



## REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

### Rainier School Bi-Annual Report

December 1, 2025



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# Executive Summary

## Substitute Senate Bill 5393

In May 2025, the state legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill 5393 entitled “Closing the Rainier school by June 30, 2027.” Amendments to the bill stop new admissions in July 2027 but Rainier School will continue to operate for eligible residents who choose to remain there.

The bill amended RCW 71A.20.020, added a new section to Chapter 71A.20 and added a new section to Chapter 43.382. These changes direct the department to:

- Stop long-term admissions July 27, 2025, and halt all new admissions June 30, 2027.
- Provide meaningful options to transition to another residential habilitation center known as an RHC or to the community. When assisting individuals who are transitioning out of Rainier School, DSHS shall:
  - Offer each resident a meaningful choice of appropriate alternative placements.
  - Prioritize client choice, autonomy, individual preferences, medical and behavioral health care needs, and opportunities for community integration.
  - Develop individualized transition plans in collaboration with each resident and their family or legal guardian, caregivers, and support providers.
  - Coordinate closely with other state agencies, local entities, health care providers, and community stakeholders to ensure seamless transitions.
  - Provide or contract for all necessary assessments, planning, relocation expenses, housing modifications, staff training, crisis support, and related transition activities.
  - Implement robust oversight and accountability measures related to the transitions, and regularly monitor transition outcomes, as well as individual well-being and satisfaction.
- Provide return rights to Rainier School for those who discharge to a community-based setting.
  - Those with return rights may be readmitted once within a year following discharge.<sup>1</sup>
  - If the person moves to the community a second time, any subsequent request to return to Rainier School must be recommended by a multidisciplinary team and approved by the DSHS secretary.
- Rainier School shall cease to operate as an RHC when the census of long-term residents has reached zero people.
- Offer employees of the Rainier School opportunities to work in state-operated living alternatives and other state facilities and programs.
- The department is to hold a 90-day public comment period to conclude no later than November 1, 2025, to solicit public feedback to identify strategies to mitigate the impact of closure.
- The Developmental Disabilities Ombuds shall submit a report to the legislature by November 1, 2028. The ombuds has requested and received initial data from the department to support their report requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Right to return after one year is also in RCW 71A.18.040.

In addition to these changes to admissions, Substitute Senate Bill 5393 directs the department to provide reports to the legislature every six months from December 1, 2025, to June 1, 2027, and annually thereafter until July 1, 2030. Each report is required to include specific information:

- A point in time description of the capacity for individuals with Intellectual/developmental disabilities served through the DDA budget in DSHS.
- The number of former residents who have transitioned out of Rainier School after July 27, 2025, and the type of setting they transitioned to, including subsequent transitions.
- The number of deaths of former residents who have transitioned from Rainier School after July 27, 2025, and into other residential settings supported by DDOS.
- The geographical distribution of residential placements across all existing residential placements for individuals with Intellectual/developmental disabilities served through the DDA budget in DSHS.
- Information regarding former Rainier School employees who have transitioned to other state employment, left the industry, or transitioned to private sector employment after July 27, 2025.

The information in this report reflects data from January-June 2025.

## Background

### Rainier School Residential Habilitation Center

Rainier School is a habilitation center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities located within the city limits of Buckley, Washington about a mile-and-a-half from downtown. The



campus is situated in a peaceful country setting with a unique and prominent view of Mount Rainier.

Rainier School's first residents arrived in October 1939 from what is now known as Lakeland Village. Then named Western State Custodial School, Rainier School was the only such facility in Western Washington. Resident population peaked in 1958 at 1,918. The facility was renamed Rainier State School in 1947 and then Rainier School in 1956.

Rainier School is one of Washington's four residential habilitation centers (RHCs) operated by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). RHCs are one of the settings that provide care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Rainier School is Medicaid-certified as an intermediate care facility. The goal of an ICF is to maximize a person's independence. They emphasize active treatment, person-centered planning, and habilitative services with a goal of integration into the community.

As of June 30, 2025, Rainier School was supporting 77 residents. Of the 77 residents, 71 were long-term and 6 were short-term. Rainier's campus is unique in the way it supports the Buckley community, as it is one of the largest employers, participates in and hosts community events and provides water treatment services for the city. DSHS works jointly with the City of Buckley to produce, treat, and transmit water throughout the water service territory. The City of Buckley received a grant from the Department of Health to conduct a feasibility study to determine the best long-term approach to provide water.

## Data Analysis

### Capacity in Residential Settings

The following 3 tables provide the capacity for residential settings for individuals with Intellectual/developmental disabilities served through the Developmental Disabilities Administration budget in DSHS as of June 30, 2025. Each table provides the explanation and definition of capacity or vacancy that is applicable to that residential setting.

| Table 1 Adult Family Homes   |            |        |                                    |                     |                    |
|------------------------------|------------|--------|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                              | Facilities | Beds   | DDCS Forecast Caseload Summer 2025 | DDCS Clients Served | HCS Clients Served |
| Adult Family Home Contracted | 5,186      | 30,099 | 1,778                              | 1,758               | 13,704             |

Capacity in Adult Family Homes means the maximum number of people receiving personal care who are permitted in an adult family home at a given time. Capacity includes:

- (1) The total capacity, which is the number of residents, and any children or adults related to the provider who receive personal or special care and services in the home; and
- (2) The licensed capacity, which is the number of residents the adult family home may admit and retain (resident capacity), which is the number listed on the license.

Available beds cannot be calculated for adult family homes as beds may be occupied by residents paying privately or paying via third party payers. The forecast is the number of people DSHS has received appropriation to support in the current fiscal year.

| Table 2 DD Waiver Residential Settings |                    |  |                     |
|--|--------------------|--|---------------------|
|  | Available Capacity | Courtesy Forecast Caseload Summer 2025 | DDCS Clients Served |
| Supported Living                       | 388                | 4,178                                  | 4,006               |
| Group Home/Group Training Home         | 16                 | 219                                    | 206                 |
| SOLA Adult & Children                  | 11                 | 227                                    | 216                 |
| Out of Home Services for Children      | 24                 | 97                                     | 87                  |

Available Capacity in DD Waiver residential settings means an unoccupied bedroom in a home that can accommodate additional housemates.

The table shows forecast counts which are estimates that are based on the percent split of the FY25 actual caseload splits in the overall Residential Services courtesy forecast. The forecast for SOLA combines both children and adults.

**Table 3 Residential Habilitation Centers**

|                                | Physical Beds | Clients in service |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Fircrest ICF                   | 104           | 83                 |
| Fircrest Nursing Facility (NF) | 100           | 81                 |
| Lakeland ICF                   | 109           | 67                 |
| Lakeland NF                    | 89            | 75                 |
| Rainier ICF                    | 100           | 75                 |
| Yakima Valley NF               | 64            | 53                 |

Available physical capacity in residential habilitation centers represents the number of physical beds that are available for a client. It does not mean an individual’s needs can be met or that necessary operating budget is available. It excludes beds that are offline, being held or occupied. Residential habilitation centers must operate within appropriation and within available staffing levels. The needs of individuals vary over time and the RHC must determine needs of the individual and the existing residents.

Long-term admission is available at Lakeland Village nursing facility and intermediate care facility and Fircrest nursing facility and intermediate care facility. Within available capacity, RHCs can provide short-term stays that include planned respite and crisis stabilization services.

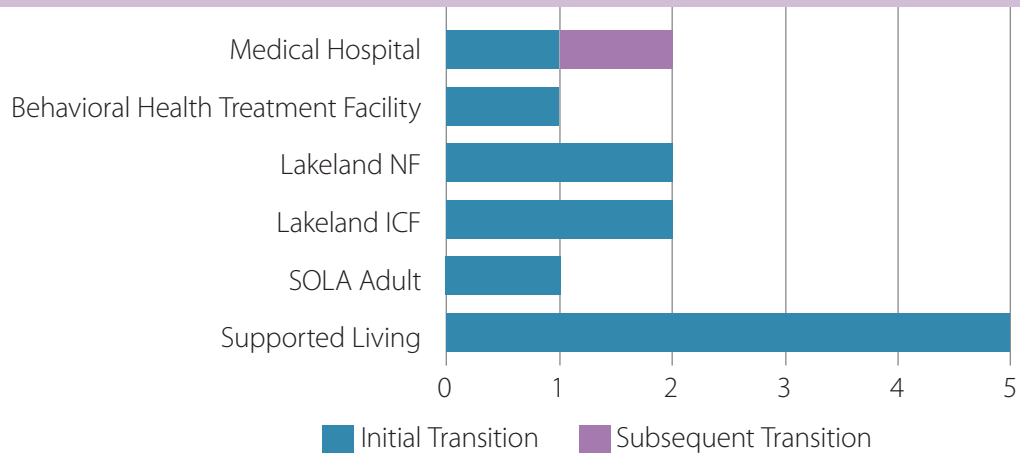
- Planned respite is available at nursing facilities to provide a scheduled break in caregiving. The nursing facilities provide planned respite to support adults living with their primary caregivers. Planned respite provides personalized activities and supports within the RHC nursing facilities congregate setting. Planned respite at an RHC NF is limited to 30 days in a calendar year and cannot exceed 30 consecutive days across two calendar years.
- Crisis stabilization services can be provided at Yakima Valley School nursing facility and at the three intermediate care facilities at Fircrest School, Lakeland Village and Rainier School. A 2017 amendment to RCW 71A.20.180 allowed for up to eight state-staffed crisis stabilization beds at Yakima Valley School. Crisis stabilization is available to people age 16 and older. Crisis stabilization at an ICF or Yakima Valley School NF provides safety and stability when the person’s current living situation puts them at risk of hospitalization or in a hospital without medical need.

### Transitions from Rainier School

From January 1 to June 30, 2025, a total of 12 residents transitioned from Rainier School. Of these, one individual has subsequently transitioned from an acute hospital to a diversion program.

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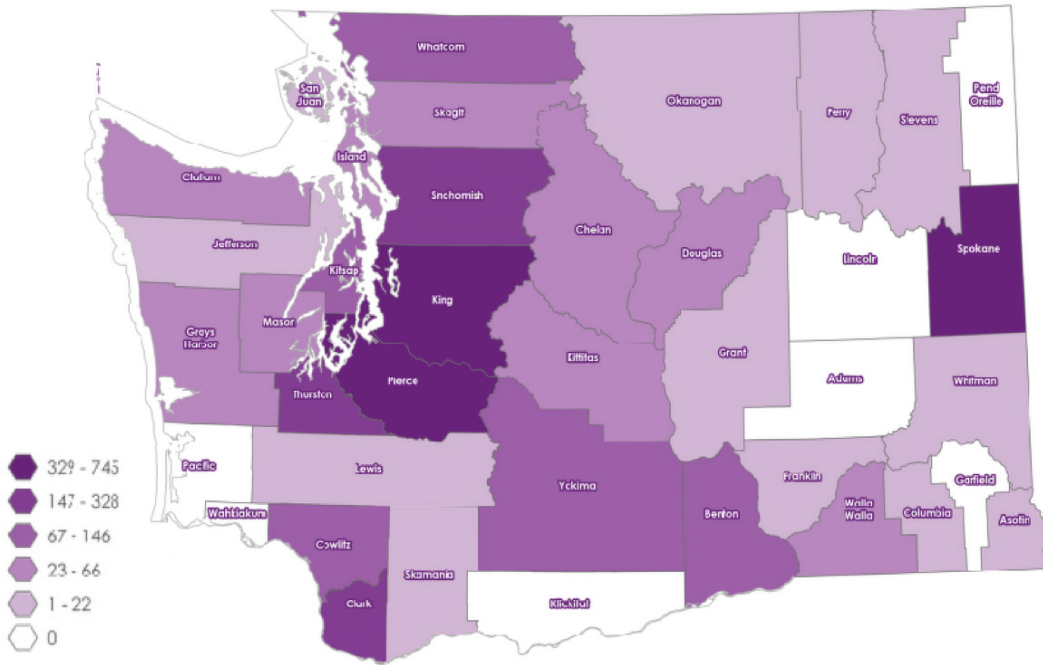
### Deaths of Former Rainier Residents

There have been no deaths of residents who transitioned after the effective date of this bill.

## Geographic Distribution

The geographic distribution of residential settings across the state from January 1 to June 30, 2025.

**Figure 1 Supported Living Clients by County**



**Figure 2 Group Training home/Group Home Clients**

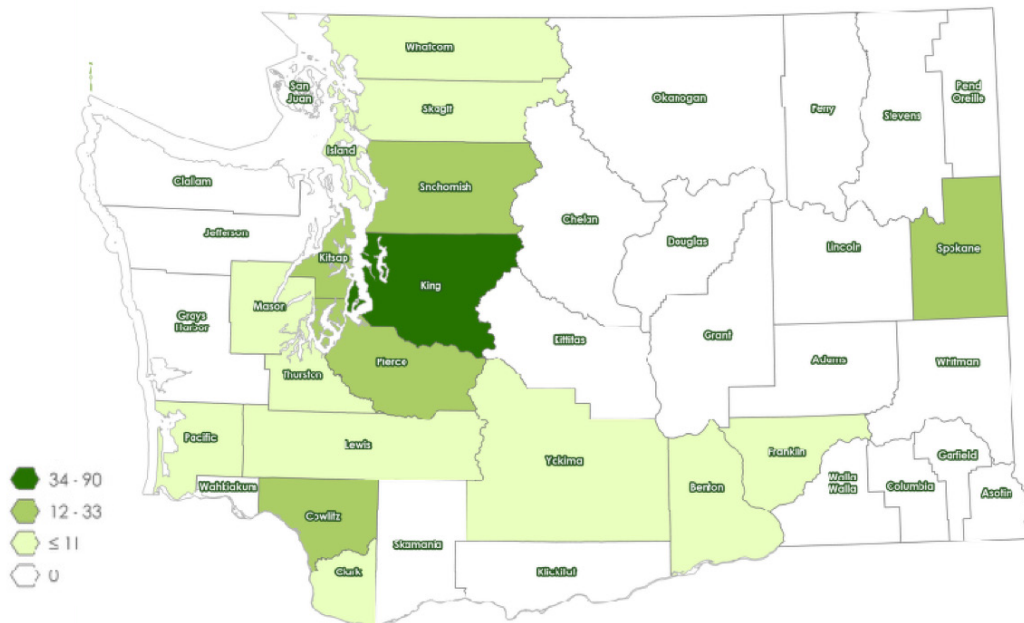


Figure 3 Companion Home Clients by County

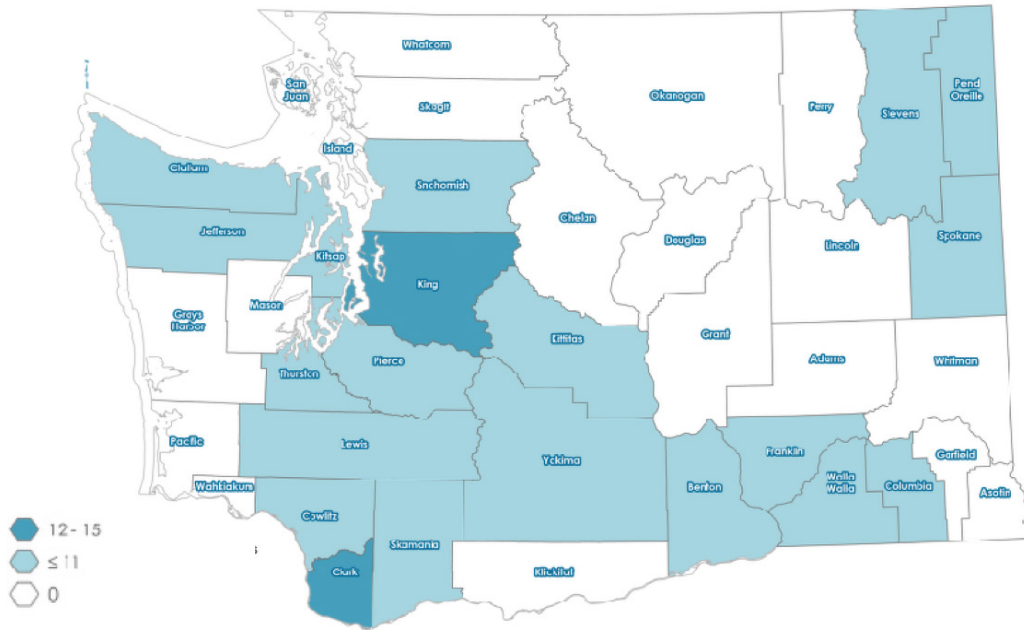
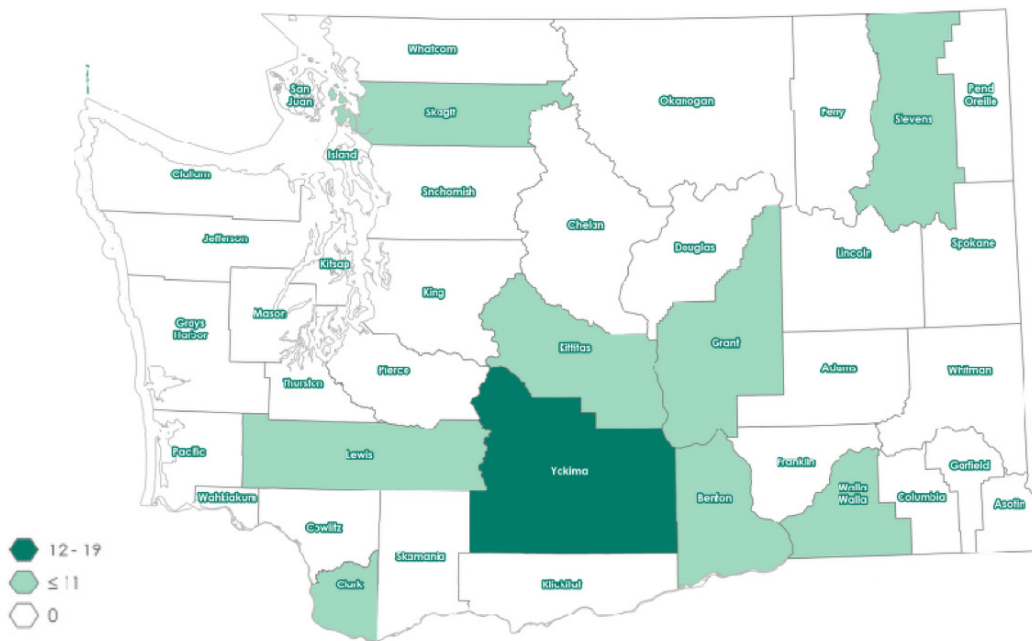


Figure 4 Alternative Living Clents by County





## Public Comment

Substitute Senate Bill 5393 Sec. 5 states, "The department of social and health services shall, within available funds, hold a public comment period to solicit feedback for the purpose of identifying strategies to mitigate the impact of the closure described in section 2 of this act on the communities that are most directly affected. The public comment period must be at least 90 days and must conclude no later than November 1, 2025." As of the drafting of this report, the public comment period remains open. The online invitation for public comment may be viewed at [Period for Public Comment - SSB 5393 Closing the Rainier School by June 30, 2027](#).

The public comment survey requested:

1. Name: (Optional)
2. Your email address (Optional)
3. County of Residence:
4. Select your answer (multi-select as people may identify as more than one)
5. I am a (select all that apply)
  - Parent/family or representative of a current Rainier School resident
  - Parent/family or representative of a former Rainier School resident
  - Current Rainier School resident
  - Former Rainier School resident
  - DDCCS client
  - Parent/family or representative of a DDCCS client
  - Advocate
  - City of Buckley community member
  - RHC employee
  - DSHS employee
  - Tribal member
  - Tribal leader
  - Labor union
  - Other
6. What suggestions do you have for an alternative use of the Rainier School campus? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have any recommendations or strategies you would like to share for mitigating the impact of closure?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What impacts of Rainier closing are you concerned about? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Any other comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The survey was distributed to subscribers to the DDCS GovDelivery list and to tribal representatives. Additionally, postcards were mailed to residents of the City of Buckley to request feedback regarding impacts a closure of Rainier School may have on residents and to the city. Rainier School provides water treatment services to the City of Buckley. The City of Buckley received grant money to study other water treatment services options in the future; this study is expected to be completed in 2027. The next report to the legislature will include the results and an analysis of public comments.

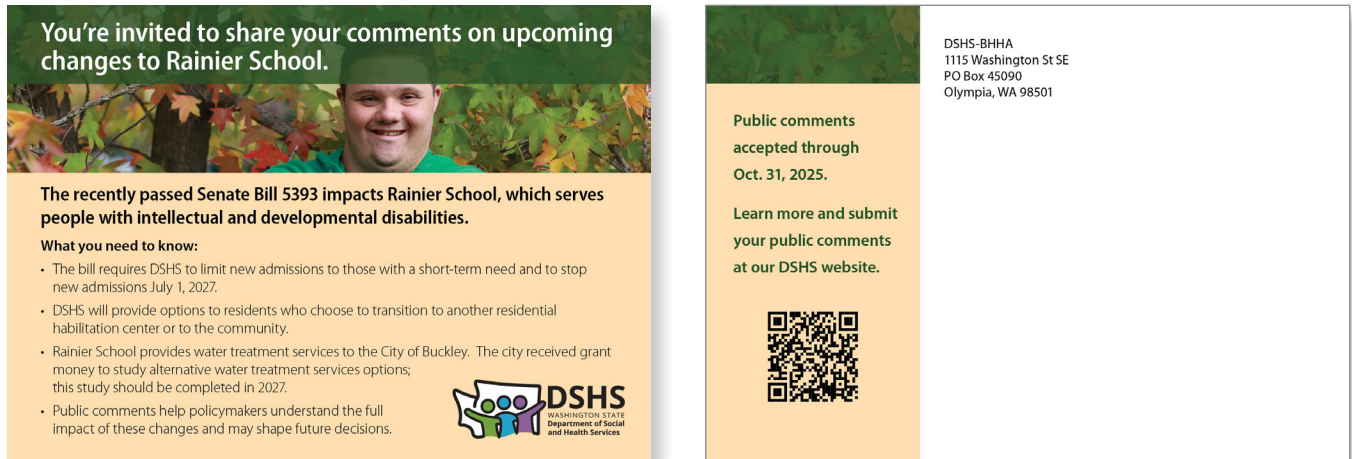


Figure 6 Postcard sent to Buckley Residents.

## Rulemaking

Emergency rulemaking was filed in July 2025 to ensure those requesting admission and those who are discharging are aware of requirements and rights under the new law. The rulemaking defines and clarifies:

1. An individual needing active treatment has an entitlement to an intermediate care facility but does not have an entitlement to a specific provider or intermediate care facility setting.
2. Long-term admission is not available at Rainier School.
3. Short-term admission is limited to those needing crisis stabilization, admitting to an ICF if you are age 16-20, or for planned respite at a nursing facility.
4. Return rights to Rainier School.
5. Effective July 1, 2027, no admissions are permitted at Rainier School unless the admission is for return rights

Permanent rulemaking is underway in follow up to the emergency rulemaking, which is temporary in nature, to reflect the direction of SB 5393.

### Conclusion

DSHS will continue to provide meaningful options to all residents to transition to another RHC or to the community. Residents may stay at Rainier School for as long as they choose and continue to be eligible, and if they transition to a community location, they may choose to return to Rainier School for up to one year afterwards, provided they are eligible. When assisting people to transition out of Rainier School, DSHS is:

- Offering each individual resident a meaningful choice of appropriate alternative placements.
- Prioritizing client choice, autonomy, individual preferences, medical and behavioral health care needs, and opportunities for community integration.
- Developing individualized transition plans in collaboration with each resident and their family or legal guardian, caregivers, and support providers.
- Coordinating closely with other state agencies, local entities, health care providers, and community stakeholders to ensure seamless transitions.
- Providing or contracting for all necessary assessments, planning, relocation expenses, housing modifications, staff training, crisis support, and related transition activities.
- Implementing robust oversight and accountability measures related to the transitions, and regularly monitor transition outcomes, as well as individual well-being and satisfaction.

#### Future reports:

DSHS will submit future reports to the legislature June 1, 2026, December 1, 2026, June 1, 2027, June 1, 2028, and annually thereafter. The June 1, 2026, report will include the results and an analysis of the public comment period which closes October 31, 2025. The public comment period is still open as of the drafting of this report.

#### Additional resources:

[Report to the Legislature Transitional Care Management December 1, 2024](#)

[Report to the Legislature Respite and stabilization October 1, 2024](#)

[Report to the Legislature Rainier School Footprint Reduction June 30, 2023](#)

[Rainier School Master Plan April 20, 2017](#)