

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

with DSHS Service Histories

Opportunity Youth are 16 to 24 years old and disengaged from school and work. Findings from a study of factors that predict disengagement (absence from school or work for 12 months) are highlighted below. This project focused on youth served by either DSHS or the Washington State Health Care Authority (more on page 2). Annually, two-thirds of youth aged 0-17 are served by these two agencies, many through Medicaid coverage or economic services such as Basic Food.

Which factors predict disengagement from school and work among Washington's youth?

EARLY ADOLESCENCE

AGE 11-15

Experiences in early adolescence have long lasting impacts on a young person's likelihood of becoming an Opportunity Youth

Cross-over youth, those involved in both the child welfare and criminal justice systems, have the highest risk of later disengagement.

RISK FACTORS

- Cross-over youth*
- Substance use issue
- Criminal justice encounter
- Disability
- Mental health issue
- Child welfare encounter
- Poverty
- Homelessness

*Known to have encountered both the child welfare and criminal justice system.

SCHOOL FACTORS

AGE 15

School records are useful in predicting disengagement

School change within a school year is one of the strongest predictors of later disengagement, perhaps due to underlying instability or school change caused by disciplinary issues. Lack of access to discipline data is a limitation of this study.

Youth in special education or ELL services at age 15 are more likely to later become Opportunity Youth. These youth also face increased risk of disengagement immediately after high school graduation, among those who graduate.

SCHOOL PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- GPA of 3.2 or higher

SCHOOL RISK FACTORS

- School change
- Chronic absenteeism
- ELL Status at age 15
- Special Education at age 15

What about race/ethnicity?

American Indian, Black, Latino, and Pacific Islander youth disengage at higher rates relative to White and Asian youth.

Much of the increased disengagement experienced by youth of color can be explained by disparities in risk factors that are more likely impact these groups.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

AGE 16-22

Certain life events increase the risk of disengagement, even when controlling for earlier experiences

Homelessness or housing instability in a given year is a strong predictor of disengagement in the following year.

Having a child increases the risk of disengagement more among young women than young men.

YOUNG ADULT RISK FACTORS

- Homelessness
- Having a child
- Criminal justice involvement

TRANSITIONS

Timing is important

Transition supports for 17 and 18 year olds—both for educational attainment and building work skills—is a strategy for keeping youth engaged.

The transition after high school is a key point at which many youth disengage

Youth with disabilities, still gaining English proficiency, with histories of poverty, and with behavioral health needs are most likely to disengage after leaving high school.

Youth with multiple, overlapping risk factors need the most support.



Study Information

Predicting Disengagement from School and Work Using Administrative Data

This brief highlights findings from a longitudinal study conducted by the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division. The study focused on a cohort of youth living in Washington state who were 15 years old between 2006 and 2011 (N = 379,609). To be included in the study, youth needed to receive a service from DSHS or HCA between 2000 and 2012. Most youth residing in the state (about 63 percent of the under-18 population) are served by these two state agencies. Youth educational and employment experiences were tracked through 2012, to see whether they disengaged from education or employment (that is, became an Opportunity Youth) during the study period.

Outcome

The Opportunity Youth definition used in this study required that youth met the following conditions for an entire academic year:

- 1) No enrollment in K-12 education,
- 2) No enrollment at a community college or state four-year university and
- 3) No earnings in the academic year.

To ensure youth were not incorrectly identified as Opportunity Youth because they moved out of state, we limited the analysis to youth still residing in Washington according to state administrative records.

Predictive Variables

Predictors were drawn from administrative data including state social services records, K-12 and college data, and employment and criminal justice records. We were limited to factors routinely collected for administrative purposes in state data systems. Therefore, other important but unmeasured factors such as motivation or optimism could not be included.



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Opportunity Youth Young People Disengaged from School and Work in South King County

Patton • Liu • Ford Shah
Felver • Lucenko • Huber

NOVEMBER 2015

Road Map Region Opportunity Youth With DSHS Service Histories

Patton • Ford Shah • Liu
Felver • Lucenko • Huber

OCTOBER 2015

