



Arlington Drive Youth Campus

2024 annual legislative report per 2023-2025 operating budget
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Report to the Legislature

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Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Legislative mandate

This report is submitted pursuant to section 129 (14) of the [2023-25 biennial operating budget](#):

(14) \$2,125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$2,125,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office of homeless youth to contract with one or more nonprofit organizations to provide youth services and young adult housing on a multi-acre youth campus located in the city of Tacoma. Youth services include, but are not limited to, HOPE beds and crisis residential centers to provide temporary shelter and permanency planning for youth under the age of 18. Young adult housing includes, but is not limited to, rental assistance and case management for young adults ages 18 to 24. 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.

Overview

After receiving the \$4.24 million biennial appropriation from the Legislature to continue funding the Arlington Drive Youth Campus, Commerce renewed its contract with the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) to continue operating the campus with its partners Community Youth Services and the YMCA Social Impact Center. The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is the largest housing model for youth and young adults in Pierce County and is a regional asset serving young people in crisis throughout the Puget Sound area.

Other jurisdictions have seen the model's success and are implementing similar features to build and/or provide new housing options for young people in crisis. The campus opened in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, with young people moving into both the apartments and Crisis Residential Center in the third and fourth quarters of that year. Services were on site before young people moved into their units, and service providers had months to fine-tune services and prepare to serve young people.

Program highlights

The due date of this report does not allow the reporting period to align with fiscal year dates. To capture a full 12 months of program data, the reporting period is May 1, 2023-April 30, 2024.

Expenditures

- \$2,140,460 in state expenditures
- \$1,551,537 from Tacoma Housing Authority in rent subsidies and operational costs

Youth and young adults served

- Served 228 youth and young adults:
 - 37 at the CRC/HOPE center
 - 191 at living Arlington Apartments and/or LifeSet
- The Tacoma Housing Authority's Arlington Drive Youth Campus has a 96.7% success rate in discharging youth to stable housing (96% at the CRC/HOPE center and 97% at Arlington Apartments).

Background

Homelessness in Pierce County

During its [2024 annual Point in Time Count](#), Pierce County Human Services reported 2,661 individuals as sheltered homeless (sleeping in emergency shelters or transitional housing) or unsheltered (sleeping outside or living in places not meant for human habitation). This is a 23% increase in homelessness since the 2023 count. Of those reported as homeless in the 2024 count:

- 18% (468) of the individuals were youth and young adults (the same percentage as counted in 2023).
 - 11% (294) were youth, ages 13-17
 - 7% (174) were young adults, ages 18-24
- 7% (181) were unaccompanied youth and young adults, meaning they were experiencing homelessness while not in the care of a parent or guardian.

Hundreds of Pierce County youth and young adults are homeless and/or without safe family or guardians. Many leave Pierce County because they are unable to secure stable housing locally. The Arlington Drive Youth Campus is part of the regional solution to ending youth and young adult homelessness.

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 to homeless young people, operating two programs:

- Community Youth services (CYS) operates **New Directions**, a 12-bed Crisis Residential Center (CRC)/HOPE Center facility for homeless youth ages 12-17, providing temporary shelter, permanency planning and family reconciliation when safe and appropriate.
- The Y Social Impact Center (YSIC) operates the 58-unit **Arlington Apartments**, which provide housing support services to young adults ages 18-24. Services also support the children of young adult residents.

The CRC/HOPE center opened in June 2020, and the apartments opened in October 2020.

Project funding

Capital funding

The THA acts as the landlord on this project, as well as owner of both buildings and property manager of the apartments. THA pulled together \$25 million for construction costs:

- The state Legislature invested \$5 million from the capital budget
- The City of Tacoma contributed \$2.8 million
- Pierce County contributed \$670,000
- The remaining \$16.53 million came from private sources, tax credit investors, commercial debt and the THA

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 operations of the project began in the 2019-21 biennium.

Tacoma Housing Authority rent subsidies and contribution

The THA also subsidizes rent on the apartments, making them affordable for homeless young adults. The THA subsidized the apartments at a total cost of \$653,987 during the reporting period. This subsidy ensures that young people never have to pay more than 30% of their income toward rent, often meaning they pay as little as \$75 per month. Young people who leave Arlington Apartments in good standing (that is, are not evicted) will also leave with a housing voucher they can use in the private rental market. These vouchers allow young adult residents (and their dependents) who do not need intensive support services to leave, making the apartment available for another young person who may have a higher level of need while ensuring the previous resident can afford rent after their time at Arlington Apartments.

The THA built the Arlington Drive Youth Campus knowing that its ongoing costs would exceed the state's potential support for services funding. The THA matches the state's contribution to ongoing operations by nearly 70%. This 70% does not account for the cost of the housing THA will continue to subsidize as young people move out into the private rental market with a housing voucher. Additional costs to the THA were approximately \$897,550 for the term of this report. This includes property management, administration, compliance, facility maintenance, utilities, insurance, permits, and tax (among other line items). Combined with rent subsidies, THA's annual contribution to ongoing operations was \$1,551,537.

Young Adult Housing Program – Arlington Apartments

The Arlington Apartments have been operating at 100% capacity since February 2022. The YSIC intentionally limits the waitlist to 40 to 50 young people to ensure they are not given false hope of availability. Young people on the waitlist have submitted paperwork, while a separate interest list is less formal and does not include paperwork.

As of the date of this report:

- There are 43 young people on the waitlist and 19 on an interest list.
- During this reporting period, 127 young adults applied to and were deemed eligible for housing at Arlington Apartments.
- Of those no longer on the waitlist, 27 stopped responding to several months of outreach attempts, 11 found other housing, and 27 became ineligible based on updated information.

Managing the waitlist

The YSIC sends out updated eligibility forms once per month to all young adults on the waitlist to verify if 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 with a request to update the form. Young people who don't respond are removed from the waitlist or interest list after more than two months of no response, ensuring the waitlist is current and as many eligible and interested young people are in the queue as possible (without offering false hope).

In the last year, the YSIC had a 300% increase in referrals from community partners, reaching into King and Thurston counties, indicating both a higher need in every community and recognition from cross-county partners that the Arlington Drive Youth Campus is a significant part of the housing solution for young people.

Serving young parents and their children

In the last year, approximately 50% of the young adults living at Arlington Apartments are parenting babies or toddlers. The Arlington Apartments is not only housing young adults, but also a new generation of children who would otherwise be homeless. The YSIC works closely with young people 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.

Increased behavioral health needs

Growing mental health issues require support beyond the capacity of on-site therapists and behavioral health services. Many young people are experiencing severe co-occurring mental health issues and are not accessing services that match their needs. Many are skeptical of traditional mental/behavioral health providers and 1:1 talk therapy.

Fentanyl has become a significant concern with the vulnerable young adult population, including residents at Arlington Apartments. YSIC staff are working with young people using a harm-reduction approach, offering access to substance use disorder professionals, training on how to administer Naloxone, access to free Naloxone, and psychoeducation on risks of drug use. YSIC and the THA have worked with the Tacoma Police Department to identify dealers and have them trespassed from the building, and to increase patrols near Arlington Drive.

Crisis Residential/HOPE Center – New Directions

New Directions, the Crisis Residential/HOPE Center, has had a busy year with significant challenges for both the staff and residents. Per licensing regulations, staffing ratios are one adult to four young people, meaning that to house 12 young people at once, CYS would need to hire one additional person per shift, without additional funding, to meet licensing requirements. This has resulted in significant funding gaps and limited the maximum capacity to eight young people.

Increased behavioral health needs

New Directions is housing youth with significant needs and behavioral challenges. Given the acuity of the youth staying at New Directions, staff need more capacity than a one-to-four ratio allows, which ultimately makes it difficult to even house eight youth at a time. That said, CYS and New Directions staff have been pivoting to meet these challenges and new/different regulations.

Longer lengths of stay

Young people staying at New Directions have needed to stay for longer lengths of time. In 2022, the average length of stay was 18.56 days. During this reporting period, that average length of stay has increased to 44.18 days, nearly three times as long. CYS attributes the longer length of stay to new legislation ([Chapter 151, Laws of 2023](#)) that passed in 2023 which lengthened the allowable amount of time a youth could stay at a shelter, as well as the lack of programs in Pierce County that offer the option of overnight stays for young people under 18 years old.

CYS has adapted to these changes to serve youth for longer, affecting their approach to case management. With a longer stay, young people can enroll in services like counseling and school-based programs, since they will be staying in one place for a longer period.

Referrals for older youth

New Directions has seen an increase in referrals for youth who are 17 years old. Typically, those young people are not getting services from the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and they are not yet eligible for many supports, like longer-term housing, until they are 18. New Directions staff have become a longer-term placement to provide stability, and have been working diligently to support young people as they plan to transition to adult systems.

Community partnerships

In the last year, New Directions was fortunate to work with new community partners, such as Hilltop Artists, Tacoma Boat Builders, Tacoma Public Libraries and others. Enrichment activities like taking art classes from artists and learning about building wooden boats have been incredibly impactful for youth at New Directions, exposing them to more of what the world has to offer and helping them find pro-social activities of interest.

Expenditure and results data

The table below shows how many young people were served by Arlington Drive Youth Campus and explains how many young people are on the waitlist, how many young people exited the housing from Arlington Drive Youth Campus, and where they went when they left. "Permanent housing" means that a young person left Arlington Drive Youth Campus and moved to a non-time limited placement. This could mean they leased their own apartment/house, moved in (and were added to the lease) with family or friends, or secured safe and stable housing without time limits in another manner.

Table 1: Outcomes by program

Measure	New Directions	Arlington Apartments
Total client enrollments	37	191*
Waitlist (approximate)	N/A	19
Interest list (approximate)	N/A	43
Total clients exited	32	24
Exits to permanent housing	20	12
Family reconciliation (under 18 at enrollment)	11	N/A
Cost per bed	\$559.31/youth/night	\$8,054.59/client/annually

* The 191 figure includes 68 current young adult residents, 29 babies/toddlers, 15 young adults who moved out, 9 children who moved out, 35 non-resident young adults served via LifeSet, and 35 children served in LifeSet.

The table below shows expenses incurred/billed between May 1, 2023, and April 30, 2024. This timeframe does not align with the state's fiscal year, so some of the funds noted below were billed during the previous fiscal year and most funds during the current year. That said, expenses were relatively consistent throughout the last two years, so the table is a reliable indication of a full year's worth of expenses and reimbursement from the state.

Table 2: Expenditure data by expense type, May 1, 2023-April 30, 2024

Expenditure type	CYS (New Directions)	YSIC (Arlington Apartments)	THA	Total
Administrative costs	\$63,395.17	\$142,760.53	\$ -	\$206,155.70
Salaries and benefits	\$406,292.28	\$1,025,490.81	\$130,794.64	\$1,562,577.73
Program operations	\$20,454.54	\$95,734.62	\$ -	\$116,189.16
Rental assistance and support services	\$3,271.17	\$201,035.83	\$ -	\$204,307.00
Facility	\$28,912.46	\$22,318.34	\$ -	\$51,230.80
Program expenditure	\$522,325.62	\$1,487,340.13	\$130,794.64	\$2,140,460.39

Success stories

CYS provided the following success stories. The actual names of clients were changed and the stories have been edited so clients remain unidentifiable.

"E"

E arrived to us directly from juvenile detention, and he was to turn 18 in just 12 days. When E arrived, he settled in and quickly got to work with the case managers. E and the New Directions team made a list of things he needed and prioritized them. The top of E's list was recovering or applying for new documentation, like his ID and securing housing for when he was 18. Documentation was submitted and the search for housing began, meanwhile, E was making friends and applying for jobs. E said that before he was in detention he had been living with mainly adults and in questionable situations, so it was nice to be around people his own age and adults who care. We were able to secure a photocopy of his birth certificate and work with a McKinney Vento liaison to apply for an ID and E went to the DMV just days before his birthday. Also, due to our amazing case managers and community partners, a bed was secured for him at a young adult shelter just a few miles away. We were able to get the two things on the top of his priority list done, but E was able to accomplish so much more in his short stay with New Directions. He made friends that he has stayed in touch with since leaving. E returned to school and is on track to graduate. E has applied for a few jobs and mastered the bus system in Tacoma. He also got to celebrate his 18th birthday with his favorite meal, cake, and people singing happy birthday to him! Our team developed an after-care plan with E as well, we have stayed in touch with him, and overall he is doing well.

"N"

N was a 13-year old who had been in state dependent care since they were very young and had bounced around between relative placements, foster homes, Behavioral Rehabilitation Services facilities and various respite placements. When they were referred, it seemed like this was their last option if they wanted to remain in Washington, which was preferred because they had begun visiting with mom again and she was in the area. N brought a lot of energy and attitude to New Directions. N was with us for two months and in that time, they mainly liked to play video games but also enjoyed playing basketball and telling jokes. N also had their fair share of behaviors and our staff did a great job building rapport with them and learning the best way to re-direct or reflect on the behaviors after the fact. However, one day after a visit with mom went poorly, N returned to New Directions and damaged several items and property in their room. After this, our case managers and staff were confident that this was just a bad moment and it wasn't going to be a regular set of behaviors. After speaking to N when they calmed down, they agreed to enroll in counselling (this is after years of refusing). In the end, N was actually reunified with mom after a new judge made the decision, which caught everyone off guard. N was thrilled when they received the news and mom even came with their social worker that day to help them pack. Even though N refused aftercare services, their mom took our cards and thanked everyone as they drove away.

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 Department of Commerce contract managers use to create, track, and maintain contract and programmatic budget and reimbursement requests. CMS provided data on program expenditures.

Narrative reports

A collection of narrative reports was used to speak to program highlights, challenges, barriers and successes within a contractual period. The Office of Homeless Youth administers Performance Progress Reports (PPR). The PPR is 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 quarterly.