



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**September 18, 2018**

**Motion 15225**

**Proposed No. 2018-0262.1**

**Sponsors Kohl-Welles and von Reichbauer**

1           A MOTION accepting an outcomes report on the best starts  
2           for kids youth and family homelessness prevention  
3           initiative, in accordance with Attachment A to Ordinance  
4           18373.

5           WHEREAS, Ordinance 18285 approved the Best Starts for Kids Youth and  
6           Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative Implementation Plan, and

7           WHEREAS, the implementation plan approved by Ordinance 18285 and  
8           subsequently updated by Ordinance 18373 requires reports on program outcomes to be  
9           transmitted to the council annually, with the first report one year from the effective date  
10          of the ordinance; required to the Council by June 1, 2018 as a stand-alone report, and

11          WHEREAS, the youth and family homelessness prevention initiative began  
12          delivering client-level prevention services in January of 2016 and now has a year of  
13          outcome data, and

14          WHEREAS, the report is submitted by the executive

15          NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

16          The council accepts the report on the best start for kids youth and family

17 homelessness prevention initiative outcomes, Attachment A to this motion, in accordance  
18 with Ordinance 18373.

19

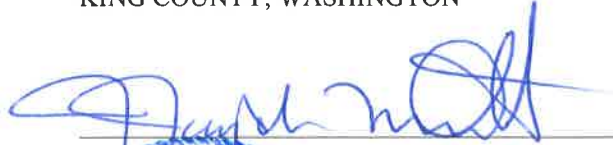
Motion 15225 was introduced on 5/29/2018 and passed by the Metropolitan King  
County Council on 9/17/2018, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Mr. von Reichbauer, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Dunn, Mr.  
McDermott, Mr. Dembowski, Mr. Upthegrove, Ms. Kohl-Welles and  
Ms. Balducci

No: 0

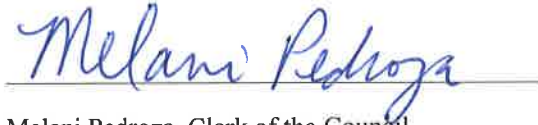
Excused: 1 - Mr. Gossett

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Joseph McDermott, Chair

ATTEST:



Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council



**Attachments:** A. Best Starts for Kids Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative Annual  
Report 2017 Outcomes Report to Our Community

# Best Starts for Kids – Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative Annual Report

## 2017 Outcomes Report to Our Community

---



Department of Community and Human Services  
Housing and Community Development

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
YFHPI Model.....	3
Strategic Funding in Action .....	3
Program Implementation.....	4-7
Training and Technical Assistance Make a Difference.....	8-9
Client Stories.....	10-11
Equity for All .....	12
Lessons Learned to Date.....	12-13
Program Performance and Outcomes: Preliminary Data.....	14-17
Evaluation - Next Steps .....	17-18
Conclusion .....	18



## **Introduction**

In November 2015, King County voters approved the Best Starts for Kids (BSK) levy for the purpose of funding prevention and early intervention strategies to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and their communities. Per King County Ordinance 18088, \$19 million of the first-year levy proceeds was included to plan, provide and administer a Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative (YFHPI).

## **YFHPI Model**

Early design for the YFHPI was based on the highly successful Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) Initiative pilot program (spanning September 2009 through September 2014), implemented by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Medina Foundation.

YFHPI's program was designed with the guiding principles of the DVHF program, affirming their primary focus of ensuring youth and families with youth most likely to enter the homeless system have access to the support and resources they need to prevent homelessness. Over time, YFHPI has made minor adaptations to the DVHF model working to ensure all youth and families in King County, those with and without exposure to domestic violence, have the highest probability of remaining housed.

YFHPI providers quickly recognized that youth and families with youth have unique strengths and characteristics positioning them as their own best advocates for resolving housing crises. For this reason, case managers focused their efforts on developing client strengths, a strategy that helped about one in five families resolve their housing crisis without the use of flexible funds.

## **Strategic Funding in Action**

YFHPI was founded under the principle of addressing disproportionality in the homeless system. As discussed in the BSK – YFHPI Outcomes Report submitted in 2017, extensive community outreach led to a robust request for proposals (RFP) process enabling the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) to fund 25 agencies that would cumulatively and uniquely address disproportionality in a new and innovative way.

As outlined in the BSK Implementation Plan, YFHPI needed to ensure a strong community representation: "King County recognizes that in order to reach the goal of giving all kids the best start, it will be necessary to address the inequities that result in disparities, and work with a range of community partners, including those with whom King County has not yet had the opportunity to engage." Under the YFHPI, DCHS established a precedent for developing new partnerships: 32 percent of all contracts provided under YFHPI were given to community agencies that had never been awarded county funding before, and 25 percent were receiving government funding for the first time.

## Program Implementation

DCHS offered awards to 27 agencies in November of 2016 with a total of 25 agencies contracting to deliver prevention services. Contracts began November 1, 2016 and within 90 days, 15 agencies were providing prevention services. By the end of March 2017, 23 providers were providing services and YFHPI was fully operational in late May 2017. The first YFHPI client was served in January 2017. As with any new program, delays in startup stemmed from extended hiring processes and training.



### Case Management Training

Retaining a highly skilled set of homelessness prevention professionals requires the County participate in the provision of training. There is no single agency in King County solely dedicated to homelessness prevention work. Prevention training is often isolated and/or non-existent. DCHS recognized that under the YFHPI, we have an opportunity to pioneer professional development for 25 case managers in homelessness prevention. DCHS developed a training curriculum that would allow for case managers to become highly skilled in homelessness prevention.

Monthly case manager trainings in 2017 covered the following topics:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trainer</b>
January 2017	Intersections between DVHF and YFHPI	WSCADV King County staff
February 2017	LGBTQ Awareness and Cultural Competency	Revelry Media & Methods
March 2017	LGBTQ Awareness and Cultural Competency; Housing Resources	Revelry Media & Methods King County staff
April 2017	DVHF Training	WSCADV
May 2017	Landlord Tenant / Fair Housing	King County staff
June 2017	LGBTQ Awareness and Cultural Competency; Understanding Imminent Risk	Revelry Media & Methods King County staff
June 2017 Special Learning Circle	Mid-contract Check In Introduce Evaluation Team	Adrienne Quinn LEO/J-PAL*
July 2017	Employment Assistance; Community Resources; Native Americans and Risk	WorkSource (Renton) St. Vincent de Paul Mother Nation
August 2017	Navigating the 211 system; YFHPI Evaluation Webinar	211 King County LEO/J-PAL
September 2017	Evaluation Training LGBTQ Training	LEO/J-PAL Revelry Media & Methods
October 2017	City of Seattle Prevention – Joint Learning Circle Civil Legal Aid	YFHPI and City of Seattle  NW Justice, Seattle Community Law Center, Legal Action Center, Unemployment Law Project, Solid Ground, Eastside Legal, Fair Work Center, Neighborhood Legal Clinic
November 2017	LGBTQ Training DVHF Training	Revelry Media & Methods WSCADV

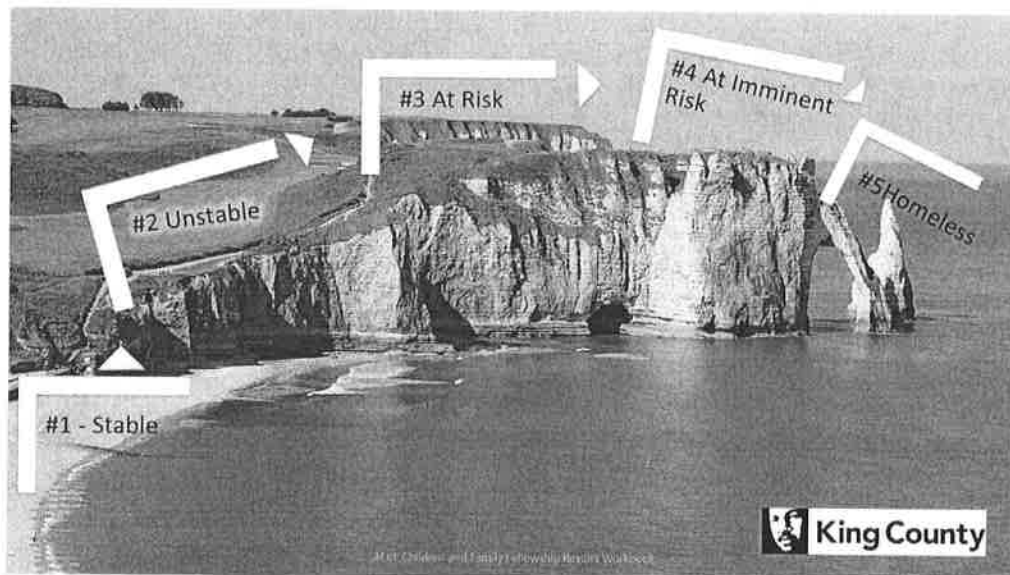
\*LEO: Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities at University of Notre Dame

J-PAL: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology

DCHS held their first YFHPI case manager training on January 18, 2017 at Renton WorkSource.



Monthly trainings ensure continued advancement of case managers' knowledge and skills in the prevention of homelessness. Early training provided by the WSCADV in collaboration with DCHS helped case managers better identify which youth and families have the highest risk of experiencing homelessness. The training focused on understanding what housing instability looks like and what barriers youth and families face in maintaining stability, and learning to identify risk factors that lead youth and families to fall over the cliff into homelessness.





As part of case manager training, case managers were given weekly scenarios to work through real-life situations and identify where the risk of homelessness was imminent. Many scenarios were drawn directly from actual case manager experiences.

Example Scenario: A family of four and mom just received a 10-day pay-or-vacate notice. She is currently one month behind in rent. She has not been behind in the past but had two incomes. Mom lives on a limited income of \$847 in disability pay and her 11-year old son receives a survivor benefit of \$460 per month. Dad passed away during Mom's pregnancy. Mom also receives food stamps. She has a husband, but he recently moved out and is not helping pay the rent. He moved out after their 5-year-old daughter passed away. Dad did not adopt the 11-year-old son, so is not required to pay child support. Mom's rent is currently \$1,000 per month. She has applied for Section 8 but is on a wait list. She is barely scraping by. Mom got behind because another family member recently passed and she had to travel to the funeral. She is depressed and feeling like she cannot cope much longer. She sees her deceased daughter in every room of the apartment. She desperately wants to move.

---

*This challenging scenario facilitated conversation on how to support a family who is not at imminent risk of homelessness. While the mom is unstable, she does have enough income to cover her rent. Discussions about how to best help this client included legal resources to see if the husband may be responsible for spousal support. Additionally, the mom would benefit from grief support. Finally, looking at ways to partner with DCHS' Developmental Disabilities Division could help the mom get connected to additional community resources. In this scenario, case managers understood they needed to provide resources and referrals to the family, but not flexible funding.*

## Training and Technical Assistance Make a Difference

Monthly learning circles have been a cornerstone for YFHPI. Learning circles are divided into two sections. The morning session is case manager-led and driven; case managers get together to share resources, discuss complicated case histories and lean on one another for support. Program staff are present and often use this time to provide one-on-one technical assistance as needed. The morning sessions also provide a time for case managers to provide critical feedback to DCHS staff on the often systemic barriers that make prevention work more difficult. (Example: clients who exit homeless housing programs unstable often find themselves at risk of homelessness and seeking YFHPI services.) The afternoon session is DCHS-led and driven and is where generalized training takes place.



### Case managers share the value of monthly learning circles:

*Learning circles have allowed me to develop professionally by being able to “confer and collaborate with other caseworkers; it’s a vital part of self-care.” – Greg Hollmann – Nexus Youth and Families*

*“The learning circles have been so valuable both for the on-going training being so relevant to the clients we serve and to be surrounded with other case managers doing the work who ask questions I might not have thought of. 25 heads are better than one. Not to mention the comradery we share!” – Cindy Obtinario – Friends of Youth*

*“Learning Circles have helped my personal and professional growth by collaborating and learning from others’ techniques and experiences. I like working with a variety of cultures.” – Thomas Bethea – The Arc of King County*

"I love the learning circles because I can speak to the other case managers about resources, issues they are having with clients, their contracts, the program, etc. I can also learn new ways to be more efficient in how I get my work done, and how my clients get their services." – Akia Forward – Multi-Service Center

### **Technical Assistance**

Another cornerstone for YFHPI has been the accessibility of YFHPI program staff to case managers in order to provide individualized training and assistance. Case managers have the opportunity to review individual client cases with staff to have a sounding board as they work to determine imminent risk of homelessness. Additionally, staff provide assistance to case managers in use of the prevention database. Case managers report:

*"Being able to contact County staff for technical assistance has been extremely helpful for me, especially being new to the supervisor position and having a brand new case manager. Whether our questions are about contract guidelines, billing or case management advice, staff is always quick to respond and provide us the information that we seek."* – Olga Lindbom – Open Doors for Multicultural Families

*"Having the ability to contact County staff for technical assistance has been a tremendous support for me to be able to perform my job responsibilities efficiently and effectively. It doesn't matter what questions I have had; with regards to billing, invoicing or questions about a particular client, they are very knowledgeable and always available to assist me."* – Tanya Robertson – Therapeutic Health Services

## Client Stories

Training does work. Intensive case manager training is making a difference in the lives of families identified to be at imminent risk of homelessness. Here are a few examples of the youth and families YFHPI has helped in 2017.

### Friends of Youth

"This family of eight was stably housed with Section 8 housing when the landlord gave notice he was selling his property. Mom is employed full-time and began the process of searching for another Section 8 house that would fit her large family. While searching for a new house for her family, mom suffered severe abdominal pain and had to have emergency surgery. She was diagnosed with kidney cancer. While the landlord extended the move-out date 30 days due to her medical complications, the recovery took longer than anticipated. Mom has a full-time job earning \$11.50 per hour in the hotel industry. After losing critical income, she also finally lost her housing. Asking friends to take some of her children and seeking out shelter for herself and her older kids, she reached out to Friends of Youth who was able to place her in a motel for two weeks while assisting with finding a house large enough for her family in the school district where her kids attend school. Friends of Youth case manager worked with other local agencies and collected enough funds for the family to pay deposits and rent for the new house. Mom and kids have been stabilized ever since YFHPI stepped in."



### **Nexus Youth and Families**

“We had a client that was doubled-up (sharing housing) with family in an unhealthy environment. Mom and boyfriend were both recovering addicts with a three-year-old child. The family member they were doubled up with was an active addict. They did not have the resources to move. The boyfriend was shot 30 days prior in a random road rage incident and was unable to work. Nexus began working with the family to establish jobs and get them moved out of the family home. Three weeks in, the boyfriend left the family and the mother was subsequently physically assaulted by a family member. We worked with mom on her employment options and offered financial planning. Mom went on to get employment, find housing, and begin budgeting while meeting with us on a regular basis. Almost a month later the mother and toddler moved into a new home and the mother received a promotion at work. Things were turning around! We never had to provide financial assistance. The family has maintained their housing stability.”

### **The Arc of King County**

“We have a family of five, referred to YFHPI by Seattle Children’s Hospital. The family was given two and a half weeks to move out by their landlord due to outstanding debt. Mom had back surgery, became unemployed, and was working against an outstanding electric bill of \$7,000. After surgery she was unable to keep up with her payment agreements so was at imminent risk of losing her housing. The family is a single mom raising four kids who each have disabilities: a 31-year-old son, 21-year-old daughter; 14-year-old son and 12-year-old son. The Arc of King County began working with the family in June of 2017. The YFHPI case manager negotiated with the collection agency to reduce the debt from \$7,000 to \$3,000. Friends and family stepped up to help cover most of the debt and The Arc contributed \$1,500.

The Arc worked with King County Housing Authority to secure the family housing in Renton. Mom has since been able to secure part-time employment with Bellevue Christian School as a part-time van driver. The family went from imminent risk of homelessness to stable through YFHPI.”



## Equity for All

Traveling throughout Seattle and most neighborhoods in King County, one doesn't have to go far to see the abundant diversity represented throughout the community. Having YFHPI providers who represent the same diversity has been an incredible asset to the critical work being done in homelessness prevention. A recent survey of YFHPI's providers identified that clients seeking services speak a total of 32 different languages with the most common languages being English, Spanish, Arabic and Somali. YFHPI has case managers fluent in the top four languages, as well as fluent in nine additional languages.



*"It is important to have a case manager that shares my culture and speaks Swahili because we understand each other. She understands my diverse cultural background which has helped us build a strong relationship and brought about a sense of identity and belonging.*

*I'm not intimidated to share my problems with my case manager because I feel she understands the problems and barriers we share as immigrants trying to navigate our way in this country. In my past experience when I shared my problems with people who did not speak my language, I felt a little lost when they would use some words and abbreviations that I felt made sense to them and not me."*

## Lessons Learned to Date

### Lessons in Program Implementation

YFHPI was designed using the highly successful DVHF model. The program design utilizes a progressive engagement model and has been YFHPI's guiding principle throughout implementation. YFHPI's flexible funding model is focused on providing "just enough" funding to stabilize households in their homes when imminent risk of losing housing is clear. YFHPI has expanded the highly successful DVHF model to fit the needs of a diverse community that includes members that may or may not be fleeing domestic violence. The model allows case managers to focus funding on housing stabilization, recognizing that expenses for a program focused primarily on housing

stabilization may look different for families with the same needs who are also fleeing domestic violence. Additionally, program staff perform a monthly review of all expenses to ensure resources spent are those most critical to preventing homelessness. While modest changes in funding allowances were made in 2017, YFHPI's flexible funds were utilized most commonly to pay for rent and past due rent, rental deposits, moving costs and utility assistance (see page 17 for a detailed breakdown of financial assistance provided).

### **Lessons/Challenges with Identifying Imminent Risk**

Identifying those that “will” become homeless without prevention assistance is viewed by many to be an impossible task. Research suggests that the key to eliminating homelessness is to prevent it in the first place; however, research also reveals the difficulty of predicting who will experience homelessness. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness’ strategy for ending homelessness among families and children by 2020 incorporates four primary elements, one of which is “connecting families to targeted prevention assistance where possible.”

In many ways, DCHS is at the forefront of developing a national best practice in the area of identifying those at highest risk of homelessness while determining the minimum levels of support needed to prevent it. The ability to establish a best practice has not come easily. For most case managers, initial work in prevention was challenging in that nearly all families presented to them in a state of crisis and appeared to be at “imminent risk.” However, after months of training, case managers have learned to work with families allowing them to create the space where they could tap into their own resources and lean on their own resiliency factors before stepping in to provide assistance. Case managers moved from a position of providing immediate financial assistance to working more directly with clients to guide them in reducing their own barriers to housing stability. As a result, one in five families have resolved their housing crisis with no financial assistance.



A housing crisis feels for clients like a big balloon ready to explode.

How can case managers help clients make their balloon seem smaller?



“The hardest part of my job is saying “no” when your client doesn’t meet all of the qualifications and knowing you can’t save everyone.” – Thomas Bethea -- The Arc of King County

“The hardest part of my job is that there isn’t enough of anything. Not enough money, not enough resources, not enough time.” – Greg Hollmann -- Nexus Youth and Families

## Program Performance and Outcomes: Preliminary Data

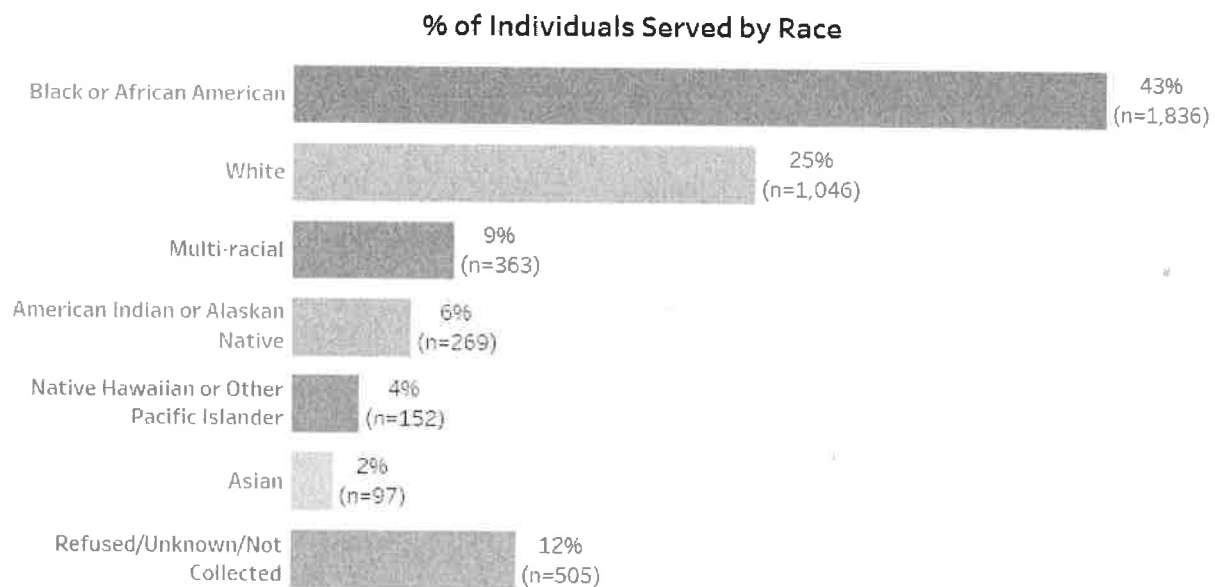
Throughout the implementation of YFHPI, the DCHS Performance Measurement and Evaluation team has conducted ongoing data analysis to monitor program performance and client outcomes. These preliminary data reflect progress made during the first year of YFHPI implementation.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Clients

More than 1,100 families and 200 unaccompanied youth were served in YFHPI in 2017, comprising more than 4,200 people all together. More than 60 percent of clients were people of color, suggesting that the program is reaching those who HMIS data show are at disproportionate risk of experiencing homelessness. Among children and youth ages 0 to 24, an even greater proportion – more than 65 percent – were youth of color.

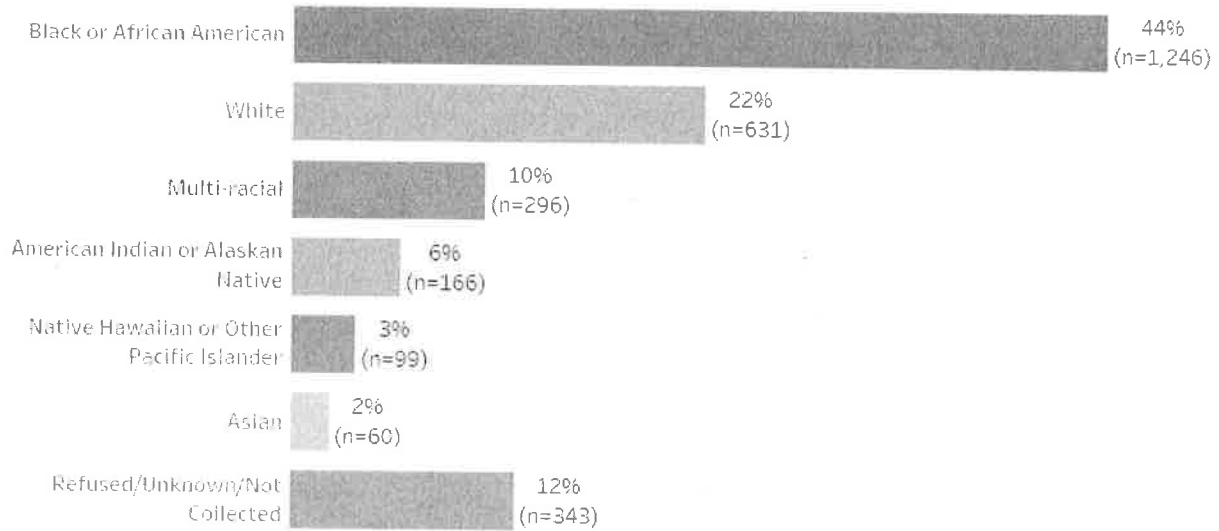
### Race

The first chart below shows the number of individuals of all ages who were served by YFHPI in 2017 by race. The second chart shows the race of youth ages 24 and under. Racial composition of children and youth was very similar to all clients served.





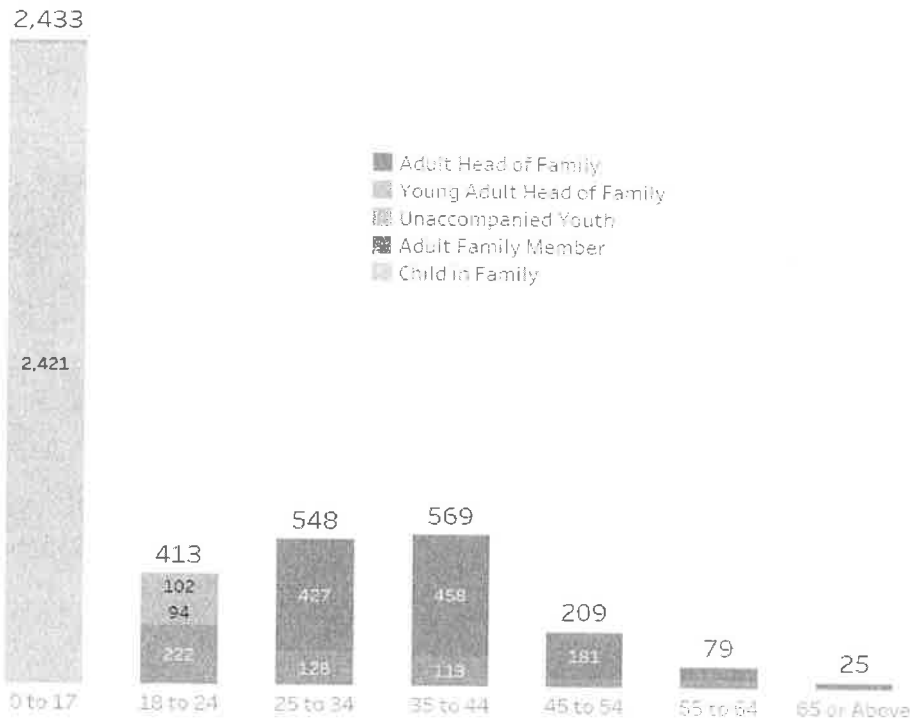
### % of Children and Youth (Age 0-24) Served by Race



### Age and Household Type

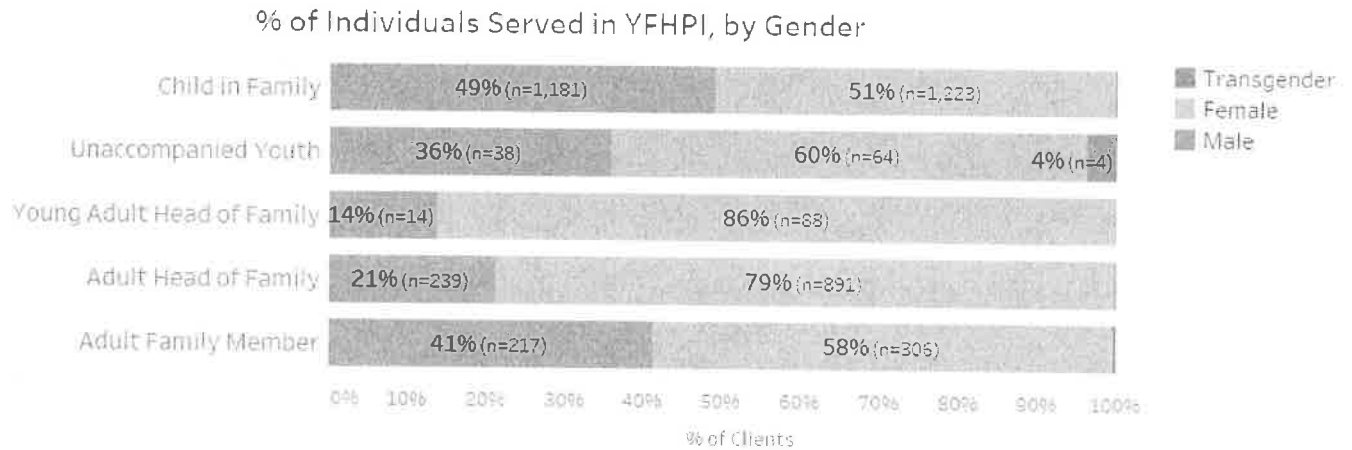
More than half of the clients served in 2017 were children under the age of 18 (N=2,433). The vast majority of the youth under age 18 were children in families, except for 15 youth who were unaccompanied minors or young parents. There were 94 unaccompanied young adults ages 18 to 24, and 102 families were headed by young adults ages 18 to 24.

### Individuals Served by Age



## Gender

Sixty percent of clients served in YFHPI identified as female and 40 percent identified as male; less than one percent identified as transgender. Among children in families, gender was more evenly split with 49 percent male and 51 percent female. However, the majority of young adults ages 18-24 were female, whether unaccompanied (60% female) or young parents (86% female). Most families had a female head of household (79%). Four percent of unaccompanied young adults and less than one percent of other adults identified as transgender.



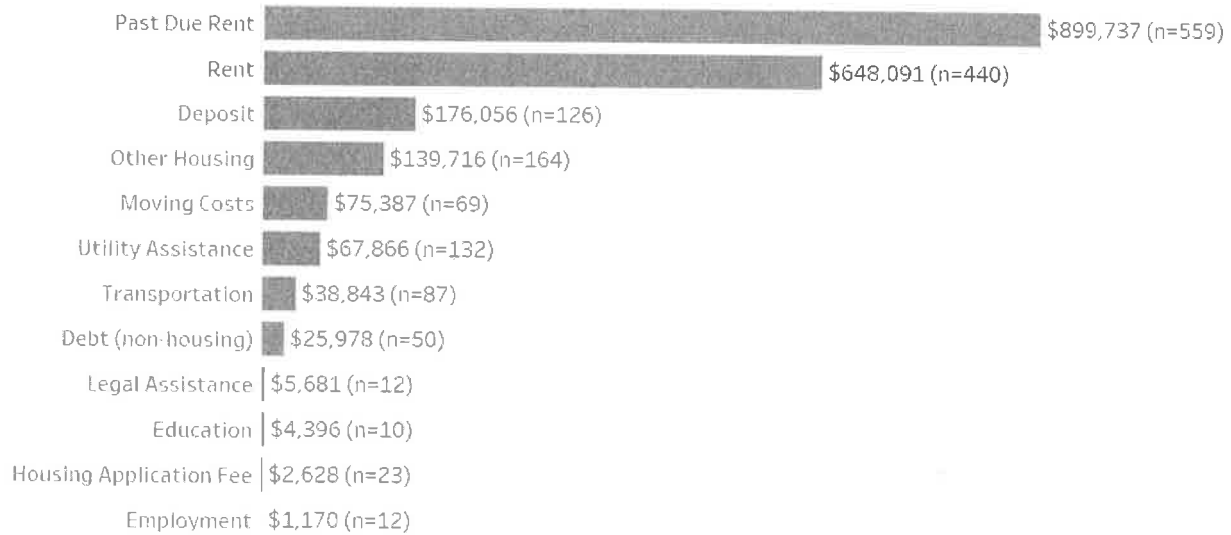
## Flexible Financial Assistance and Case Management

YFHPI providers utilized \$2.1M in flexible funds in 2017 to maintain stable housing and prevent homelessness. The average amount of financial assistance provided was about \$1,900 per household and the median was just under \$1,400. Past due rent and rent assistance were the most common types of financial assistance provided, accounting for almost three-quarters of all financial assistance. Deposits and other housing-related costs—such as temporary housing (e.g. motels) and gift cards for household necessities—were the next most frequent types of assistance provided.

Furthermore, 19 percent of households did not receive any financial assistance, but rather were able to work with their case manager to resolve their housing crisis through other means.

Ninety-four percent of the households served in 2017 obtained or maintained housing; only 41 households (6%) entered Coordinated Entry for All or another program in HMIS indicating they experienced homelessness after starting YFHPI.

### Total Amount of Financial Assistance Provided, by Category



## Evaluation – Next Steps

The outcomes report submitted in 2017 identified working with an external evaluator as the next steps as mandated in the Ordinance 18373. The County has made efforts to explore and select an external evaluator for the YFHPI program. In May 2017, DCHS was one of three jurisdictions awarded a planning grant from the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT (J-PAL) State and Local Innovation Initiative—a foundation-backed initiative to provide pro-bono assistance and flexible funding for one year to governments interested in rigorous evaluation of their anti-poverty efforts. The Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunity (LEO) at University of Notre Dame is the research team partnering with DCHS for this planning grant.

J-PAL was founded in 2003 at MIT to provide expertise on randomized evaluations of anti-poverty policy, and currently works across the world on evaluations focused on housing, health, education, crime prevention and labor markets. J-PAL-affiliated professors and professional staff work with innovative partners to evaluate social policy. In North America, J-PAL is currently working with government partners from Baltimore and Philadelphia to Puerto Rico and South Carolina, and is working in partnership with LEO in Rochester, New York and Santa Clara, California.

LEO was founded in 2012 at the University of Notre Dame to reduce poverty and improve lives of people in disadvantaged communities through evidence-based programs and policies. LEO collaborates with social service providers, government agencies, and other researchers across the United States to conduct impact evaluations to identify the anti-poverty programs that effectively and permanently move people out of poverty. LEO is currently involved in more than 20 projects throughout the United States, focusing on programs in the areas of criminal justice, education, health, housing and self-sufficiency.

LEO is partnering with J-PAL and DCHS, bringing specialized research knowledge and experience in working with governments to build evaluations into existing programs. In 2017, they began an intensive, participatory planning process to assess the feasibility of a randomized impact evaluation of YFHPI. LEO and J-PAL have partnered with YFHPI program staff, DCHS performance measurement and evaluation staff, and all 25 YFHPI agencies throughout the planning process to develop and refine the research questions and study design. This process has led to a mutually acceptable research design, increased the researchers' credibility, and promoted trust and buy-in among the agencies.

The evaluation with LEO will begin in late spring 2018 and will focus on measuring the impact of case management and flexible funds compared with flexible funds alone when preventing homelessness. The research team has worked closely with county staff and software vendors to build the evaluation into the existing prevention database in order to streamline the evaluation and minimize the burden to case managers and clients. The evaluation design and research questions were developed through a collaborative process with particular consideration for equity and social justice.

As part of the evaluation plan, DCHS has adopted a standard tool to assess the risk of experiencing homelessness. This tool is intended to address the need identified by program staff and case managers for a standard way to assess imminent risk and determine program eligibility. The evidence-based Homelessness Prevention Risk Tool was developed by Matt White, Senior Associate with Abt Associates, and is currently used by the City of Seattle-funded homelessness prevention programs. YFHPI case managers will begin using the risk tool in May 2018, empowering them to assess risk of imminent homelessness among their clients in a standard, unbiased way. Preliminary data and more details about the evaluation will be shared in the 2018 Best Starts for Kids Annual Report. The report will also describe progress made in 2018, successes and challenges, and next steps for the YFHPI.

## **Conclusion**

King County voters determined in November of 2015 that intervening early to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and their communities was important. In November of 2017, the same voters agreed that supporting human services for vulnerable populations was important, passing the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy. King County further committed in 2017 to a "Pro-Equity Policy Agenda aimed at expanding access to opportunity in eight areas, including child and youth development..." King County has invested upstream where the needs are the greatest, in community partnerships and in programs that ensure kids have their best start at life. The Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative is at the forefront of proving homelessness prevention is not only possible but the first step in ending homelessness once and for all. 2018 will be a year of gathering the evidence that supports this bold statement.