REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Enhanced Respite Services for Children Ages 8-20

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5950
Section 203 1(n)
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Executive Summary

Enhanced Respite Services provide short-term community-based stabilization as an alternative to using respite services in an institutional setting. These services support behavioral stabilization of the child, provide a break in caregiving and offer families and an opportunity to partner with the state in the development of a plan that helps the child to remain in their family home.

The legislature has supported this important resource for Washington families since 2015.

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5167, Section 203 1(n) directs Developmental Disabilities Community Services to continue to develop an annual respite utilization report. The report must include:

1) The number of children who have used enhanced respite services in the preceding year.
2) The location and number of days per month that each respite bed was occupied.

Funding Timeline

- 2015-2017: Initial funds allocated to develop and implement eight enhanced respite beds.
- 2017-2019: Biennial budget allocated additional funds to support Enhanced Respite Services.
- 2019-2021: Funds allocated develop an additional five enhanced respite beds.
- 2021-2023: The Legislature approved a 40% increase in the Enhanced Respite Service daily rate.
- 2023-2025: Biennial budget maintained current funding for the program.
- 2025-2027: Biennial budget approved a 15% increase for fiscal year 2026 and an additional 3% increase for fiscal year 2027.

"Your staff have been incredible! Thank you, this kind of support is so appreciated. How do we start planning for our respite for next year?" –Parent of Enhanced Respite Service Youth

Background and Context

In 2011, the Washington State Legislature amended Chapter 71A.20 RCW and directed the Department of Social and Health Services to establish community crisis stabilization services. The bill further directed that no person under age 21 may be admitted to receive services at a Residential Habilitation Center, "unless no service options are available in the community," and unless "such admission is limited to the provision of short-term respite or crisis stabilization services."

In 2019, DDCS reached out to families as a part of the No Paid Services Report (2021) to see what services people are interested in and need. Reporting data show that families identify out-of-home respite and behavioral services as some of their greatest needs enabling them to continue to care for their child in the family home. Out-of-home respite provides therapeutic support rooted in positive behavior support principles for families raising children with complex behavioral support needs.

The legislature has appropriated funds for the establishment of 13 enhanced respite beds for children with developmental disabilities. These services are intended to provide families and caregivers with the opportunity for behavioral stabilization of the child, and the ability to collaborate with Washington state to develop a person-centered service plan that allows the child to remain in their family home while also offering a break in caregiving in direct alignment with DSHS' mission to "partner with people to access support, care, and resources."

"This new home is a testament to the tireless work and dedication to care for children and youth who are medically fragile. According to The Children's Respite Home of America, there are only six identified pediatric respite homes for medically fragile youth in the U.S.A., and Pope's Kids Place is one of them."
– New Enhanced Respite Services Provider

Occupancy Rates and Total Clients Served

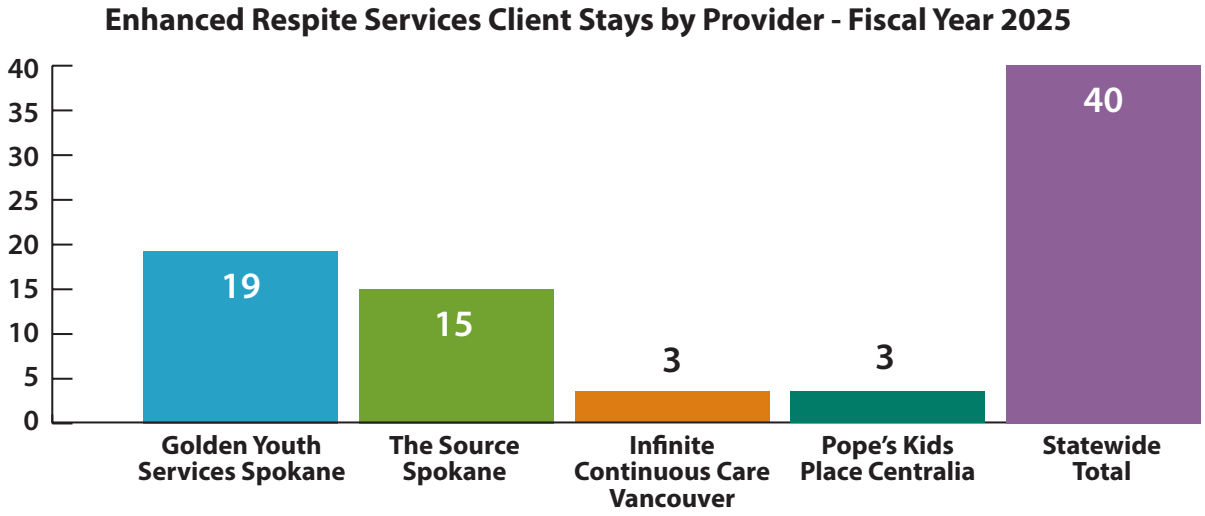
The table below illustrates enhanced respite bed occupancy for FY25. During FY23, Developmental Disabilities Community Services developed two new providers and established five additional enhanced respite beds to serve eligible youths. These provider contracts were maintained through FY25. Additional providers were developed and contracted in FY25, bringing the total number of enhanced respite beds to nine.

Enhanced Respite Services Occupancy Rates by Quarter - Fiscal Year 2025

Location	Quarter 1 Jul-Sep 24	Quarter 2 Oct-Dec 24	Quarter 3 Jan-Mar 25	Quarter 4 Apr-Jun 25	Total Year
Golden Youth Services Bed A	79%	95%	85%	87%	86%
Golden Youth Services Bed B	79%	95%	77%	60%	78%
Golden Youth Services Bed C	54%	89%	10%	62%	54%
The Source Bed A	99%	91%	88%	63%	85%
The Source Bed B	99%	87%	88%	62%	84%
Pope's Kids Place Bed A	N/A	N/A	N/A	67%	67%
Pope's Kids Place Bed B	N/A	N/A	N/A	3%	3%
Infinite Continuous Care Bed A	N/A	N/A	48%	84%	84%
Infinite Continuous Care Bed B	N/A	N/A	N/A	32%	32%
Statewide	82%	91%	66%	58%	74%

Children's Stabilization and Residential Services Unit, Sept.26, 2025

The table below illustrates the Enhanced Respite Services client count statewide by individual provider location for FY25. Enhanced Respite Services served 40 clients in FY25 compared to 37 clients served in FY24. Infinite Continuous Care and Pope's Kids Place were contracted in May of 2025; their numbers reflect the last two months of FY25.



Children's Stabilization and Residential Services Unit, Sept.26, 2025

"100% you will see us again. I wish I could clone you all and replicate what you do a thousand times so all my friends with special needs kiddos could have the same blessing as our family has!" – Parent of Enhanced Respite Services Youth

Children's Residential Stabilization Services Unit, Sept.19, 2024

Service Barriers

Client and Family Specific Barriers

1) Youth may experience crises requiring a level of support and intervention beyond what is provided in the enhanced respite setting. This can lead to declined referrals or Enhanced Respite services ending early.
2) Unplanned and last-minute cancelations make it difficult to serve other youth during that reserved timeframe, leaving the bed vacant.
3) Referrals to enhanced respite services are being received with no discharge setting identified. Enhanced Respite Services is a short-term service that requires youth to have a caregiver to discharge to at the end of 30 days.

Provider Development Barriers

1) Start-up costs may include costly home modifications including lowering windows and installing fire prevention systems, which present significant barriers and delays to start offering the service with new providers. These are requirements set forth by building code.
2) Potential providers have reported high insurance costs as a reason for not being able to move forward. This is a known barrier with only two providers of group home care insurance nationwide.
3) The setting must be licensed by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. The licensing process takes additional time before DDCS contracting can occur and ensures that clients' needs are safely met in the setting.

Resource Development

We are prioritizing statewide resource development and access for stabilization respite services in local communities where our clients and their families live and work. This objective allows clients to access behavioral stabilization and supports while reducing travel time for families, maintaining access to education, enhancing peer relationships and preserving support systems. To focus on these actions, in FY25, Developmental Disability Community Services:

1) Contracted with providers to open two new homes.
    a. Two beds were opened in Lewis County, offering stabilization respite to children and youth with complex medical needs.
    b. Two beds opened in Clark County, providing stabilization respite in Southwest Washington for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities and complex behavioral support needs.
    c. A potential provider in Skagit county has gone out of business due to the rising insurance costs being prohibitive to operating the home.
    d. DDCS is continuing engagement efforts with prospective providers with a goal of contracting for all 13 beds.
2) Developed an informational video for families, community partners and providers to learn about the Enhanced Respite Service.
3) Developed a program rule, Chapter 388-841 WAC, Enhanced Respite Services.

Summary

Families report having behavioral stabilization services and a break in caregiving as key factors in their ability to continue to meet their child's needs in their own home (No Paid Services Report, 2021). Children with behavioral and medical complexities and their families have limited options when it comes to accessing respite overall. Enhanced Respite Services is strategically designed to meet these needs through:

1) Building access by supporting youth with complex needs.
2) Integrating stabilization supports and respite for the caregiver.
3) Offering services within the individual's community that empower them to grow and thrive.

Enhanced Respite Services expanded from five to nine beds in FY25. This growth allows for the statewide delivery of quality services to youth with behavioral and medical needs to meet increasing demand for respite services. Through targeted provider development efforts, we anticipate growing more on the west side of the state in FY26 - FY27 with a goal of providing Enhanced Respite Services in each region.