

WISe Length of Stay

Tailored to the Needs of Youth and Families

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The Washington State Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISe) program provides intensive behavioral health services and supports in home and community settings for Medicaid-eligible children and youth (ages 0 to 20) with complex behavioral health needs, and their families. The goal of WISe is for eligible youth to live and thrive in their homes and communities, as well as to avoid or reduce costly and disruptive out-of-home placements while receiving needed behavioral health treatment services.

Q *How long should youth remain in the WISe program?*

• There is no one-size-fits-all answer:

The length of stay in WISe must be determined by medical necessity.¹

- Eligible children and youth should stay in the program as long as this level of service is both needed and desired by youth and families. The length of stay should also be sufficient to facilitate transition into a lower level of care.

Program data indicate that length of stay is being appropriately tailored to the needs of individual youth.²

- Data show that length of stay in the WISe program is a function of how rapidly youth show improvement, consistent with WISe services being tailored to the needs and progress of individual youth. Youth whose outcomes improve more rapidly tend to exit the WISe program earlier, and youth who make more gradual progress tend to exit the program later.

Average length of stay in WISe is approximately 9 months, but some youth stay for a shorter time and others stay substantially longer.²

- Variation in length of stay for different WISe clients is expected, given the need to tailor the program to the needs of youth and families. Data also indicates some regional variation in length of stay, which may reflect differences in caseload mix (i.e., different severity and type of behavioral health needs, other family needs, and preferences of youth and families in different regions), differing program structure (e.g., shorter programs with a more intensive service package or vice versa), or different stages of program development.³ Despite regional variation in length of stay, youth participating in WISe in every region are making important gains in the program, both measured by assessment data (e.g., reductions in emotional control problems) as well as administrative data (e.g., reductions in school absences and suspensions or expulsions).⁴

¹ See WISe Program, Policy, and Procedure Manual at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/billers-and-providers/wise-wraparound-intensive-services-manual.pdf>.

² See WISe Length of Stay and CANS Outcomes, updated January 2020, at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/wise-length-of-stay-and-cans-outcomes.pdf>.

³ See WISe Service Characteristics Report at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/behavioral-health-recovery/wraparound-intensive-services-wise-0>. Note that length of stay statistics are reported here as medians, which tend to be smaller than averages.

⁴ See WISe Dashboard (section “WISe Outcomes”) and WISe Educational Outcome Measures at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/behavioral-health-recovery/wraparound-intensive-services-wise-0>.