

**UNACCOMPANIED
HOMELESS YOUTH:
PERFORMANCE
MEASURES AND
POPULATION
ESTIMATES**

**PROPOSED
SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**



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STATE OF WASHINGTON
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND
REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Why a JLARC study of programs for unaccompanied homeless youth?

In 2015, the Legislature passed the Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act (2SSB 5404), which aims to coordinate statewide programs to reduce and prevent youth homelessness. The Act:

- Creates the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs within the Department of Commerce (Commerce);
- Transfers some responsibilities from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to Commerce; and
- Directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to review state-funded programs and services provided to unaccompanied homeless youth.

The Act also sets five priority service areas: stable housing, family reconciliation, permanent connections with adults, education and employment, and social and emotional well-being.

Who are unaccompanied homeless youth?

The Act defines unaccompanied homeless youth as persons under 18 years of age who lack a fixed nighttime residence and who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Local, state, federal, and non-profit entities may use a variety of other definitions for other purposes. For example, in other settings “youth” may include individuals between the ages of 18 and 24, and “homeless” may exclude individuals who stay temporarily in other people’s homes (“couch surfing”).

Programs and services include housing, support services, family reconciliation, and outreach

State-funded programs that serve unaccompanied homeless youth and other youth in crisis include the following:

- **HOPE Centers** and **Crisis Residential Centers** house youth for 5 to 30 days and provide counseling, health, education, and family reconciliation services.
- The **Street Youth Services** outreach program helps youth access health, housing, employment, and other support services.

Private organizations operate these programs under state contracts.

DSHS and Commerce will share responsibility

HOPE Centers, Crisis Residential Centers, and Street Youth Services were previously provided by DSHS. The Act transferred these

programs from DSHS to Commerce. Commerce will now manage the programs and contracts, and DSHS will license the centers.

Study scope

The study will focus on youth under the age of 18. JLARC staff will report the estimates of Washington’s unaccompanied homeless youth population and the methods used to quantify this population.

The report will identify state-funded programs and services provided to unaccompanied homeless youth and review performance measures, data reliability, and reporting requirements. The study’s scope excludes programs that serve unaccompanied homeless youth as part of a broader population (e.g., food stamps).

JLARC staff will identify national practices and other appropriate standards regarding population estimates and performance measures for programs and services for homeless youth.

Study objectives

This study will address the following questions:

- 1) How many unaccompanied homeless youth do agencies estimate there are in Washington, and what methods are used to make these estimates?
- 2) What performance measures, reporting requirements, and data exist for state-funded programs and services provided to unaccompanied homeless youth?
- 3) What national practices and other appropriate standards could inform the state’s approach to providing programs and services, and evaluating outcomes for unaccompanied homeless youth?

Timeframe for the study

Staff will present its preliminary report at the September 2016 JLARC meeting and the proposed final report at the December 2016 JLARC meeting.

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