



# BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION SERVICES

Semi-annual Report to the Legislature





Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

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## Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with **HB 1109**, section 225(s)(ii), which requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to do the following:

Beginning Jan. 1, 2020 and continuing through the 2019-2021 fiscal biennium, DCYF will provide semi-annual reports to the governor and appropriate legislative committees that include the number of in-state behavior rehabilitation services providers and licensed beds, as well as the number of out-of-state behavior rehabilitation services placements. DCYF will also include a comparison of these numbers to the same metrics expressed as an average over the first six months of calendar year 2019.

## Introduction

In 2019, the Behavior Rehabilitation Services (BRS) budget was increased by the Legislature based on a BRS rate study completed by a third party contractor. As a result of this study and subsequent budget increase, the BRS rate structure was overhauled and new rates for providers began Oct. 1, 2019. The new rate structure was intended to stabilize current providers and to increase the number of providers and BRS beds within Washington State's contracted BRS provider community. The BRS program has had a slow decline of providers over the years due to many factors, including the reimbursement rate. With the decreasing capacity within the state, youth that needed the intensive level of care that BRS provides were being placed in Out-of-State Intensive Residential Child Specific Contracts (OSIRCSC). The number of youth in out-of-state placements grew in the last six years, hitting a high of 84 youth in August 2018. DCYF took a multi-pronged approach to bring these youth back to Washington State. This approach included, but was not limited to:

- Higher level of approval required prior to a youth being placed in an out-of-state facility – DCYF added the statewide director of field operations to the approval process.
- Adding performance outcomes to the BRS contract – as of Oct. 1, 2019, the BRS contract requires providers to accept 90% of referrals.
- Increasing community engagement for youth placed out of state or at risk of out-of-state placements.
- The Department of Commerce issued a \$2 million grant for BRS facility providers to help them renovate current space to increase BRS beds. All the money was awarded and DCYF expects to see an increase of approximately 30 beds. The Department of Commerce grant was renewed and DCYF is working with them to award new grants to new applicants.
- DCYF has a Child Placing Agency (CPA) licensing incentive – for each new foster home that a CPA licenses, it gets a one-time flat fee payment of \$191.87.
- DCYF paid an incentive to BRS providers who increased their BRS capacity, using proviso funding. This funding was available for only one year. The incentive payments were minimal and did not result in any significant increase to capacity or utilization.

## Baseline Averages

### In-state providers, number of beds and out-of-state youth numbers (Jan. – June 2019)

Measuring licensed capacity is not always accurate or meaningful. DCYF does not contract for a specific number of BRS beds. BRS is paid as a fee for service and no provider is guaranteed referrals. DCYF contracts for a service array, which can be provided in-home with parents or legal guardians, treatment foster home or a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (formerly referred to as a facility). Licensed capacity for these service types does not equate to available or useable capacity. A BRS treatment foster home may be licensed for six children, but only willing to take one or two (the contract limits this capacity to three BRS youth).

Foster parents, whether licensed by a contracted CPA or by the state of Washington Licensing Division (LD), are volunteers, and DCYF cannot require them to take any youth into their home or be at full capacity. Further, a CPA can have both a non-BRS CPA contract and a BRS contract. The foster care resources for CPAs having both contracts can become diluted between the two contracted services. The number of licensed foster homes is not necessarily an indicator of the number of BRS treatment foster homes.

BRS Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) do have licensed capacities, however, this does not always equate to useable resources. Contracted agencies under one program license may have multiple contracts with different state agencies or take private pay. As an example, this may mean that DCYF can only place eight youth in a program licensed for 20. In addition, contractors may keep their programs licensed at full capacity, but only have enough staff to supervise nine youth instead of 12 as the license capacity allows.

In light of the above information, measuring the actual number of youth served in these programs and how the number of youth increase or decrease is a more accurate method. Payment data is the current most accurate method to determine utilization and the number of youth being served. With the previous rate structure, determining the number of program types with specific rates was extremely difficult, with questionable accuracy. Service rates were not separated by a program type. Under the new rate structure, rates are based on the different BRS program types (QRTP, Treatment Foster Care, or In-home) and this information can be pulled from payment records with a higher level of accuracy.

## BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION SERVICES

In-State BRS Provider Count			
Dates	Type	Count of Providers	Licensed Number of BRS Beds
Average Jan.–June 2019	QRTP	21	326
	Treatment Foster Care	17	N/A*
As of Oct. 8, 2019	QRTP	21	326
	Treatment Foster Care	15	N/A*
As of June 30, 2020**	QRTP	20	306
	Treatment Foster Care	15	N/A*
Number of Youth Placed Out of State			
Average Jan.–June 2019	64		
As of Oct. 8, 2019	33		
As of June 30, 2020**	25		

\*Not available because there is not an accurate way to count the number of beds available in treatment foster care.

\*\*New information from previously submitted report.

The decrease of one QRTP provider with the corresponding decrease of 20 beds is due to a provider choosing not to contract to continue providing BRS services. DCYF anticipates that within the next six months, there will be additional providers licensed to increase available capacity.

### Conclusion

DCYF’s goal is to have all youth in an appropriate Washington State placement and to return out-of-state youth to Washington as soon as safely possible. However, there will always be cases where out-of-state placement is in a child’s best interest (e.g., placement closer to identified out-of-state family member or a special treatment program not available in the state of Washington). The 25 youth currently placed out of state as of June 30, 2020, have an average length of stay (LOS) of 9.1 months. Youth returned to Washington (since September 2017) had an average LOS of 12 months. DCYF continues to work to reduce the number of youth placed out of state. Although there has been a reduction in overall BRS capacity, the new rate structure is intended to retain these resources and attract new providers. Further, DCYF hopes the ongoing Commerce capacity building grant will eventually result in an increase to placement resources.