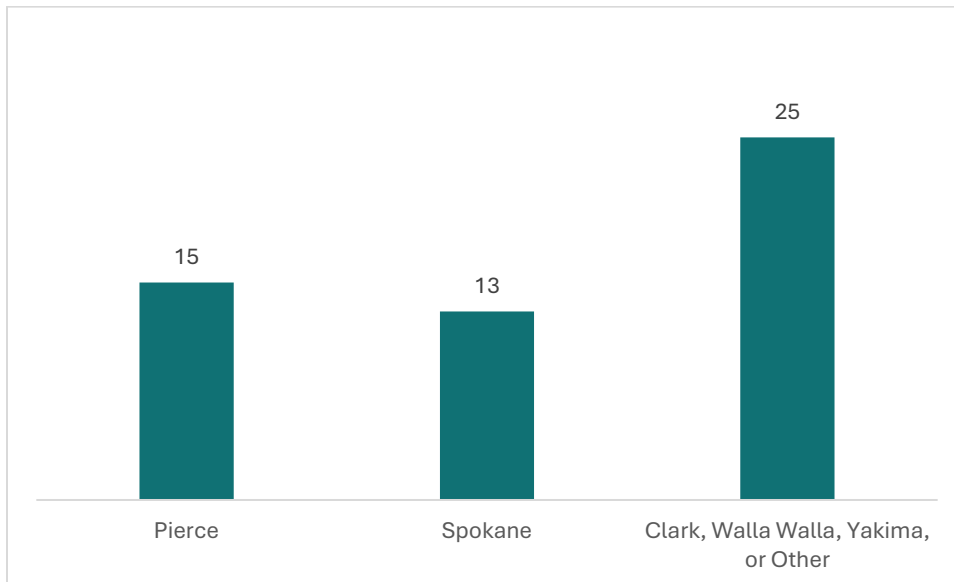
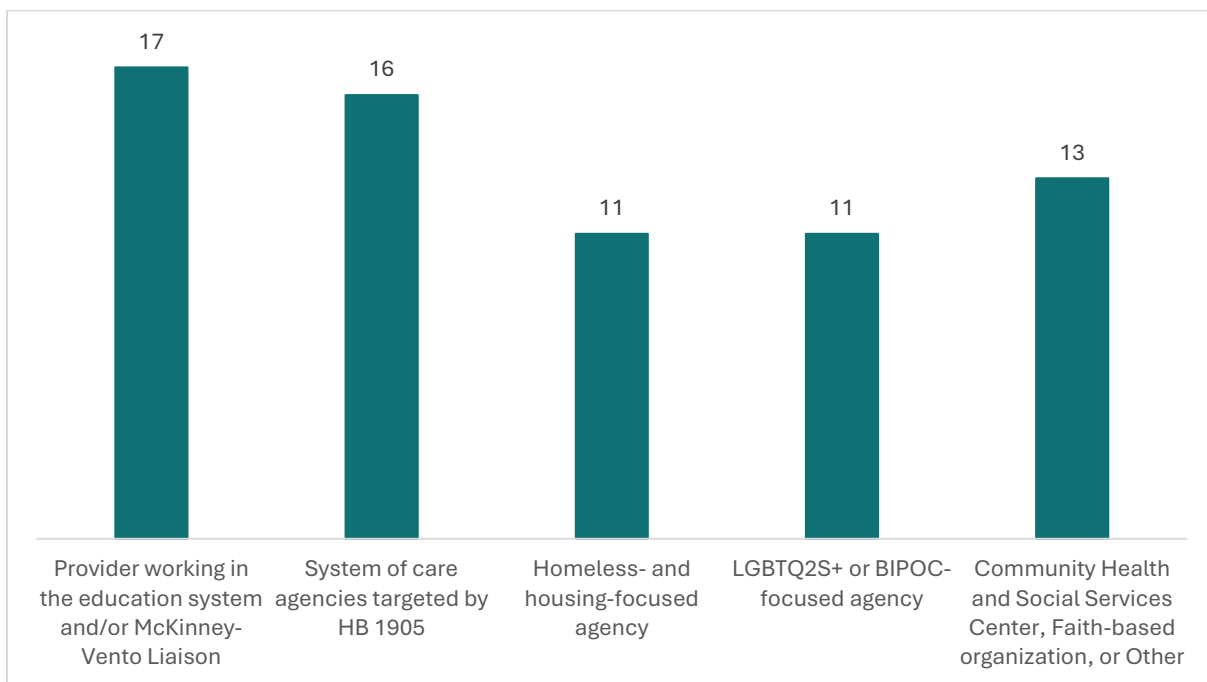


Figure 17. Types of agencies in which YDIP providers (survey respondents) worked (N=68).

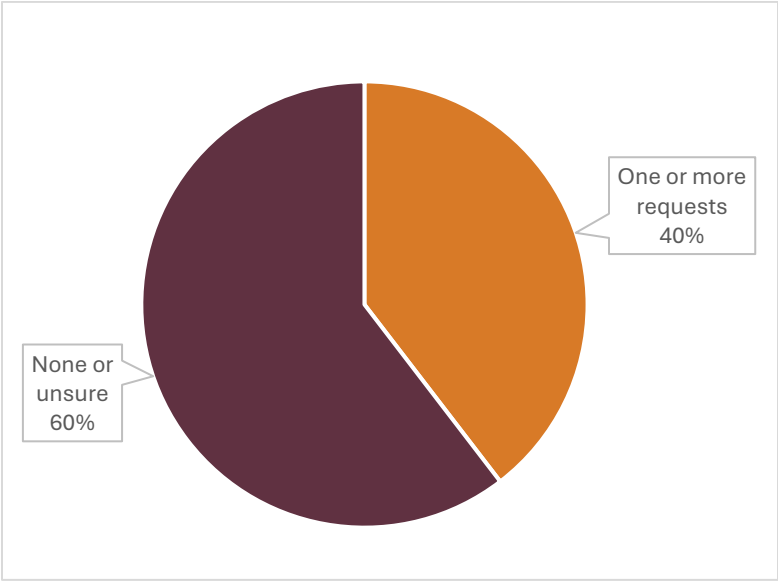


BIPOC, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; LGBTQ2S+, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and two-spirit plus. "Other" includes a refugee resettlement agency, health insurance agencies, Foundational Community Supports programs, workforce support, and nonprofits.



The survey asked respondents whether they felt adequately prepared to submit YDIP requests on behalf of their clients after receiving Diversion training. Of those who responded, more than 75% felt prepared to submit a request. When asked how many requests respondents had submitted to YDIP, 40% reported having submitted at least one request (Figure 18). Among respondents who had submitted YDIP requests, most requests were approved.

Figure 18. Number of requests providers submitted to YDIP (N=50).



YDIP providers who had ever submitted at least one request were asked to rate their experience of the YDIP process. The majority of respondents rated their experience in the YDIP process favorably in terms of access and ease of submitting requests, ability to get help in submitting the requests, communication/tracking the status of requests, ability to communicate with clients about the use of YDIP flex funds, timeliness of the approval or denial of requests, as well as the result of requests.

The most common reason providers had not submitted YDIP flexible funding requests was because they had not worked with eligible clients (Table 4). Some respondents shared specific challenges they faced working with students, as unaccompanied homeless youth often lack the necessary paperwork, credit histories, etc. to obtain housing on their own.

Table 4. Reasons providers did not submit YDIP flex fund requests (N=16).

Reason
Have not yet worked with eligible clients.
I have access to other flex funds that support Diversion housing solutions.
I need more information about what YDIP is, what flex funds are available, and/or how to access it.
I refer young people needing Diversion support to another agency.
The populations I'm serving needs more support than the light-touch, one-time flex funds intended for YDIP.
Unsure about access to YDIP.
Flex funds aren't necessary in my Diversion work.
I don't think the population I serve would be eligible for the YDIP flex funds.
YDIP has not been consistent or dependable enough to meet the needs of clients.

Strengths

Based on observations, discussions, client interviews, the FA focus group, and provider survey feedback, a few strengths of YDIP were identified:

- **Ease of accessing the fund:** Providers shared that the flexibility in funding and prompt disbursement of requested funds served clients well. FAs agreed, with one sharing that “the accessibility of services and funds within the short-term period helps out a lot, especially when agencies and their case managers know this is a resource they can tap into pretty quickly.”
- **Meeting client needs:** Clients and providers shared what YDIP did well to meet client needs and success stories of YDIP in action. A common theme in these stories was flex funds being used for rental arrears and move-in costs, which prevented evictions, moved YYA and their families into stable housing situations, and diverted individuals and families from entering homelessness. Additionally, YDIP limited barriers to getting needed funds for YYA clients exiting systems of care.
- **AWHWA and BC support:** Providers and FAs shared that both organizations were quick to respond to questions and help solve issues, and were available as needed. Additionally, trainings were effective.
- **Community-based approach:** YDIP relies on an FA to help support the work across each county and create a funding pool available to anyone within the community. BC and AWHWA strive to recruit as many system partners, providers, community organizations, and others that interact with YYA to be part of YDIP in these communities and access it as needed. This is supported by work by the FAs. In particular, we have seen a great number of system of care partners in the YDIP trainings and hope to see further interaction by a variety of systems of care.
- **Upfront payments for FAs:** A key aspect of YDIP is that flex funds and operating costs are made available to FAs on an advance basis, rather than by reimbursement.



This is critical because it allows FAs to focus on the key function of their role: being responsive to providers submitting flex fund requests. If FAs were contracted on a reimbursement basis, the typical contract model with public dollars, it would slow the process and ultimately not support YDIP's goal of quickly and efficiently meeting client needs.

Opportunities for growth

The observations, discussions, client interviews, FA focus group, and provider survey feedback also revealed areas of growth for YDIP:

- **Address barriers for students and school district staff:** Students and unaccompanied homeless youth face big barriers in getting necessary paperwork for providers working in schools to get YDIP requests approved. These clients are often minors who have no rental history, and there are not enough housing options for minors, thus the housing solution or plan needed for an approvable request is not available.
- **Expanding flexibility of funding:** Expanding YDIP funding uses, such as for client medical needs and costs, would be beneficial as medical debt can be burdensome for families. One provider gave an example of being flexible with regard to funding limits, like only being able to cover rental arrears for a maximum of three months, sharing an example of a family that was unable to pay rent for eight months due to social security income issues that took a long time to resolve. Because they lived in low-income housing, their requested amount was lower than other requests for shorter rental arrear payments, highlighting a need for more case-by-case basis considerations.
- **Provide trainings and forms in Spanish:** Providers shared a desire to have trainings and request forms available in Spanish to better support Spanish-speaking clients and providers.
- **Support internal capacity in tracking budgets:** FAs shared an interest in getting support around tracking availability of YDIP funds in their communities so the information they have is up to date and not limited by their organization's accounting staff, which can lead to delays in understanding fund spending.
- **Allocating funding:** Some FAs face challenges around allocating YDIP funds so they can last throughout the six-month term, suggesting that funding is not meeting community demand in some areas. However, FAs can request more funds before the term ends. This signals a need for BC and AWHWA to provide clear communication about this to FAs.
- **More internal capacity funding:** Some FAs shared that the work they do is more than administrative as they also work to promote YDIP, provide technical assistance to trained providers, and more. Although they are able to bill time to YDIP, they shared that sometimes it feels like more work than is budgeted for internal capacity.



Next steps

In the first year of operation we saw utilization of YDIP in the five communities increase as the program continued to grow. As BC and AHWHA continue this work, there are areas we hope to expand and build on:

- **Expansion to other communities:** BC and AHWHA want to continue supporting the five YDIP communities and are in the process of expanding this work in King County. One area in particular we need to consider is how to implement YDIP without the infrastructure of the Anchor Communities Initiative.
- **YYA as payees:** An area that is allowed but has not been implemented by our five FAs is paying out flex funds directly to YYA as a viable housing solution. This would allow greater independence for YYA and potentially quicker assistance. BC and AHWHA plan to work with current and future FAs in building out this piece for YDIP.
- **Intentional outreach to culturally centered organizations:** One aspect that BC and AHWHA would like to expand is outreach to culturally centered organizations that serve populations overrepresented within YYA experiencing a housing crisis and exiting a system of care: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and two-spirit plus and POC. Although some of these organizations and providers are trained in YDIP, it is an area that continues to be built up and continues to need deliberate effort. By-for organizations often need more intentional and one-on-one engagement due to continued exclusion from the work, poor experiences for themselves and their clients, and historical trauma by the housing system. We are committed to continuing to explore intentional endeavors to reach these providers and communities and develop a targeted outreach plan.
- **Growing partnerships and collaboration with systems of care:** BC and AHWHA would like to continue to explore and develop system of care partnerships through YDIP and include them in future work. As each system of care in each community is different and requires unique navigation and time to build relationships with, it is an area BC and AHWHA plan to continue to build moving forward. Furthermore, greater partner investment in YDIP will help to create accountability and center YYA housing needs in these systems.

Recommendations

Recommendations to further the impact of YDIP include:

- **Advance payments for flex fund–related contracts by OHY:** The option of OHY providing advance payments for organizations can assist in getting dollars to clients quicker. Furthermore, it is more equitable, as many organizations, particularly grassroots and by-for organizations, are well positioned to do this work but often do not have the funds to provide financial assistance to clients prior to receiving funding from OHY.



- **Inform stakeholders across the education system:** Schools are connection points for YYA who are either navigating or exiting systems of care. McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons should be informed about such efforts and equipped to ensure that YYA are supported in transitioning out of systems of care, and training should address their specific needs as this area grows.
- **Partner with DCYF to include YDIP certification as a requirement for regionally based case workers working with YYA and families:** Training DCYF case managers in the communities where YDIP is currently available would increase access to and utilization of the flex funds to support their work. This would also expand best practices around the Diversion approach (housing first, strengths-based development, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care).

Overall, this first year of YDIP positively impacted communities and clients, and BC and AHWHA hope to continue to build on this meaningful work. Furthermore, information from YDIP services can help to meet HB 1905's goal and better understand the needs of YYA facing a housing crisis.



Appendix A. Index scores

Index scores were calculated by ranking each county for each measurement and then adding each of their ranks together to get a final index score for the county. Some counties lacked data for some of these measurements, either due to suppression, lack of information, or not having the resource itself. Counties with missing data were automatically ranked last (39th).

Figure 19 shows the map of final index scores from this endeavor. An index score that is lower indicates a county where impact of the Youth Division Infrastructure Project Diversion services could be high.

The measurements used to calculate the index scores were:

- Number of youth ages 12 to 24 exiting state residential behavioral health, foster care, and criminal justice systems.⁵
- Percentage of youth ages 12 to 24 exiting state residential behavioral health, foster care, and criminal justice systems who exit into homelessness.⁵
- Total number of HOPE, Crisis Residential Center, and Secure Crisis Residential Center beds in the county.⁶
- Total number of adolescent substance use disorder beds.⁷
- Proportion of the population who is a minority, either people of color and/or Hispanic/Latinx.⁸
- Proportion of homeless youth who are unaccompanied.⁹

The top ten counties based on index score: Spokane (46), Whatcom (46), King (51), Snohomish (79), Yakima (79), Pierce (81), Thurston (84), Clark (85), Walla Walla (88), and Chelan (98).

In addition to the index score for each county, Building Changes and A Way Home Washington discussed where different facilities from which youth and young adults may be exiting were located and can be seen on the map, spread of the counties throughout the state, urban and rural representation, and the potential need for organizations to have experience in being a Fiscal Administrator due to limited time to implement the Youth

⁵ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (2022). *Homelessness Among Youth Exiting Systems of Care in Washington State*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Retrieved from https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254_0.pdf

⁶ Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2019). *Report to the Washington State Legislature: Families and Youth in Crisis*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families, in Coordination with the Washington State Department of Commerce, Office of Homeless Youth. Retrieved from <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/FamiliesYouthinCrisis2019.pdf>

⁷ A Way Home Washington. (2018). *From Inpatient Treatment to Homelessness: Envisioning a Path Toward Healing and Safe Housing for Young People in Washington State*. Seattle, WA: A Way Home Washington. Retrieved from https://awayhomewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AWHWA_Inpatient-to-Homelessness_Full-Report-Dec-2018.pdf

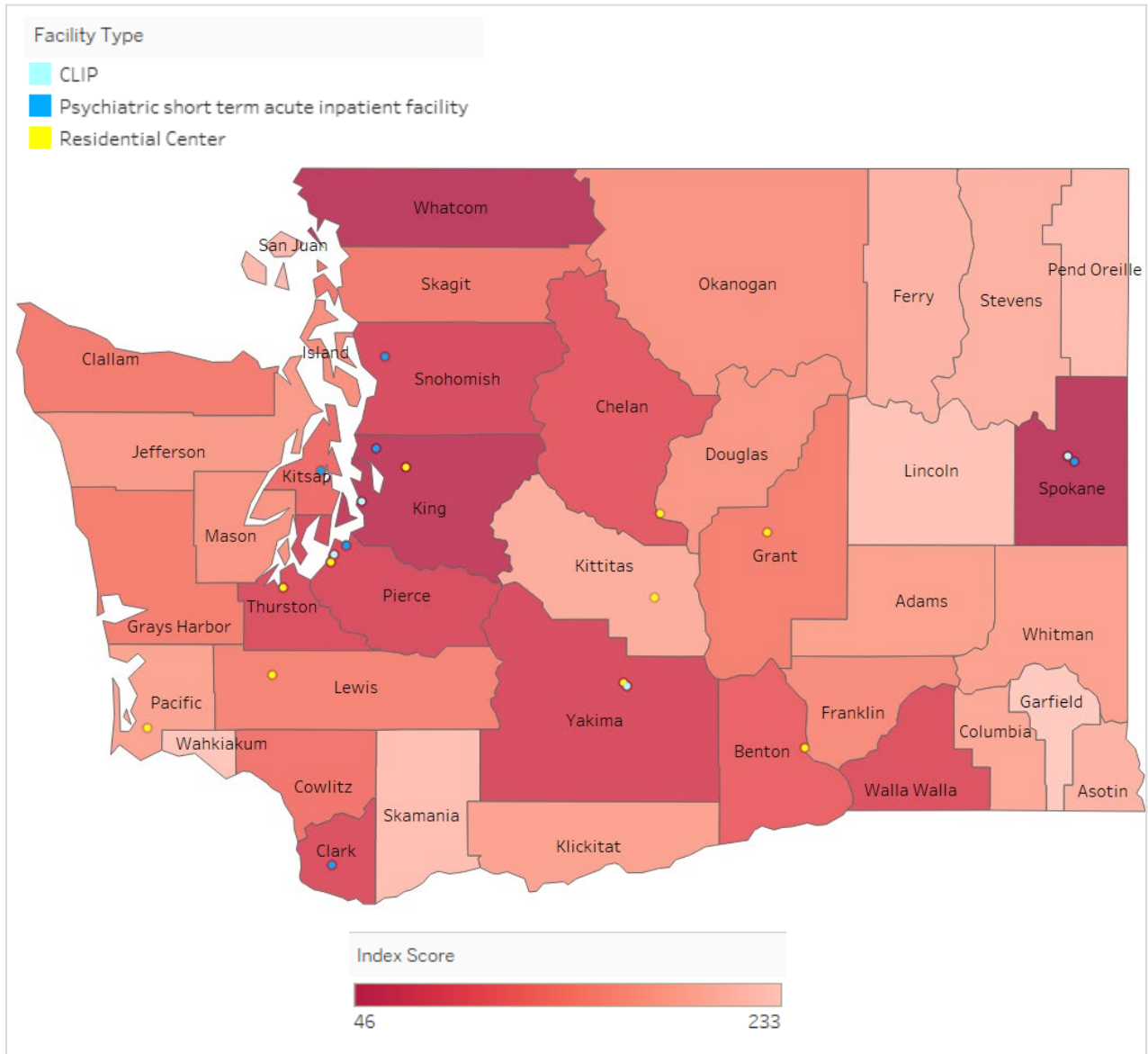
⁸ Washington State Office of Financial Management. (June 12, 2024). Estimates of April 1 population by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin. Retrieved from <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/estimates-april-1-population-age-sex-race-and-hispanic-origin>

⁹ U.S. Department of Education. *Homeless Student Enrollment Data by Local Educational Agency: School Year 2019-20, EDFacts Data Documentation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>



Division Infrastructure Project. Based on all these pieces of data, the final five counties were Clark, Pierce, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima.

Figure 19. Map of final index scores for counties across Washington state.



CLIP, Children's Long-term Inpatient Program.



Appendix B. Fiscal Administrator focus group questions

1. Can you describe what the role of a YDIP Fiscal Administrator looks like for your work?
 - a. Is there consistency around the initial understanding of this role and what the actual responsibilities of this role are?
2. What is working well with YDIP?
 - a. How does the process facilitate serving your community?
3. What are the gaps you are seeing with YDIP?
 - a. What processes are barriers to serving your community?
4. What else is needed to support Fiscal Administrators, if any?
5. What are some of the biggest themes that stand out for why people need Diversion?
6. From the data that is submitted through HMIS, is there missing context? What isn't communicated through this data that you are seeing?
7. I know there's a goal for equitable outcomes. What are you seeing with queer, trans, and BIPOC communities that you and your networks serve?
 - a. Barriers and facilitators?
8. Is there anything else you want to add that I didn't ask about?



Appendix C. YDIP provider survey questions

1. What county do you work in?
2. What type of agency do you work for?
3. Is your agency certified to use YDIP?
4. Are you, as an individual, certified to access YDIP? (i.e., completed Diversion training and work for an agency that makes requests to a Fiscal Administrator in your area)
5. Are you interested in trainings related to the Diversion approach?
6. Do you have other colleagues or staff that may need training on the Diversion approach?
7. After taking the Diversion training, did you feel adequately prepared to submit a YDIP request?
8. How many requests have you submitted to YDIP?

[IF 0, SKIP TO Q15.]

[IF 1 OR MORE, PROCEED TO Q9 AND SKIP Q15.]

9. Have you had any YDIP requests approved?
10. When did you last access YDIP?
11. How would you rate your experience in the YDIP process?

	Excellent	Good	Okay	Needs improvement	N/A
Access and ease of submitting requests					
Ability to get help in submitting the request(s)					
Communication/tracking the status of the request(s)					
Ability to communicate with your client(s) about the use of the YDIP flex funds					
Timeliness of the approval or denial of the request(s)					
The result of the request(s)					

12. Please share any skills/ideas that could support you in submitting requests that are likely to be approved.
13. What does YDIP do well to meet your clients' needs?
14. Do you have any success stories of YDIP in action? If so, please provide some details but do not include identifying information, such as names.
15. Why haven't you submitted any requests to YDIP?
16. How could YDIP better meet our client's needs?
17. Would you like someone to follow up with you to share more feedback?



Appendix D. Client interview questions

You were referred to me because you received some financial support for housing. This funding is from YDIP, a project that allows young people who have exited a system of care, such as foster care or jail, and who are facing a housing crisis to access Diversion services. This comes in the form of talking with your case worker to find a creative housing solution and potentially a single payment to help with housing costs. Payments could have included debt payment on past rental debt, help with moving costs, transportation, food, security deposit, etc. Does that sound familiar?

[IF YES, GO TO Q1.]

[IF NO, GO TO Q6.]

1. In your experience working with your provider, what was the conversation like?
 - a. How did it make you feel?
 - b. Can you talk about how comfortable you felt talking with them?
2. Just to understand what funds you may have accessed, do you recall receiving something called flex funds? Can you describe what you requested funding for?
 - a. How did this support you in getting/maintaining safe and supportive housing?
 - b. How did this fall short in getting/maintaining safe and supportive housing?
3. What was the impact of receiving this kind of support?
 - a. The conversation you had with your provider?
 - b. The funding you received?
4. How much time did it feel you spent working with your case worker through YDIP? Did it feel too long or too short?
5. After you received financial support through YDIP, did you feel like your housing was stable? If not, would you share what you felt afterwards?
6. Can you describe your living situation? If this has changed recently, please describe how.
7. If you have received other housing support before, what aspects of that did you like then versus now or what similarities did you see?
8. Please describe what you would need funds for to become stably housed.
9. YDIP specifically is for youth who exit systems of care. This includes:
 - Child welfare or foster care systems
 - Juvenile detention and rehabilitation centers
 - Adult detention centers and jails
 - Inpatient behavioral health facilities
 - Psychiatric hospitals
 - Mental health crisis centers
 - Substance use rehabilitation centers
 - Emergency rooms for behavioral health crises
 - Select Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) programs

Could you describe when you last exited any of these systems and what it looked like when exiting?

