

# Housing Stability for Youth in Courts (H-SYNC) Program, Washington State

## A Case Study for the Pursuing Justice Project

### What is H-SYNC?

The **Housing Stability for Youth in Courts (H-SYNC) program** in Seattle, WA is an innovative, youth-centred program designed to reduce recidivism and prevent homelessness among youth involved in the juvenile justice system. In recognition that many young people exit detention into homelessness, H-SYNC navigators work closely with both youth and their families by connecting them to community resources. **H-SYNC ensures that youth and their families have access to coordinated, individualized assistance, closing a critical gap in the existing support network.**

### Program Goal

**Bridging gaps between the court and homelessness systems by ensuring that youth and their families have access to stable housing, social supports, and services during and after their involvement with the justice system.**

### Program Origins & Development

Launched in 2019, the H-SYNC program came out of a pressing need to support young people involved in the justice system who were unstably housed. [Early\\_pilot\\_research](#) found that family dynamics (i.e., youth kicked out, tension/stress in the home) often led to homelessness. To reduce strain on families, H-SYNC was shaped to provide youth and their families with comprehensive wraparound services in one place. Since its launch, H-SYNC has also secured state funding allowing the pilot program to grow significantly. **It has supported nearly 300 youth and their families, spanning 6 counties in Washington State.**

# Program Model & Core Components

H-SYNC program **navigators** guide youth and their families within and beyond the court process. Navigators connect people to the right services and supports, ensuring long-term stability.

Core Components	Description
<b>Eligibility &amp; Referrals</b>	<b>Youth aged 12 to 17 ½</b> involved with the court system (e.g., truancy cases, probation, or detention) who have housing or family stability concerns may be eligible. H-SYNC relies on two family-specific questions within the <b>PACT form</b> to generate automatic referrals. Referrals may come from anyone within the court system, such as probation counsellors, attorneys, or judges, as well as from community members. Youth also have the option to self-refer.
<b>Tailored Intake &amp; Needs Assessment</b>	Once referred, navigators conduct in-depth interviews and use screening tools to understand a youth's housing status, safety, and family dynamics. This helps identify each <b>young person's unique needs</b> and any <b>systemic challenges</b> they may face.
<b>Resource Identification &amp; Connection</b>	<b>Navigators</b> gather and connect youth and their families with <b>resources</b> tailored to their <b>identified needs</b> .
<b>Active Facilitation &amp; Follow-Through</b>	The program provides <b>ongoing and flexible support</b> with regular check-ins at <b>one, three, and six months</b> . If youth are stable after six months, navigators step back, while making sure youth know they can return for help at any time if their situation changes or new challenges arise.

## State Funding & Support

[The University of Washington CoLab](#) is a strong partner in H-SYNC's research and development, and provides valuable input for expansion. Additionally, state funding has played a key role in the development and sustainability of the H-SYNC program, allowing for **long-term planning** and **expansion**. State support has made the program's reach and impact stronger by providing access to **statewide data** and facilitating important connections like that to the [Office of Homeless Youth](#). It also provides access to databases necessary for compiling youth served data, connecting program numbers to the **Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)**.

# Program Outcomes & Impact

H-SYNC is demonstrating positive outcomes for youth and families involved in the court system. Between July 2022 and March 2025, H-SYNC enrolled **315 participants**. As the program continues, it is working to improve data collection to better understand impacts and outcomes about how youth and their families are transitioning into temporary or permanent safe and stable housing.



## Key Lessons & Recommendations

Communities looking to implement a similar program will want to consider the following:

- **Build trust.** Strong relationships with court staff (probation counsellors, judges, attorneys) ensures referrals and successful program implementation.
- **Tailor support to youth and family needs.** Recognize unique circumstances and community resources to ensure assistance is effective and appropriate.
- **Leverage government support to strengthen program sustainability.** Reach beyond the piloting phase to scale services to match the level of need.
- **Stats need stories.** Combine statistical data with personal stories when advocating for support to demonstrate both the scale and human impact of the program.
- **Bridge the Transitions.** Ensure the age of eligibility allows for continuity of care between systems.



**“Youth involved in the court system each have different stories. Everything that led them to this point is unique, so there's no way we'll ever be able to end homelessness, or prevent it, if we treat every single story the same.”**

— Sheala Toth, Director, H-SYNC



**For more information visit:**

- H-SYNC: [uwcolab.org/hsync](http://uwcolab.org/hsync)
- Research report: [Pursuing Justice: Bilateral Interactions Among the Criminal Justice and Housing Sectors for Preventing Youth Homelessness](#)
- 2025-26 Housing Solutions Lab: [Pursuing Housing: Scaling Options for Justice Involved Youth](#)

# Additional Resources

## Reports on H-SYNC

- Bishop AS, Walker SC, Baumgarten EB, Vick K, Dean T. (2025). [Usability of a cross-system housing stability program for juvenile courts: A multimethod study of probation counselor perspectives](#). Implement Res Pract.
- Walker, S.C., Bishop, A.S., Gudino, J. et al. (2025). [A Non-coercive Prevention Cascade Using a Cash-Plus Model for Legally Involved Youth: a Multi-method Study of Feasibility, Acceptability, and Engagement Outcomes](#). Prev Sci 26, 282–292 .
- Walker, S., Valencia, E., Bishop, A., Irons, M. & Gertseva, A. (2018). [Developing a coordinated youth housing stability program for juvenile courts](#). Cityscape, 20(3), 117-137.
- Walker, S., Valencia, E., & Vick, K. (2018). [Report of a Research to Practice Partnership to Develop the Youth Housing Stability Model for Juvenile Courts](#). Seattle, WA: Center for the Study and Advancement of Justice Effectiveness (SAJE).

For further reading, visit: <https://uwcolab.org/hsync>

For additional detail on the PACT form and the questions used for automatic referral, see:

- Washington State Courts. (2024). [Washington Juvenile Court Assessment Manual \(PACT\)](#), Domain 7A (Family), Question 2 (p. 70), and Domain 7B (Family), Question 11 (p. 76).

## Multimedia

- Gaetz, S., Redman, M., Trupin, C., & Davis, M. (2025). [How Prevention Helped Washington Reduce Youth Homelessness by 40%](#) [Webinar]. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.
- St. Leonard's Society of Canada (2026). [Pursuing Housing: Scaling Options for Justice-Involved Youth](#) Solutions Lab What Works Panel [Webinar].

## Policy Readings

- *Homeless or Runaway Youth – Various Provisions*, [Substitute House Bill 1406](#), ch. 151, 68<sup>th</sup> Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2023).
- *Informed consent—Persons authorized to provide for patients who do not have capacity—Priority—Unaccompanied homeless minors*, [Wash. Rev. Code § 7.70.065](#) (2024).
- *Youth – Discharge from Public Care into Homelessness*, [Substitute Senate Bill 6560](#), ch. 157, 65<sup>th</sup> Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2018).
- *Youth Shelters, Homeless Youth Programs, and Host Homes –Protected Health Care Services*, [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5599](#), ch. 408, 68<sup>th</sup> Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2023).

## Research Readings

- DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division. (2025). [Homelessness Among Youth Exiting Systems of Care in Washington State](#) (RDA Report No. 11.254).
- Harding Chao, L., & Castro, L. (2024, February). [“Yes to Yes” Washington State: Unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness landscape scan](#) (Co-authored by A Way Home Washington and Washington State Department of Commerce; Research and coordination by System Change Partners).
- Pritchett, E., Serantes, K., Harding Chao, L., & System Change Partners. (2025). [Scaling equitable solutions for youth homelessness prevention in Washington State](#) (Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Fund Fourth Annual Report). Northstar Advocates.



The Pursuing Justice Bilateral Interactions Among the Criminal Justice and Housing Sectors for Preventing Youth Homelessness Project (2025) research team gratefully acknowledges H-SYNC Director Sheala Toth for contributing the information for this case study.