

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR CONCLUSION:

# Homeless youth programs need specific performance measures. Ability to evaluate outcomes hindered by state limits on collecting personal data.

**Why this study:** In 2015, the Legislature passed the Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act. The Act transferred three programs from DSHS to Commerce and directed JLARC to review state-funded programs and services provided to unaccompanied homeless youth.

## Recommendations

**Commerce should develop program-specific performance measures** and incorporate performance measurement into grant agreements beginning in fiscal year 2018.

**Commerce should brief legislative committees** about how current consent law is interpreted, its effect on collecting data from homeless youth, and the potential impacts and trade-offs of collecting this data to evaluate program outcomes.

**Commerce and OSPI should issue joint guidance** to counties and school districts, and clarify how they can work together to improve estimates of the unaccompanied homeless youth population.

## Commerce has not developed program-specific performance measures

Since 2015, Commerce has managed 3 programs for unaccompanied homeless youth: **Street Youth Services, Crisis Residential Centers, and HOPE Centers**



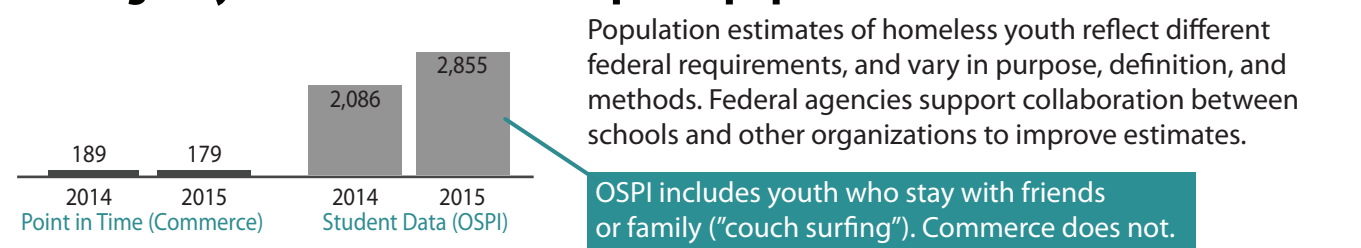
Commerce is developing system-wide measures related to Legislative goals. **It has not written program-specific measures necessary to evaluate outcomes.**

## Limits on data collection will hinder ability to evaluate outcomes



Commerce collects data from contracted providers. Under an interpretation of state law, youth cannot consent to provide personal data in HMIS. Without personal data, youth who re-enter programs may be double counted. This hinders the ability to evaluate outcomes.

## Interagency coordination can improve population estimates



The complete report is on the JLARC web site. For more information, contact:

Keenan Konopaski, Washington State Legislative Auditor (360) 786-5187 keenan.konopaski@leg.wa.gov

SEPT. 2016