

Arlington Drive Youth Campus and Young Adult Housing Program report



Per 2021-2023 operating budget ([ESSB 5092 Sec. 26](#))

**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
HOUSING DIVISION**

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Report to the Legislature

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Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Overview

The Legislature directed \$4.25 million in state general funds in the 2021-23 biennium to provide youth services and young adult housing in Tacoma. Commerce awarded the contract to the Arlington Drive Youth Campus, operated by the Tacoma Housing Authority and Community Youth Services. This report is submitted to satisfy the reporting requirements in section 129, subsection 26 of the [2021-2023 biennial operating budget](#):

(26) \$2,125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$2,125,000 of the general fund—state—appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the office of homeless youth to contract with one or more nonprofit organizations to provide youth services and young adult housing on a multi-acre youth campus located in the city of Tacoma. Youth services include, but are not limited to, HOPE beds and crisis residential centers to provide temporary shelter and permanency planning for youth under the age of 18. Young adult housing includes, but is not limited to, rental assistance and case management for young adults ages 18 to 24.

The department shall submit an annual report to the legislature on the use of the funds. The first report is due June 30, 2022, and each June 30th thereafter. The report shall include but is not limited to:

- (a) A breakdown of expenditures by program and expense type, including the cost per bed;
- (b) The number of youth and young adults helped by each program;
- (c) The number of youth and young adults on the waiting list for programs, if any; and
- (d) Any other metric or measure the department deems appropriate to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the funds.

Program highlights

Expenditures

The reporting timeframe does not allow for a full biennial report. Therefore, data will be limited to nine months to meet the June 30, 2022 report due date:

- Spent \$677,320.70 of the state fiscal year 2022 appropriation
- Served 185 youth and young adults

Youth and young adults served

The Tacoma Housing Authority's Arlington Drive Youth Campus has a 91% success rate in discharging youth to stable housing. The average stay in the HOPE Center is 15 days. Since opening, the Arlington Drive Youth Campus has:

- Housed 71 young adults (ages 18-24) in apartments
- Diverted 114 youth (ages 12-17) from homelessness

Recommendations

- **Maintain the state general funds in the 2023-25 biennium:** The Office of Homeless Youth recommends that the Legislature continue funding this program at \$4.25 million per biennium to maintain the current level of support services.
- **Make funding expenditure flexible through dedicated account deposit:** Funding this project through Fund 10B - Home Security Account would allow any unspent dollars contracted for this project to remain available for the entirety of the biennium.

Background

Homelessness context in Pierce County

Pierce County Human Services reported 1,897 individuals as sheltered homeless (those sleeping in emergency shelters or transitional housing) or unsheltered (those sleeping outside or living in places not meant for human habitation) during its annual Point in Time Count:

- 372 of the 1,897 individuals were youth and young adults
- 226 youth ages 13-17
- 146 young adults ages 18-24

Hundreds of Pierce County youth and young adults are homeless without family or guardians.¹ Many leave Pierce County because they are unable to secure stable housing locally. Additionally, many young people leave their home communities in counties outside Pierce seeking supportive services and housing. Arlington is part of the regional solution to ending youth and young adult homelessness. Youth who are homeless or unstably housed face increased risks of violence, drug abuse and sex trafficking.

Background on the Arlington Drive Youth Campus

Project overview

The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is a nationally unique partnership between the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and two of the nation's premier social services providers to homeless young people. It operates two programs:

1. Community Youth Services operates a 12-bed CRC/HOPE Center facility for homeless youth ages 12-17, providing temporary shelter, permanency planning and family reconciliation when safe and appropriate.
2. The YMCA's Y Social Impact Center (YSIC) operates a 58-unit Young Adult Housing Program (YAHP) that provides housing support services to young adults ages 18-24.

The CRC/HOPE Center facility opened in June 2020 and the Young Adult Housing Program (YAHP) young adult apartments opened in October 2020. The project started under budget and three months ahead of schedule. The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is the largest housing model for youth and young adults in Pierce County and a regional asset serving young people in crisis throughout the Puget Sound area.

Project funding

Capital funding

The THA acts as the landlord in this project. THA acquired \$25 million for construction costs:

- The state Legislature invested \$5 million from the capital budget
- The City of Tacoma contributed \$2.8 million
- Pierce County contributed \$670,000

¹ Tacoma Housing Authority, "Arlington Drive Campus for Homeless Youth and Young Adults," (July 22, 2019), https://www.tacomahousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/arlington_campus_brochure_7.22.2018.pdf

- The remaining \$16,530,000 came from private sources, tax credit investors, commercial debt and the THA

Funding for services

The state Legislature provided \$4.25 million in ongoing state general fund in the 2021-23 biennial operating budget to the Department of Commerce, Office of Homeless Youth, for youth services and young adult housing on a multi-acre youth campus. The first ongoing investment was made during the 2019-21 biennium at \$1.25 million, and an additional ongoing investment of \$3 million was made during the 2021-23 biennium, totaling \$4.25 million.

The Tacoma Housing Authority also subsidizes the rent on the apartments, at a cost of \$1,040,112 to date. This subsidy ensures that young people never have to pay more than 30% of their income toward rent, often meaning they pay as little as \$75 per month. Young people who leave Arlington in good standing (that is, are not evicted) also leave with a housing voucher to use on the private rental market. This allows the young adult residents who do not need intensive supportive services to leave, opening up the apartment for another young person who may have a higher level of need, and ensures the former resident can afford rent after Arlington.

COVID-19 challenges

COVID-19 affected this project in four primary areas:

1. The governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order suspended almost all in-person learning.² The suspension of in-person instruction caused a gap in some serviced youth's school engagement.
2. The COVID-19 length of stay waivers extended youth stays in Crisis Residential Centers past the maximum stay of 45 days. As a result, some youth could remain in the facility for an extended time. This waiver benefitted youth and the community but limited the number of youth the program could serve.
3. High staff turnover has been an ongoing challenge to service delivery for this and many other projects.
4. The Crisis Residential Center also had to close several times throughout the pandemic due to COVID-19 exposure among residents and/or staff. This also limited the number of youth served.

CRC/HOPE Center

Challenges around the "stay at home" order and school closures during COVID caused a gap in some youths' schooling. Due to many youths' need for social engagement, online courses gave some young people a sense of hopelessness. As a result, they struggled to stay on schedule with assignments and fell behind in schoolwork. Community Youth Services (CYS) increased engagement efforts and focused on encouragement around schoolwork and activities. CYS advocated on the student's behalf, speaking with teachers and school counselors and developing education plans to support and meet the youth's educational needs.

Despite the many challenges that have come with COVID, CYS continues to discharge youth to safe and stable housing at an 88% success rate.

² Washington Governor Jay Inslee, "Inslee announces 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' order," (March 23, 2020), <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-stay-home-stay-healthy%2%A0order#:~:text=This%20Stay%20Home%2C%20Stay%20Healthy,to%20pursue%20an%20essential%20activity>

Young Adult Housing Program

The Young Adult Housing Program (YAHP) had to make significant adjustments in how services were rendered with COVID-19. During the project's first contractual period (July 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2021), the project leased and occupied 42 of the 58 units, anticipating full capacity by the end of February 2021. However, hiring has been an ongoing struggle for the YAHP due to COVID-19 and ongoing hiring and retention issues prevalent throughout the industry. Over the last year, the project has operated short-staffed, including the executive director stepping down from their post in October 2021. The program has been operating at 100% capacity effective February 2022 and currently has a waiting list of 41 young adults awaiting housing. The waitlist is intentionally kept at 40-50 young people to ensure they are not waiting too long for housing and are not given false hope that housing is imminently available at Arlington.

Approximately 30% of the young adult residents are also parenting babies or toddlers. Not only is Arlington housing young adults, but an additional generation of 27 children who would otherwise be homeless. The YMCA works hard with young people to bring in additional family planning and parenting resources, ensuring they have the support and are making resourced and informed decisions about what is in the best interest of their family.

Program expenditures and results

Timeframe

This is the first annual report for the Arlington Drive Youth Campus. The reporting timeframe does not allow for a full year's worth of data. Therefore, data will be limited to nine months to meet the June 30, 2022, annual report due date. Funding for this project was allocated for July 1, 2021, through June 2023. The project is active. This report presents outcomes for dates of service from July 1, 2021, through March 30, 2022.

Funding

The Legislature provided \$1.25 million from the 2019-21 biennial operating budget. From Jan. 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, the program spent \$1,238,669.71. To support allocated program spending, the Legislature allowed Commerce to adjust the program budget from \$625,000 in fiscal year 2020 and \$625,000 in fiscal year 2021 to \$91,246 in fiscal year 2020 and \$1,158,654 in fiscal year 2021.

The amended budget allowed the program to spend all but \$11,330.29. All unspent funds were de-obligated to close the contract on Aug. 1, 2021. Unspent funds were connected to programmatic adjustments and right sizing. Examples of adjustments during the 2019-21 biennium include but are not limited to:

- **Changes in key positions:** CYS experienced turnover in its fiscal department. The department's chief financial officer addressed this by prioritizing recruitment efforts and temporarily handling additional duties, including program billing and invoicing responsibilities, until a replacement was hired.
- **Grand opening:** The program was a new project, which officially opened in June 2020. Expenditures made before June 2020 were limited to staff training, utility payments, office supplies and other programmatic expenses.

The Legislature provided \$4.25 million (\$2,125,000 in fiscal year 2022, \$2,125,000 in fiscal year 2023) from the 2021-2023 biennial operating budget for operating costs to the Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth to

provide youth services and young adult housing on a multi-acre youth campus. The project made several adjustments to right-size funding to respond to the needs of the youth and young adults:

- The original contract budget was revised to include \$120,559 (\$60,279.50 in fiscal year 2022, \$60,279.50 in fiscal year 2023) for Tacoma Housing Authority's administration cost as a lead grantee for this project.
- CYS budget will remain \$894,441 (\$447,220.50 in fiscal year 2022, \$447,220 in fiscal year 2023). The project has increased its outreach efforts to provide additional support services and to meet the needs of youth at risk of homelessness.
- YMCA's budget is \$3,142,968 for the biennium (\$1,571,484 in fiscal year 2022, \$1,571,484 in fiscal year 2023). The program is expanding LifeSet support services to include young people on the waitlist and/or have expressed interest in enrolling in the Arlington program.
- Commerce approved additional expenses for rental assistance for young people in securing employment. Many young people need this support, and the project is reviewing reimbursing employment-centered requests.
- Additionally, the program identified that items such as furniture, mattresses, dishware, silverware and bedding were needed for youth and young adults transitioning from homelessness to stable housing. The program adjusted its budget to address these needs.

Expenditure and results data

The reporting timeframe does not allow for a full biennial report. Therefore, the data presented below are limited to July 1, 2021, through March 30, 2022, to meet the June 30, 2022, report due date.

Table 1: Expenditure and results data by program

Result	HOPE/CRC (CYS)	YAHP (YMCA)	Total
Active client enrollments	114	71	185
New clients this period	110	71	181
Waitlist (approximate)	N/A	41	41
Clients exited	111	3	114
Exits to permanent housing	21	2	23
Family reconciliation (under age 18 at enrollment)	21	N/A	21
Cost per bed	\$1,274.83	\$7,351.97	\$8,625.80
Program expenditure	\$145,330.68	\$521,990.02	\$667,320.70

Table 2: Expenditure data by expense type and subgrantee

Expenditure type	CYS (HOPE/CRC)	YMCA (YAHP)	THA
Administrative costs	\$17,757.54	\$50,466.15	\$0
Salaries and benefits	\$104,577.53	\$374,364.97	\$0
Program operations	\$10,445.01	\$74,966.67	\$0
Rental assistance	\$0	\$0	\$0
Support services	\$643.17	\$22192.23	\$0
Facility	\$11,907.43	\$0	\$0
Program expenditure	\$145,330.68	\$521,990.02	\$0

Data sources and methods

Homeless Management Information System

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the main data source for measuring the success of the Arlington Drive Youth Campus. Homeless housing service providers use HMIS to collect and manage data while providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness. Youth and young adult providers use HMIS to measure instances of returns to homelessness. The indicator for this measurement is an increase in the percentage of youth who maintain safe and stable housing. Measurements are taken six and 12 months post-project exit. The Young Adult Housing Program provides up to six months of aftercare to youth who have recently exited the program. There are currently more than 60 measurements identified within the Youth and Young Adult Program guidelines.³

Contract Management System

The Contract Management System (CMS) is a data system used by contract managers within the Department of Commerce to create, track, and maintain contract and programmatic budget and reimbursement requests. CMS provided data on program expenditures.

Narrative reports

A collection of narrative reports were used to identify program highlights, challenges, barriers and successes within a contractual period. The Office of Homeless Youth administers Performance Progress Reports (PPR). The PPR is a methodology in which programs have an opportunity to speak to experiences within a project that may not be quantified within the HMIS application. Programs are required to submit a PPR quarterly.

³ Office of Homeless Youth, "Youth and Young Adult Program Guidelines," <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/m029gxig1ohnmej35158l1dyu6f2go6k>

Success stories

14-year-old youth in protective custody

Community Youth Services supported a 14-year-old male with a learning disability in protective custody placed at the CRC/HOPE center for 30 days. At the beginning of his stay, staff were informed that he had over 80 missing assignments since the beginning of the school year. For the first couple of days, staff noticed his lack of concern and negative outlook toward school. No one had advocated for the youth nor made it a requirement for him to attend classes. After meeting with teachers, he agreed to do an extra assignment or two a day to catch up, with staff holding him accountable. Toward the end of his stay, one of his assignments was to write an essay, and he chose to write about his stay at Community Youth Services.

The youth's teacher shared the essay with the clinical case manager and Community Youth Services' executive director via email. He stated that staff were irritating because they were always watching; however, he appreciated being made to attend classes and catch up on his work because that had never happened before. He stated that now he enjoys school but was concerned with his possible new placement not being as hands-on and falling behind again. However, he also said he felt he could continue this path and do his schoolwork. The school counselor stated that she was impressed because he had reduced his assignments by more than half in 30 days, which put a big smile on his face.

A single mother living out of her car

The Y Social Impact Center (YSIC) housed several households with children who were previously living in their vehicles. One example included a young adult single mother of two living in her car and struggling with sobriety due to depression. They were couch surfing while the mother attempted to maintain employment.

Since moving into the Arlington Drive Youth Campus, the mother has provided safety and comfort for herself and her children. She secured full-time employment and recently received a promotion. The household consistently works with on-site case management to achieve her goals, enabling her to thrive at work and maintain sobriety. The interventions for the mother, a young adult, are also helping her children. This family is a prime example of how this project can support young adults in achieving housing stability, increasing the chance of stabilizing other areas of their lives.

Collaborations

COVID-19 affected the service delivery of many items. For this report, we will focus on furniture. Youth and young adults referred to the Young Adult Housing Program (YAHP) project did not own furniture and needed to acquire it to furnish their new homes. Increased pricing and long delivery waits made furniture acquisition impossible for this population. The YSIC partnered with a local furniture provider and a local church to supply households with starter sets of home goods and furnishings. All households were considered chronically homeless at move-in. Thirty-seven of 42 participated in case management with the on-site YSIC service provider via the Arlington Case management team or the YMCA Youth Village Organization's LifeSet team.

Tenants access employment resources, on-site medical programming provided by Community Health Care, and other essential housing needs such as assistance acquiring vital documents, debt reduction and child care. Additionally, the YSIC partnered with local food banks to provide relief from food instability while households adjusted to stable housing.

Recommendations

In January 2020, Pierce County Human Services reported a deficit of 372 housing units for youth and young adults.⁴ The Arlington Drive Youth Campus has diverted over 1,093 youth and young adults away from homelessness in Pierce County.⁵

Although measurable progress is being made, more work is required. The COVID-19 health crisis presented this project with various challenges, including increased staff turnover and capacity issues. Despite these obstacles, the Arlington Drive Youth Campus is a solution to homelessness for young people in the Puget Sound area.

- **Sustain funds in state fiscal year 2024.** The Office of Homeless Youth recommends that the Legislature continue to fund this program at \$4.25 million per biennium in state general funds for operational costs to maintain support services for youth and young adults who lack a safe and stable place to stay.
- **Make funding expenditures flexible through account deposit.** The Legislature appropriated \$2,125,000 of the general fund, state appropriation for fiscal year 2022, and \$2,125,000 of the general fund, state appropriation for fiscal year 2023. Any funds left unspent after the identified fiscal year will be lost. Instead, funds should be deposited into Fund 10B - Home Security Account for dedicated use. Funding this project through 10B would allow any unspent dollars contracted for this project to remain available for the entirety of the biennium.

⁴ Pierce County, "Point-In-Time Count," <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/4719/Homeless-Point-in-Time-PIT-Count>

⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Diversion," <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/diversionexplainer/>