Washington State Department of Commerce

Arlington Drive Youth Campus

Annual report per Section 129 (14) of the 2023 operating budget

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Report to the Legislature

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HOUSING DIVISION
OFFICE OF HOMELESS YOUTH

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Executive summary

Legislative mandate and Arlington Drive Youth Campus funding summary

This report is submitted pursuant to Section 129 (14) of the 2023-25 biennial operating budget:

> The department shall submit an annual report to the legislature on the use of the funds. The report is due annually on June 30th. 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.

The expenditure and results data section presents data responsive to subsections (a) and (b). Data related to subsections (c) and (d) appears in the narrative reporting section, which provides context about how the programs are operating. To satisfy the requirements of subsection (d), which permits any other metric or measure the department deems appropriate for evaluating the use of the funds, Commerce has included anonymized success stories from program participants, submitted by the grantees. These stories are placed throughout the report to improve readability.

The 2023–2025 operating budget allocated $4.25 million from the General Fund-State, split evenly between state fiscal years 2024 and 2025, for the Office of Homeless Youth to contract with nonprofit organizations. These funds are designated exclusively to support youth services and young adult housing on a multi-acre campus in Tacoma, including:

- Temporary shelter options such as HOPE beds and crisis residential centers, with a focus on permanency planning for individuals under 18.
- Young adult housing with rental assistance and case management for individuals aged 18 to 24.

After the Legislature reappropriated funds for the Arlington Drive Youth Campus for the 2023-25 biennium, Commerce renewed its contract with the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) to continue operating the program, along with its partners Community Youth Services (CYS) and the YMCA Social Impact Center (YSIC). Commerce has worked with THA to implement the Arlington Drive Youth Campus since 2020. The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is Pierce County's largest housing model for youth and young adults and a regional asset serving young people in crisis throughout the Puget Sound area.

Program highlights

Expenditures summary:

- $2,273,802 in state expenditures
- $1,605,335 from Tacoma Housing Authority in rent subsidies and operational costs

Youth and young adults served

The program served 168 youth and young adults during the reporting period:

- 54 resided at the CRC/HOPE Center
- 114 resided at the Arlington Apartments

Since the program's beginning, Arlington Drive has served 665 youth and young adults:

- 370 resided at the CRC/HOPE Center
- 285 resided at the Arlington Apartments

Background

Homelessness in Pierce County

During its 2024 annual Point in Time Count (PIT), Pierce County Human Services reported 2,661 individuals experiencing homelessness, either sheltered in emergency shelters or transitional housing, or unsheltered and sleeping outdoors or in places not meant for human habitation.[1] Of that total, 468 were youth and young adults without stable housing or a safe family or guardian. The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is part of the region's effort to end youth and young adult homelessness.

2024 data from Pierce County Human Services shows a 23% increase in homelessness since 2023:

- Overall count increased by 513, from 2,148 in 2023 to 2,661 in 2024
- Youth ages 13-17 increased by 68, from 226 in 2023 to 294 in 2024
- Young adults ages 18-24 increased by eight, from 166 in 2023 to 174 in 2024
- Unaccompanied youth and young adults increased by 22, from 159 in 2023 to 181 in 2024. This category includes young people who were experiencing homelessness while not in the care of a parent or guardian.

Table 1: 2024 Pierce County homeless household composition

Household type	Households	Persons
Without minors	2,025	2,262
With minors	143	483
With only minors	16	16
Total	**2,184**	**2,661**

Source: 2024 Point in Time Count results for Pierce County

Background on the Arlington Drive Youth Campus

Project overview

The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is a unique partnership between the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and two of the nation's premier social service providers for homeless young people. It operates two programs: the CRC/HOPE Center, which opened in June 2020, and Arlington Apartments, which opened in October 2020.

[1] Pierce County Human Services, "2024 Point-in-Time Count Results: Accessible Version. Published April 2024,"

Arlington Apartments

The YSIC operates the 58-unit Arlington Apartments, which provide housing support services to young adults ages 18-24 and any children they may have. Additionally, YSIC operates the LifeSet program at this location, which serves youth aged 17.5 to 22 in the Extended Foster Care system under the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). This program also supports young individuals transitioning out of juvenile justice and behavioral health systems, empowering them to achieve successful adulthood after care.

Success story

The resident was lightly engaged with Arlington case management when they broke up with their romantic partner. Following the breakup, the resident expressed a desire to reconcile with their family in Minnesota.

With that goal in mind, they began working more intentionally with case management. Staff confirmed that returning to Minnesota was safe after speaking with the resident's parents, then helped arrange transportation home. Case management also assisted the resident in securing employment and provided work clothes ahead of the trip, ensuring they had a job waiting upon arrival.

The resident reports that things are going well in Minnesota and that they believe it was the right move for their future.

Resident of Arlington Apartments

New Directions

Community Youth Services (CYS) operates New Directions, a 12-bed Crisis Residential Center (CRC)/HOPE Center facility for homeless youth ages 12-17. The facility provides temporary shelter, permanency planning and family reconciliation when safe and appropriate. The CRC is the initial entry point, serving youth for up to 15 days. Youth needing longer-term support may roll into the HOPE program for extended stays.

Success story

The resident arrived at New Directions through a referral from their probation officer. They had been couch surfing while working with the officer to find a stable placement.

After making it off the waitlist and into the program, the resident struggled to adjust to the rules due to a lack of structure and consistency in their daily routine. Despite this, they were polite and eventually adapted. Even though doing dishes wasn't their favorite task, they completed them reliably when it was their turn.

Since arriving at New Directions, we've ensured the resident attends all appointments, counseling groups and mentor meetings. We've also connected with their school to arrange additional support services.

Although the resident is still with us, we consider them a success story based on feedback from their school counselor and probation officer. Last week, after two weeks in the program, the counselor emailed:

"Just wanted to let you know that the resident has been [at school] every day for about two weeks. They have only been late a handful of times. They are passing three of their classes with C's. Just gave them a handful of snacks and told them to keep it up. Very proud of them!"

The probation officer forwarded a screenshot of the email with the message:

"This is such a huge win! Thank you for providing them stability and structure."

We need to celebrate wins as they happen and recognize that success comes in many forms.

Resident of New Directions

Project funding

Capital funding

THA owns both buildings and acts as the landlord and property manager of the apartments on this project. THA acquired $25 million for construction costs, of which $5 million came from the state capital budget.

Funding for services

State funding

The Legislature provided $4.25 million in the 2023-25 biennial operating budget to the Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth to provide youth services and young adult housing services on a multi-acre youth campus. The initial funding for the project operations began in the 2019-21 biennium.

Tacoma Housing Authority rent subsidies

THA subsidizes the rents at the apartments, making them affordable for homeless young adults. During the reporting period, THA subsidized the apartments at a total cost of $721,474. This subsidy ensures that young people never have to pay more than 30% of their income toward rent, with a minimum monthly rent payment of $75 for those able to work. THA also has hardship policies for those with no income.

Historically, young people who left Arlington Apartments in good standing (that is, were not evicted) received a housing voucher they could use in the private rental market. For young adult residents who did not need intensive support, these vouchers made it possible to move out. Each voucher made an opening at Arlington Apartments available for another young person who might have a higher level of need, while ensuring the previous resident could afford rent after their time at Arlington Apartments. Unfortunately, federal voucher funding has dried up, and THA is currently unable to provide this support for residents hoping to move into homes in the private rental market.

Ongoing Tacoma Housing Authority contributions

THA built Arlington Drive Youth Campus, knowing its ongoing costs would exceed the state's potential support for services. Washington has made a wise investment in Arlington Drive Youth Campus, with THA matching the state's contribution to ongoing operations by nearly 76% this year. (This 76% does not include the cost of housing vouchers THA has provided for Arlington Apartments clients who move out onto the private rental market.) Costs to THA were approximately $883,861 for the term of this report. This includes property management, administration, compliance, facility maintenance, utilities, insurance, permits and tax (among other line items). THA's annual contribution to ongoing operations is more than $1,605,335 when combined with rent subsidies.

Expenditure and results data

Data sources and methods

Homeless Management Information System

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the primary data source for measuring the outcomes of the Arlington Drive Youth Campus. Homeless housing service providers use HMIS to collect and manage data gathered while providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness.

Contract Management System

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

Expenditure and outcomes: May 1, 2024-April 30, 2025

Table 2 shows the number of young people served by Arlington Drive Youth Campus, the number on the waitlist, the number exiting the housing at Arlington Drive Youth Campus and where they went when they left. “Permanent Housing” means a young person left Arlington Drive Youth Campus and moved to a non-time-limited placement. This could mean they leased an apartment or house, moved in (and were added to the lease) with family or friends or otherwise secured safe and stable non-time-limited housing.

Table 2: Outcomes by program

Measure	CYS/New Directions	YSIC/Arlington Apartments
Number of beds/units	12	58
Total participants served	51	151*
Waitlist (approximate)	8	14
Interest list (approximate)	Not applicable	37
Total participants exited	47	39
Exits to permanent housing	21	19

* The 151 figure includes 70 young adult residents and 26 babies/toddlers who are currently housed, 18 young adults and 11 children who have moved out, and 27 non-resident young adults served via LifeSet.

Program outcome highlights and challenges:

- This year, the **Arlington Drive Youth Campus had a 60% success rate in discharging youth to safe and stable housing** (57% at the CRC/HOPE Center, and 67% at Arlington Apartments). This excludes transfers to the HOPE program and other temporary living situations, even if they are safe, because they are not considered stable under current guidance.
- THA is currently unable to issue Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs); the last one issued to a resident of Arlington Apartments was in May 2024. Without this path to independent living, there is a clear correlation to lower successful discharges (96.7% in 2023-2024 vs. 60% in 2024-2025).

Expenditure data

Table 3: CYS expenditure and results data by expense type and funding source

Expenditure type	OHY funding	Other sources	Total
Administrative costs	$55,436.75	$73,388.53	**$128,825.28**
Salaries and benefits	$322,944.87	$418,701.86	**$741,646.73**
Program operations	$19,583.26	$38,128.19	**$57,711.45**
Rental assistance and support services	$3,927.55	$19,017.65	**$22,945.20**
Facility	$41,687.05	$37,795.96	**$79,483.01**
Total program expenditures	$443,579.48	$587,032.19	**$1,030,611.67**
Cost per year per bed/unit**	$36,964.96	Not applicable	**Not applicable**
Cost per night per bed/unit**	$102.68	Not applicable	**Not applicable**

Table 4: YSIC expenditure and results data by expense type and funding source

Expenditure type	OHY funding	Other sources	Total
Administrative costs	$222,367.69	$61,247.68	**$283,615.37**
Salaries and benefits	$1,165,106.44	$21,472.97	**$1,186,579.41**
Program operations	$107,972.38	$20,016.37	**$127,988.75**
Rental assistance and support services	$161,283.67	$6,237.20	**$167,520.87**
Facility	$46,678.63	$53,031.16	**$99,709.79**
Total program expenditures	$1,703,408.81	$162,005.38	**$1,865,414.19**
Cost per year per bed/unit**	$29,369.12	Not applicable	**Not applicable**
Cost per night per bed/unit**	$81.58	Not applicable	**Not applicable**

Table 5: THA expenditure and results data by expense type and funding source

Expenditure type	OHY funding	Other sources	Total
Administrative costs	$0	$545,390.29	**$545,390.29**
Salaries and benefits	$322,944.87	$174,703.81	**$497,648.68**
Program operations	$0	$0	**$127,555.64**
Rental assistance and support services	$0	$721,474	**$721,474**
Facility	$0	$163,766.48	**$163,766.48**
Total program expenditures	$322,944.87	$1,605,334.10	**$1,928,278.97**
Cost per year per bed/unit**	$150.97*	Not applicable	**Not applicable**
Cost per night per bed/unit**	$5.03*	Not applicable	**Not applicable**

* This outlines the charges for all beds and units for the property management services provided by THA.

Narrative reporting

A collection of narrative reports was used to describe program highlights, challenges, barriers and successes within a contractual period. The Office of Homeless Youth administers Performance Progress Reports (PPR), a methodology through which programs can speak to experiences within a project that may not be quantified within the HMIS application. Programs are required to submit a PPR semi-annually.

Arlington Apartments Young Adult Housing Program

Managing the waitlist

Arlington Apartments have been operating at 100% capacity since February 2022. The Y Social Impact Center intentionally limits the waitlist to about 50 individuals to ensure that young people do not have false hope about the availability of living space. Being on the waitlist means that a young person has submitted paperwork for an apartment, whereas the interest list is less formal and does not include paperwork. The young people on the interest list are also referred to Coordinated Entry and other services and housing options.

Once a month, YSIC sends updated eligibility forms to all young adults on the waitlist to verify that they are still interested and eligible. This allows potential tenants to move in quickly once a unit is ready. Each applicant is contacted by email, phone and text, requesting to update the form. If two months pass without response, the young person is removed from the waitlist or interest list. This ensures the waitlist is current and includes as many eligible and interested young people as possible without offering false hope.

As of April 30, 2025:

- **The waitlist includes 14 young people; the interest list is up to 37.**
- **261 young adults applied to and were deemed eligible for housing at Arlington Apartments.**
- **Of those no longer on the waitlist, 103 stopped responding to several months of outreach attempts, and at least 3 found other housing. Another 16 became ineligible due to factors like collection balances, not having required documents or earning too much money.**

Communication and expectations

This year, YSIC has partnered more closely with THA on property management. They requested more consistent notices to residents that they are late on rent, and more frequent pay or vacate notices. Early, frequent communication means that residents realize they owe money when the amount is still something a young person can afford, whereas waiting 4 or 5 months to provide notice results in a total that can feel unachievable. While this change initially resulted in some untimely departures and uncertain outcomes, it also motivated more young people to finally work with case management, find employment and/or start and finish the paperwork for Aged, Blind or Disabled (ABD)/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. They have seen an uptick in residents' desire to secure consistent income via employment or state assistance.

This is part of a larger YSIC effort to provide real-life expectations of adulthood to our young residents. For many, temporary COVID protections and eviction moratoria created an unrealistic impression of what it meant to rent and be an adult for the young people, with few repercussions for nonpayment of rent. YSIC staff also updated rental and utility assistance applications to mimic what renters see in the private market, which gives residents practice filing out applications for life post-Arlington Apartments. Change is slow, but YSIC is confident that residents are growing to understand housing processes better than they did a few months ago.

Serving young parents and their children

In addition to the primary clientele, Arlington Apartments houses children who would otherwise be homeless. During the past year, 31 Arlington Apartment residents were parenting babies or toddlers, so the total number of program beneficiaries was 192: 151 enrolled clients + 41 children of clients. YSIC works closely with community partners to bring in additional family planning and parenting resources, ensuring individuals have the support and agency to make informed decisions in the best interest of their families.

Challenges

Lack of funding has slowed voucher disbursement almost to a stop. Several residents have been waiting for vouchers for nearly a year, and THA has no timeline for when they may resume. This, plus a lack of affordable market-rate housing, means that residents stay in the building longer than they want or need to. Six residents are on the waitlist for a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), dating back to early April 2024. Several others have inquired, but THA has provided a realistic perspective on the likelihood of getting a voucher, so the young people have decided not to pursue a voucher. The bottleneck drastically limits the number of young people THA can help because it prevents apartments from becoming available for new clients.

Mental health is also a challenge. Many of the residents need support for their mental health, but they are reluctant to go to therapy due to stigma around mental health diagnoses. To overcome this barrier, YSIC has worked to bring in alternative wellness resources that can support healing.

Success story

While living at Arlington, a resident obtained employment as a security guard. With this new income, they felt ready to move into the community but weren't sure where to begin.

Case management worked with the resident to apply for a housing voucher, identify eligible units, visit sites and ultimately sign a lease. Staff supported the resident throughout the process, helping them feel empowered and confident in their decision.

The resident later shared that the process was so involved they might have backed out and remained at Arlington if staff hadn't guided them through it. In aftercare check-ins, the resident reports they are doing well, still working in security and now pursuing a college degree.

Resident of Arlington Apartments

New Directions Crisis Residential/HOPE Center

As of July 2024, New Directions has a new call/referral log system that counts every incoming call inquiring if they have an open bed. This includes all email referrals, which is how they get referrals from the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Since rolling out the system, they have received 504 calls inquiring about a bed or making a referral. However, the number of calls is not necessarily the same as the number of youth seeking help, since one person may call multiple days in a row to ask for a bed.

Length of stay and increased self-referrals

Over the past few years, New Directions has seen youth staying at the center longer:

- In 2022, the average length of stay was 18.56 days.
- In 2023, the average length of stay was 44.18 days.
- In 2024, the average length of stay was 27.56 days. The longest stay was 211 days.

The Keeping Families Together Act of 2021 significantly contributed to this shift. This legislation directs DCYF to keep families together unless a child is at imminent risk of physical harm. Before HB 1227, New Directions worked closely with DCYF to provide services to youth who had been removed from their homes — children who might be with New Directions for only four or five days. Now, 67% of the youth are self-referrals, which means they don't have the same available resources, the same support outside the program, or the same connection with their families. This represents a significant change compared to 2022, when 15% of the youth served came via self-referral. Without DCYF support, New Directions is responsible for all care and case management.

New Directions has had to adapt its program to meet very different needs. The longer stays impact case management choices and day-to-day program function. On the positive side, it does mean that they can enroll youth in services such as counseling because they know they will have more stability. They can also connect with their schools to ensure services are in place for clients to succeed there, too.

Seventeen year olds

A consistent issue is the number of 17 year olds being referred to New Directions. State systems often underserve them, likely due to limited resources and there are not enough placements for youth of this age in foster homes. State systems also do not have sufficient capacity to support youth in crisis who are not likely to be placed in foster care. Yet these teens cannot apply for many services (including housing) until they are 18, resulting in a significant gap in support. To help meet this need, New Directions has been providing longer-term placement to provide some stability. That said, New Directions must be highly creative and lean on community partners to set up continued stability for life after they turn 18.

Success story

In July, we discharged a youth who had been a New Directions client for 321 days. The resident spent nearly their entire 17th year in the program and was discharged on their 18th birthday.

They arrived at New Directions in September 2023 after being referred by their school. Originally from Latin America, the resident had been in the United States for only a short time when they found themselves in need of housing. Upon discharge, they transitioned into a Transitional Living Program under Extended Foster Care, with support from an immigration lawyer working to help them obtain legal status.

Staff worked with the resident on job skills, education and independent living. Their school was highly supportive, and we were grateful for the collaboration throughout the resident's stay. After many inquiries, calls and emails, the resident ended up with three legal advocates—LCYC, DCYF and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project.

We maintained regular communication with the resident's mother in Latin America, who consistently supported their path to life in the United States. G continues to do well, remains in school and is still enrolled in their housing program. They hope to secure immigration documents so they can begin working.

The resident wants to become a mechanic, and the school is helping them explore technical education options for after graduation. We're proud of their progress and hopeful for their future.

Resident New Directions

Personal electronics

At the end of October, in response to updates to Chapter 110-145 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), CYS revised its protocol regarding youth personal electronics.[2] Under the old rules, youth were not allowed to keep their phones and other personal electronics in the program, leading to many youth refusing services outright. Even though devices would be kept safe in the case manager's office, potential clients felt an urgency to keep their phones and devices with them for reassurance. Under the new rules, youth can possess and use their personal electronics in the program. There is a learning curve for everyone, but so far it is going well. In addition to providing youth with more agency, this change allows youth to stay connected to their support systems all the time.

New staff

In last year's report, CYS shared that staff shortages severely impacted their capacity to serve youth. However, this has shifted in the last year; since May 2024, New Directions has hired 12 new team members. Of these, three are full-time, one is part-time, and the rest are on call. The entire New Directions team has had a hand in training them and ensuring their questions are answered. They are an asset to the New Directions team. Now that they are fully staffed, they can serve more youth, and they hope to use the full capacity of the program by the end of summer.

Tacoma Housing Authority

THA's Property Management Department has noted that residents are moving toward greater accountability in rent payment, employment and vehicle and pet registration, as required. The apartments were leased during the pandemic, so accountability for the lease the residents signed has been addressed as they have moved forward

[2]Washington State Legislature, "Washington Administrative Code Chapter 110-145,"

from the pandemic. The property management staff reports seeing the residents take more accountability and create better relationships with staff. Staff have witnessed a complete change in the feeling of the building as Property Management continues to work with the Y Social Impact Center to educate, assist and move the residents toward their goals. Staff report that residents who have arrived at THA's housing from severe traumatic life events, some with minors in their household, are transitioning from survival mode to planning for their future.

Community partnerships

New Directions has worked with many community partners to support and enrich the lives of participants:

- Hilltop Artists, Tacoma Boat Builders and Tacoma Public Libraries get the youth involved in the community via summer courses/programs and other activities.
- New Directions works closely with other local shelter providers, as they sometimes cannot place all the referred youth. Providers like Coffee Oasis work with them to find nearby placements.
- Coleman and Associates facilitates Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training for CYS leadership.
- Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYF) and the Pierce County attorney provide legal representation for the youth.
- New Directions is also integral to the Pierce County Youth Engagement Services (YES) program. During the quarter, it connected with the Metropolitan Development Council (MDC) and explored how these organizations can partner more.

YSIC has a robust array of community partnerships at Arlington Drive Youth Campus that help surround the residents with support. Partnerships range from one-off presentations on life skills programming to continuous weekly engagement:

- Our Sisters House and YOU-ISH: These grassroots by-and-for organizations partnered with YSIC through a WA Department of Health grant to deliver healthy relationship education, healing circles, mindset shifting and confidence growth twice a week over three months for a cohort of residents. So far, two cohorts have wrapped up and a third cohort is underway. This program has seen some of the best results in terms of healing and growth of residents. All participants were asked to go through the program again, and the friendships developed in sessions are still blossoming.
- YSIC Behavioral Health, Comprehensive Life Resources, Community Health and Greater Lakes: Partners provide 1:1 therapy for residents.
- Ted Brown Music, Henna for Fun, Hilltop Artists and a yoga therapist: These partners provide wellness support outside of standard 1:1 therapy for clients who need different types of mental health support.
- DSHS Mobile Outreach, Labor Works, WorkSource, Northwest Education Access, Orion Industries, Rebuilding Hope, Oasis Youth Center and Washington State Employees Credit Union are just a few of the partners offering resources, education and training through our life skills programming.

YSIC has worked hard to build protective environments that allow young people in the building to thrive. Adding Our Sisters House and the YOU-ISH wellness cohort has improved the sense of community even more. They see residents caring for each other and the community in a new and deeper way. An example is residents stepping in to help another resident when a former partner was harassing them. Residents also protected case managers when guests were not acting in line with the building norms. Best of all, they have seen residents lean on each other through similar life experiences.