

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

**Rainier School Footprint Reduction**

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 Part 3 Sections 11-13  
Chapter 219, 2022 Laws PV

June 30, 2023

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**Figure 1** *Aerial view of northern portion of Rainier School 2023*

## Executive Summary

In Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 (Supplemental Operating Budget), Chapter 297, Laws of 2022, Section 203 (2)(e), the Legislature included a proviso directing the Department of Social and Health Services “to develop a plan to reduce the footprint of Rainier School residential habilitation center campus and other property facilities taking into consideration”:

- [The Ruckelshaus residential habilitation center workgroup report](#).
- Rainier School Master Plan.
- Ensuring a continued need for a safety net and crisis stabilization for clients.

The Department of Social and Health Services Developmental Disabilities Administration was directed to submit a report describing the above efforts and to make any necessary recommendations for policy or fiscal changes to the Governor and the Legislature for consideration in the 2024 Legislative session.

This report provides the following recommendations for legislative consideration:

- Utilize state residential habilitation center professionals to support a greater number of clients in need of specialized care.
- Develop a residential model of services that partners DDA and DSHS Behavioral Health Administration services.
- Maintain Sufficient Capacity for Emergency Transitional Support Services (Klamath Cottage).
- Repurpose current land and facility use to support the surrounding community of Buckley.

## Legislative Requirements

This report addresses the requirements of [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693](#) enacted in the 2022 legislative session. The bill directed the Department of Social and Health Services to develop a plan to reduce the footprint of the Rainier School residential habilitation center campus and other property facilities, taking into consideration recommendations of the Ruckelshaus residential habilitation center work group report and the Rainier School Master Plan.

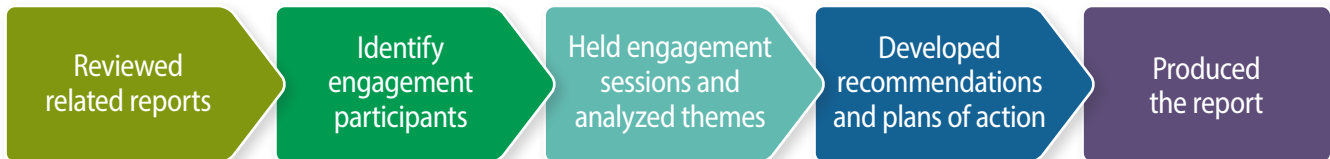
This plan includes the following:

- Input from interested stakeholders to ensure a thoughtful, safe and well supported residential transition to the community.
- An outline for maintaining a state-operated safety net for individuals who transition to the community and who may later be in crisis or need a greater level of care.
- Barriers to successful community transitions and how to mitigate those barriers.
- An analysis of stakeholder feedback received and a description of how it was or was not incorporated into the plan.
- A proposed timeline to implement the plan and a target date for reducing the footprint of Rainier if the plan is followed.

The bill named specific stakeholders to participate in the development of these recommendations, all of whom were engaged in this process. The bill required the final plan to be submitted to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature no later than June 30, 2023.

## Approach to Report Development

DDA took the following five-step approach to meet the requirements of this report:



### Step 1: Reviewed related reports to the Legislature:

- Developmental Disabilities Residential Habilitation Center Workgroup (January 7, 2019).
- [Rethinking Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Policy to Empower Clients, Develop Providers and Improve Services](#).
- Implementing the December 2019 Report Regarding Residential Habilitation Centers (January 26, 2021).
- Transforming State-Operated Intermediate Care Facilities (November 1, 2021).
- [Residential Habilitation Center Facility-Based Professionals](#).
- [Redesign State Operated Intermediate Care Facilities to provide Short-Term Stabilization and Intervention Services](#).
- Additional documentation received from tribal government representatives.

### Step 2: Reviewed the 2017 Rainier School Master Plan.

### Step 3: Identified individuals to participate in engagement sessions.

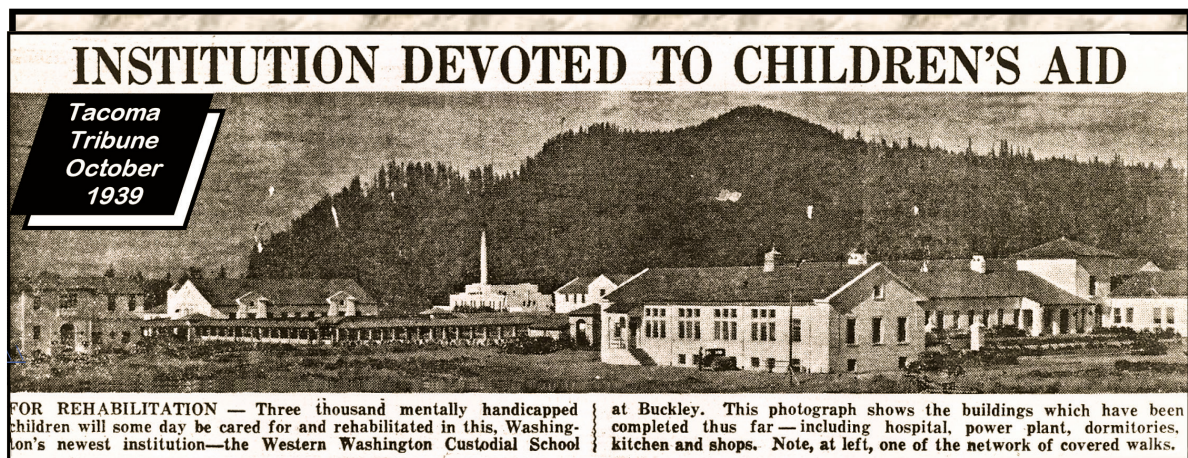
Step 4: Developed stakeholder and tribal engagement sessions to solicit input and comments related to the reduction of the Rainier School footprint and the continued need to provide a safety net for individuals in crisis. Reviewed, analyzed and grouped feedback into themes.

Step 5: Developed recommendations and proposed plans of action for the report. Held internal reviews. This included reconnecting with the participants of the engagement sessions to confirm their ideas and contributions were appropriately reflected.

Step 6: Produced and submitted the report according to Department protocols.

## Background

In 2019, a stakeholder workgroup facilitated by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center produced a report to the Legislature titled [Rethinking Intellectual and Developmental Disability Policy to Empower Clients, Develop Providers, and Improve Services](#). Among the recommendations was the need to redesign state-operated Intermediate Care Facilities, also called ICF, serving individuals with cognitive or developmental disabilities to function as short-term crisis stabilization and intervention facilities by developing infrastructure to ensure no individual remains in an ICF longer than necessary. This aligns with federal Medicaid regulatory requirements for ICFs serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities needing habilitative training and actively participating in the active treatment. Often, when an individual is experiencing extreme mental health crisis, behavioral or housing instability, the ICF model may not be the best program to meet their individual needs. The Ruckelshaus report also stated that DSHS' Developmental Disabilities Administration should continue to transform the continuum of care for individuals with developmental disabilities.



**Figure 2** Outdated terminology used during that period is shown in the graphic.

Our new comprehensive [RHC Admissions for Intermediate Care and Nursing Facility Services Policy](#) requires staff to ensure that clients requesting state-operated ICF services are informed that those services are temporary. DDA staff must discuss clients' goals during the admission process to help inform readiness in the community upon discharge. Additionally, individuals are given a clear, thorough explanation of the legal and practical requirements of continuous aggressive active treatment, including its implications for continued ICF eligibility. The ICF federal regulations require that the facility comply with the Conditions of Participation one of which is the Condition of Active Treatment. Active Treatment prescribes a robust schedule of learning objectives throughout the clients' day that include skill development in Activities of Daily Living. Not all clients in need of crisis stabilization require such rigorous training in this area.

### CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AT RAINIER

Rainier School ICF provides services on-site to individuals who are Medicaid-qualified and who reside in Medicaid certified units. At the time Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 was

enacted, Rainier School was comprised of two separately certified program areas: Program Area Team C and Program Area Team E. Each program area served approximately 70 clients, which is about 20 clients less than were served 10 years prior. Since 2018, and apart from any legislative requirements, Rainier School and DDA have been actively addressing transition for clients that no longer need ICF level of care into a less restrictive setting. This includes the closure of Program Area Team A in 2019 which served 86 individuals.

### **Program Area Team E**

Program Area Team E is fully certified and can support clients in need of ICF level of care. As of May 2023 census in PAT E is 80 clients, some of which are actively involved in transition to community-based settings. The census fluctuates. PAT E is surveyed annually by Residential Care Services in alignment with the ICF regulations. The last survey in November 2022 found PAT E to be in regulatory compliance. The annual survey includes focused attention on Active Treatment and clients' participation and willingness to engage in that field.

### **Klamath Cottage**

Klamath was opened in 2020 at the direction of the Governor to get clients that were medically stable out of acute hospital beds related to ensure hospital capacity was available during the pandemic surge. In response, DSHS' Developmental Disabilities Administration opened a vacant cottage on the grounds of Rainier School to provide emergency transitional services while long-term community-based options were pending. As we transition out of the pandemic, it is clear that there remains a gap in the short-term transitional service system in our communities. Further, recent data from the Washington Military Department ranks Washington as the fourth most disaster-prone state in the nation. Short term services through Klamath are expected to remain in demand until such time that additional community-based emergency transitional resources are developed.

Rainier School is currently operating the [Klamath Cottage](#). The Klamath Cottage is part of a program model that currently operates as a non-Intermediate Care Facilities program, which means, in part, that this program operates using state funds without receiving federal matching funds. DDA has successfully transitioned more than 20 clients through Klamath Cottage where it currently supports eight individuals. Initially developed during the pandemic surge, it has been successful in serving individuals with unique care needs. These transitions happened because of partnership with case management/field staff and successful pairing of individuals with community providers who can meet their needs. The Klamath model helps prevent and reduce the number of people inappropriately relegated to settings that do not allow for individualized person-centered treatment, such as acute care hospitals.

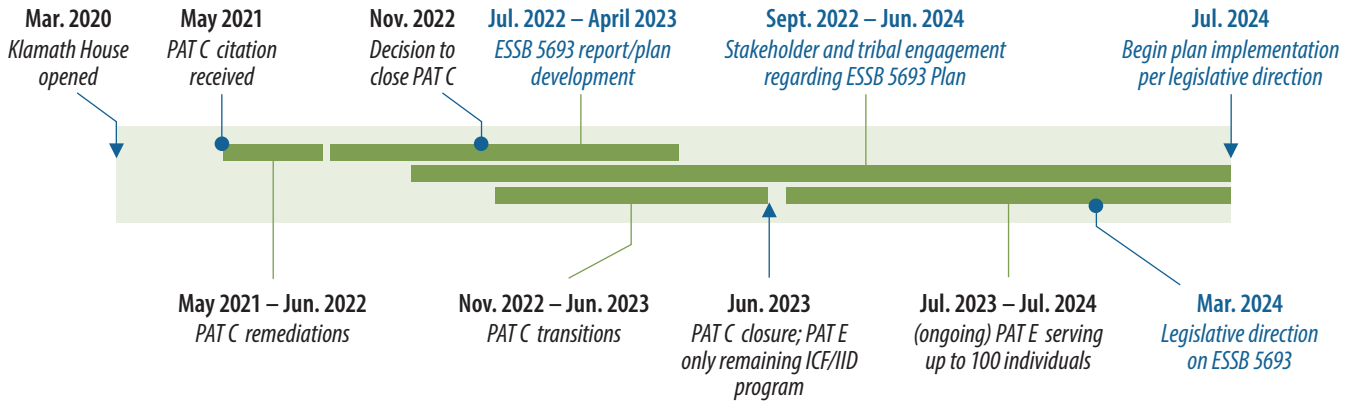
Services provided by Klamath:

1. 24/7 residential staffing with behavior response protocol.
2. 24/7 access to professional disciplines knowledgeable in supporting IDD.
3. Medical and psychiatric services provided by professionals knowledgeable in supporting IDD.
4. Access to community, vocational and recreational services.
5. Habilitative programming and assistance with maintaining daily living skills.

## Program Area Team C

In May 2021, Program Area Team C was cited with four condition-level citations, resulting in it being placed in an 11-month denial of payment status for new residents. After receiving the citation, PAT C attempted to remedy the concerns while also decreasing census. Ultimately, at the end of November 2022, Health Care Authority and DSHS agreed to close PAT C, effectively reducing the footprint of Rainier School. Rainier School was allowed until July 2023, to continue to receive federal funds while transitioning the remaining 18 PAT C clients into other residential settings. With the closure of PAT C in July 2023, PAT E will be the only remaining ICF/IID-certified program located at Rainier School.

A combined overview of this timeline is illustrated below:



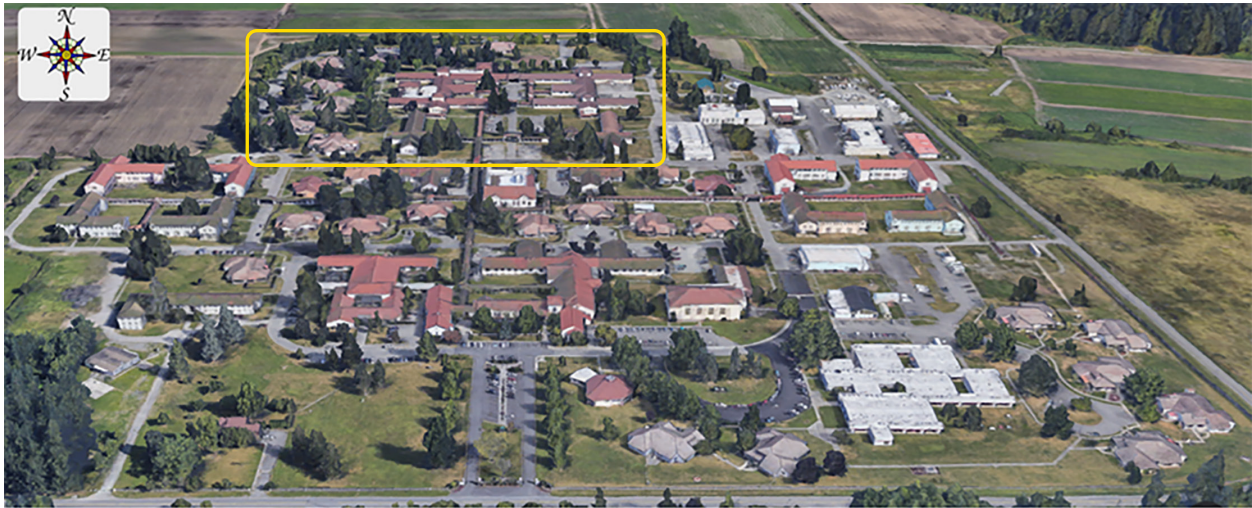
**Figure 3** Key RHC Activities & Report Development Timeline

*Note: the activities related to this report development are reflected in blue font. Other significant events and activities referenced in this report are reflected in black font.*

## Resulting Reduction of Rainier’s Footprint

In 2019 Program Area Team A closed and PAT C will close in 2023. Rainier School will only operate on the south end of the campus, allowing services to be offered in a more condensed space. This allows approximately half of the campus, the northern portion, to be used for other purposes in the future. Thirteen of the 29 duplexes on the Rainier School campus are currently vacant, which has been considered in the development of the recommendations in this report. Given this reduction and consolidation, there would not be any additional sizable reduction of Rainier School without consideration of eventual closure.

The picture below highlights the north end of campus that is currently vacant.



**Figure 4** Rainier School Campus 2023

## Summary of Tribal and Stakeholder Recommendations

In fall 2022, DDA held five listening sessions comprised of the required attendees noted in the bill, along with engaging tribal governments and soliciting their ideas and recommendations. These sessions were held virtually with more than 75 participants. Below are the areas identified as themes with common interest from the stakeholder and tribal engagement sessions.

PROPOSED IDEA	DDA AND RAINIER EMPLOYEES	CLIENTS AND ADVOCATES	CITY OF BUCKLEY	LABOR UNION	TRIBAL / IPAC
1. Offer crisis support services to the broader community.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Adequately fund the programs and changes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Repurpose facility for community use.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Allow DDA clients who reside in the community to receive dental, medical, and therapeutic services on campus.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Preserve current workforce expertise at Rainier School.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Offer respite services on campus.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Provide affordable housing on campus for veterans, seniors, DDA clients, etc.		✓	✓	✓	✓



PROPOSED IDEA	DDA AND RAINIER EMPLOYEES	CLIENTS AND ADVOCATES	CITY OF BUCKLEY	LABOR UNION	TRIBAL / IPAC
8. Offer crisis stabilization services outside of the ICF model.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9. Increase access to mental health services to DDA clients in the community.	✓	✓	✓		✓
10. Preserve the positive economic impact of Rainier as a significant local employer.	✓		✓	✓	
11. Pursue the property's economic development potential.		✓	✓		✓
12. Support services for families and caregivers.		✓			✓
13. Share property with other state entities (e.g., Behavioral Health Administration or Dept. of Veterans Affairs).	✓			✓	
14. Redevelop property.			✓		
15. Complete closure.		✓			
16. Bolster community resources.			✓		
17. Offer earlier intervention.		✓			
18. Implement awareness campaign regarding tribal court orders.					✓
19. Use facilities for storing disaster relief equipment and supplies.		✓			

## Additional Themes

During the feedback sessions there were several less-common themes raised (topics 14-19 above) which did not result in a recommendation in this report. We are sharing those themes in this report for inclusivity as the participants who raised these topics stressed their importance.

- **Redevelop property:** encouragement for the state to sell the property for development of low-income housing specifically for seniors and veterans.
- **Complete closure:** shutting down Rainier School completely.
- **Bolster community resources:** address current lack of case resource managers and turnover in those positions; reduce caseload sizes. (This would require more case resource managers if people are served in the community for monitoring and assistance on an ongoing basis. DDA submitted a report to the Legislature in 2022 regarding smaller caseloads).

- **Offer earlier intervention:** for example, team with Child Find early in a person’s life.
- **Implement awareness campaign regarding tribal court orders:** local facilities need to recognize and honor tribal court orders. Need to implement a broad awareness campaign to educate on Full Faith and Credit RCW 43.376 (Tribal court orders must be honored by the state.)

## Recommendations and Plan

DSHS recommends the following actions to meet the intent of the legislation. These recommendations are based on stakeholder input, Rainier School’s current ICF certification status, and the Ruckelshaus report. These recommendations do not replace the need to develop more community-based services, providers and related resources.

### 1. Deploy and Expand Access to Rainier School Specialized Services

Develop a wraparound crisis team that follows the progress of the individual during their ICF admission and continues to follow the individual with support to their community-based service. This team will actively support the clients’ transition to community or while in the community and experiencing a crisis. This would require a policy that outlines the process and redistribution of funds for staff but will be done entirely within existing resources at no additional cost.



**Figure 5** Main entrance to Rainier School 2023

If enacted, this recommendation would support individuals in the community minimizing transitions out and then transition back in when challenges arise in the community, minimizing relocation stress. Further, staff in the residential habilitation centers understand and have a

strong skillset to work with specific special needs that other community providers may not have.

### ***Implementation Plan for this Recommendation***

To implement this recommendation, the following high-level steps are required:

- Identify services to be deployed and accessed as part of this model.
- Request necessary funding.
- Increase the network of providers who have IDD expertise.
- Perform a gap analysis between desired services and available facility-based service providers.
- Develop related policies and procedures, to include provider billing and liability insurance requirements.
- Resolve gaps (may require a decision package).
- Implement the model.

### ***Anticipated Benefits of this Recommendation***

- Continuation of successful outcomes for the client's transition to the community.
- Prevent repeat cycles of ICF admissions and avoid other institutional settings.
- Leverages the vast array of specialized services and professionals currently employed at Rainier School to provide services to clients on the campus.
- Mitigates barriers to successful community transitions by expanding access to facility-based service providers who can help an individual prior to reaching destabilization.
- Alleviate concerns of stakeholders on transition to the community.
- Increase and continue the collaboration of providers after the change in provider.
- Require in-person client and provider check ins, which may include review from facility-based professional(s).
- Support job retention of this skilled workforce.
- Community providers may be more willing to support the individual.

### ***Potential Risks and Barriers of this Recommendation***

- Consideration should be given to whether the staff remain state employees or need to become contractors.
- Demand could exceed current resources.
- Identifying service qualification criteria.

### ***Timeline to Implement***

A specific timeline for realizing this recommendation will be dependent on what is discovered during the gap analysis implementation step.

## **2. Develop a Cross-System Collaboration Residential Model of Services that Partners DSHS DDA and BHA Services**

This model of services involves each administration bringing to the table a program area specialty and having shared responsibility for serving the same clients. For example:

- An individual is ready to discharge from a habilitative mental health program, cross collaboration program could support a transition into a less-restrictive environment.
- Daily programming would have a greater focus and structure around the individual's mental health needs as opposed to activities of daily living.

This model would provide quality services for clients needing this specialized level of care and enable different physical structures of residential services to be provided.

### ***Implementation Plan for this Recommendation***

- Develop a memorandum of understanding between partnering entities to review services, cost coding and levels of engagement.
- Write policy around a residential service delivery setting identifying eligibility requirements.
- Environmental modifications of existing cottages should be considered.

### ***Anticipated Benefits of this Recommendation***

- Each Administration has a depth of professionals who provide support to clients.
- Acting as an Interdisciplinary Team to address service needs tends to produce a higher level of service delivery.
- Keeping clients needing specialized services out of acute care and behavioral health hospitals

### ***Potential Risks and Barriers of this Recommendation***

- Organization of multifaceted service delivery system could be hard for clients to navigate.
- This is a more costly setting, as it doesn't fit under any program currently available for federal match.
- Stakeholders may express concern around serving more individuals in an institutional vs. community-based setting.
- Requires new rules to be established regarding more restrictive and secured settings.
- Other legislative priorities for the Rainier campus may not be consistent with the cross-system collaboration service model.

### ***Timeline to Implement***

Timeline to implement is dependent upon legislative direction, funding allocation, policy development, and staff and process readiness.

## **3. Maintain Sufficient Capacity for Emergency Transitional Support Services (Klamath Cottage)**

The Ruckelshaus report, submitted to the Legislature in 2019, described how Washington state's current practice of operating ICFs as a long-term care model puts its Medicaid certifications.

at risk. As the state transforms its system of residential services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the model of care currently does not meet all the requirements and techniques to support individuals in crisis. Ensuring sufficient capacity of the Klamath model on Rainier School campus would enhance the Department's ability to serve individuals continuing to need intense services and support timely discharge from acute care hospitals when medically stable. Services provided in this model receive the same level of oversight and quality assurance as services delivered in the community and aligns with providing a safety net as requested in the legislation.

Klamath and similar program options provide individuals with temporary residential services with a focus on stabilization, who do not need all the required services within the standard ICF/IID model. This allows for services to be focused on short-term individual stabilization and supports transitions to longer-term housing options with services tailored to individual needs. As the ICF/IID model is the federal Medicaid standard in this area, services like Klamath are not presently eligible for Medicaid matching funds, resulting in any program costs being state-only funded.

### ***Implementation Plan for this Recommendation***

To implement this recommendation, the following high-level steps are required:

- Assess if modifications are needed to the houses.
- Revise current rule to reflect expansion.
- Develop related policies and procedures.
- Hire and train staff (specifically for this model of service).

### ***Anticipated Benefits of this Recommendation***

- Provides a place where individuals are safe and receive care.
- Klamath Cottage basic infrastructure is currently operating on the Rainier School campus. This provides a foundation for rapid expansion.
- Supports retention of this skilled work force.
- Preserves a facility with knowledgeable professionals with experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Provides a facility-based model for individuals who do not require the rigorous active treatment requirement of an ICF.
- Supports emergency transitional support services. This model can support client residential, and behavior needs during emergency, like a pandemic or natural disaster.

### ***Potential Risks and Barriers of this Recommendation***

- Clients that are difficult to serve may stay longer than anticipated as the surrounding community cannot support their behavioral needs.
- The cost of this setting will fall fully to the state as it does not fit under any program currently available for federal match.
- Requires establishing admission criteria that is concrete and equitable, and which supports clients' behavioral needs.

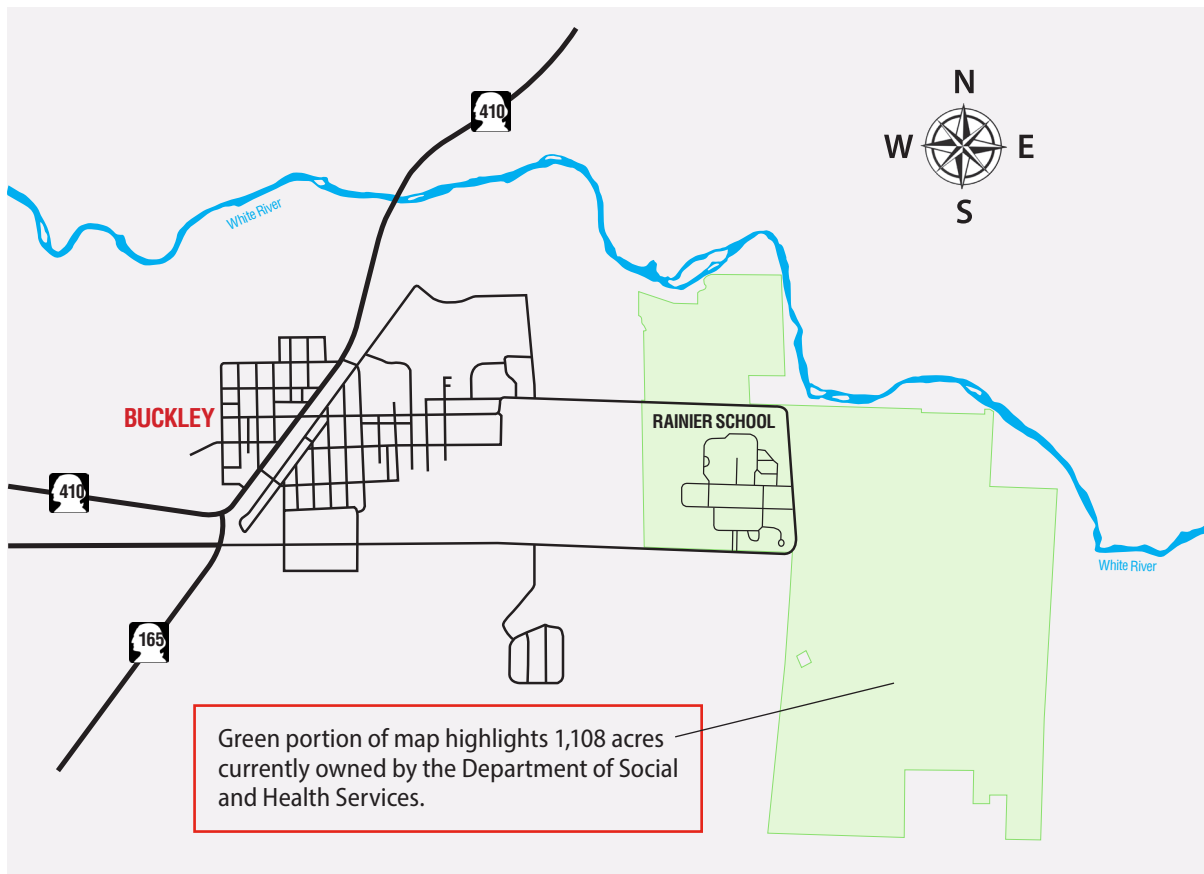
- Because this will be a limited resource it will be important to maintain clear eligibility, admission and discharge criteria.
- Stakeholders have expressed a concern that the quality assurance program that supports policy and rule compliance is staffed by DSHS employees, rather than by an external party.
- Anticipated stakeholder concerns around serving more individuals in an institutional vs. community-based setting.
- Other legislative priorities for the Rainier campus may not be consistent with the Klamath service model.

**Timeline to Implement**

The expansion could begin immediately following funding allocation, policy development, and staff and process readiness.

**4. Repurpose Excess Land and Existing Campus Buildings**

Utilize the current [Rainier School Master Plan](#) which is to continue use of the campus and shares leased space with the City of Buckley. A master plan is a document that describes the agreement between DSHS and local government, which is often required for development and zoning within a city.



**Figure 6** City of Buckley in relation to land owned by DSHS

Consideration should be given to develop a new master plan for Rainier School as the goal of the current (2017) master plan is to provide a long-term road map for the Rainier School property by identifying strategies to consolidate the Intermediate Care Facility operations. The master plan considers a 20-year horizon, where Rainier School as an institution would remain in operation with a decrease in population of about 1/3 (300 clients to 200 clients) as community-based options for people with developmental disabilities increases. This goal has been met. Suggested uses for the property discussed during the engagement sessions include senior and veteran low-income housing, community-based medical services, recreation, and other leasing opportunities with the City of Buckley. These options could generate revenue for the [Dan Thompson Memorial Developmental Disabilities Community Services Account](#).

### ***Implementation Plan for this Recommendation***

To implement this recommendation, the following high-level steps are required:

- Update the Rainier School master plan.
- Explore potential use of cottages by other DSHS administrations (e.g., Behavioral Health), other agencies (e.g., Department of Veterans Affairs), or complementary services organizations.
- Confirm presence of complementary entity interested in developing the excess land.
- Engage with state, local and tribal government entities (e.g., Capital Programs, Attorney General, City of Buckley, Pierce County, Ecology, Muckleshoot Tribe, Puyallup Tribe, etc.)
- Create a plan for development and use.
- Request funding, if necessary.
- Implement the plan.

### ***Anticipated Benefits of this Recommendation***

- Support job retention of the skilled workforce.
- Create a positive economic impact for state, county and city.
- Serve as a potential revenue stream for the Developmental Disabilities Community Dan Thompson Trust.
- Foster increased community inclusion and recreational infrastructure.

### ***Potential Risks and Barriers of this Recommendation***

- DSHS does not develop land and would be dependent upon an entity that had interest in developing resources that are complementary to current use.
- Delays with development related to city and county ordinance that may have changed over the years.
- Current law allows the state to enter into land lease agreements for a maximum of 10 years, which could limit interest by potential developers.

### ***Timeline to Implement***

The timeline to begin this work is dependent on funding the update to the Rainier School Master Plan, which should make recommendations on how to increase development opportunities and include an action plan and timeline for realizing the changes.

## Conclusion

We were tasked with providing a report to the Legislature that focused on the reduction of the Rainier School footprint. The recommendations include providing a safety net for individuals experiencing crisis, identifying barriers to community transition and how to mitigate them, as well as providing a timeline for implementing the reduction of Rainier School's footprint.



**Figure 7** *Rainier School Campus and Property March 2023*

The future closure of PAT C in 2023 will decrease the census by almost half. As a result, the north end of the campus has available capacity in vacant cottages, administrative areas and land. This report includes recommendations and tactical action steps for reducing Rainier School's footprint while also providing safety-net services to those experiencing crisis.

## Appreciation to the Legislature and Contributors

We express our appreciation to the Legislature for the opportunity to bring many voices and perspectives together, and to the many individuals who took time to inform the recommendations presented in this report.