

The Bridge

The Bridge is a statewide collaboration dedicated to reducing youth & young adults experiencing homelessness with collaboration between community-based housing providers, behavioral health discharge planners, other community-based professionals, and young people with lived experience of housing instability or behavioral health condition. This group offers developmentally appropriate trainings and resources to increase housing stability for unaccompanied young people.

Behavioral health settings include:

- Acute care facilities, including hospitals and evaluation and treatment facilities.
- Substance use residential treatment facilities
- Children's Long-Term Inpatient Program (CLIP) facilities
- State hospitals (Western and Eastern State Hospitals)
- Long Term Civil Commitment (LTCC) facilities

Goals

The Bridge will empower young people and their supporters by:

- **Providing Cross-System Coordination and Training:** Developing relationships among service providers by providing training, education, and awareness of resources, as well as culturally and developmentally responsive best practices for young people returning to the community from a behavioral health inpatient treatment program.
- **Returning to Community Customized Planning:** Strengthening the process by customizing a return to community plan for young people who face having unstable or no housing upon discharge from inpatient behavioral health programs.
- **Envisioning Lasting Reforms and Securing Resources:** Setting goals for future education and systemic change, identifying policies and practices that could be reformed one, three, or five years from the present.

Trainings can be found on their [website](#).

82-0466 (9/24)

History and context

In 2018, the Washington State legislature enacted [SB 6560](#) to ensure systems of care discharge young people to safe, stable housing. According to recent data, approximately 75 percent of young people in Washington State who become homeless within a year of leaving a system of care (including foster care, criminal justice, and behavioral health) were previously discharged from inpatient behavioral health programs. The Bridge Program is designed to change this trend so that young people who have the courage to enter treatment have safe housing and services when they return to community.

In July 2021, HCA completed a report to establish best practice recommendations for strong, supportive communities for successful transitions from inpatient behavioral health facilities. Within this report, you will find that HCA recommended educational programs to identify best practices for transitional aged youth discharges from inpatient facilities to discharge planners, Managed Care Organizations (MCO), and community partners that work with young people during this stressful time.

This report identifies the importance of provider and MCO collaboration with “warm hand offs” during care coordination. This is to identify follow-up care, housing vouchers, natural supports, education, employment supports and other basic needs such as food, ID cards etc. Additionally, this report emphasized the importance of educating community providers on inclusivity, trauma informed care, developmentally appropriate goal setting, identifying and addressing the stigma related to youth homelessness, and to identify systematic gaps that need additional innovation and support.

Budget

\$250,000 for FY24 & FY25 from General State Fund ESSB 5693, section 215, subsection 127 with additional funding per Proviso CBH 215 (81), 5187.

Totaling in \$500,000.

Reports

- [Safe and supportive transition to stable housing for youth ages 16-25, Best practice recommendations for strong supportive communities](#)
- [Improving stability for youth exiting systems of care](#)
- Unaccompanied youth, publicly funded system of care RCW [43.330720](#); Homeless youth RCW [4.330.700](#)
- [SB 6560](#)
- [Progress report SB6560](#)

Participants

- Discharge Planners
- Case Managers & Managed Care Organizations
- Young people with lived experience
- Housing & Community Providers

How to get involved

[The Bridge Program](#) meets monthly. To learn more or get involved with the group, contact Jim Theofelis at: jim@northstaradvocates.org.

Key partners

North Star Advocates, Mockingbird Society, A Way Home Washington & Building Changes

More information

Contact: HCADBHRInformation@hca.wa.gov

Rachel Baxter, MS

Transition Age Youth Stable Housing Policy Lead