



BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION SERVICES SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE

Report to the Legislature



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary..... 1

Introduction 1

Baseline Averages 1

 In-state providers, number of beds, and out-of-state youth numbers (January – June 2019) 1

Conclusion..... 3

Child Welfare Programs and
Finance Division

Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with HB 1109, section 225(s)(ii), which requires the Washington State 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.
- Using proviso funding, DCYF paid an incentive to BRS providers who increased their BRS capacity. This funding was only available for one year. The incentive payments were minimal and did not result in any significant increase in capacity or utilization.

Baseline Averages

In-state providers, number of beds, and out-of-state youth numbers (January – 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

BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION SERVICES SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE

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).

Whether licensed by a contracted CPA or by the state of Washington Licensing Division (LD), foster parents 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. For 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 licensed capacity is not always accurate or meaningful. 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.

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*
As of Nov. 6, 2020	QRTP	23	333
	Treatment Foster Care	15	N/A*
As of April 22, 2021	QRTP	24	338
	Treatment Foster Care	16	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	
As of Nov. 6, 2020		13	
As of April 22, 2021		9	

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

The increase in QRTP beds is a result of one new agency contracting for BRS QRTPs. We also were able to bring on a new BRS TFC provider in this cycle. DCYF anticipates that within the next six months, there will be an addition of one new facility provider contracting with DCYF, adding at least 5-17 new QRTP beds. They have completed the application process and are finishing the licensing process. There is also another BRS TFC provider that has submitted an application to provide TFC BRS. We still have an existing BRS TFC provider that is working on licensing five QRTP beds. We have also been approached by another new facility-based provider that would provide treatment specific to Sexually Aggressive Youth (SAY) in their five-bed facility. That will likely take at least six months as this program has not acquired property or started the application or licensing process.

Conclusion

DCYF's goal is to have all youth in an appropriate Washington State placement and 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 members or a special treatment program not available in the state of Washington). The nine youth currently placed out-of-state as of April 22, 2021, have an average length of stay (LOS) of 4.7 months. Youth returned to Washington (since September 2017) had an average LOS of 11.9 months. DCYF continues to work to reduce the number of youth placed out-of-state. We have seen gains in our in-state capacity, and the new rate structure seems to have contributed to this. Further, DCYF hopes the ongoing Commerce capacity building grant will eventually result in an increase in placement resources. DCYF will need to look at the rates again to make sure they are still meeting the needs of providers and adjust the rates accordingly.