

THE BRIDGE PROGRAM

Safe, Healthy Returns to Community from
Inpatient Behavioral Health Treatment Programs

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Washington state legislature enacted SB 6560 to ensure systems of care discharge young people to safe, stable housing. Some progress has been made since then, and more work remains to fulfill the promise of this reform, specifically for unaccompanied young people being discharged from inpatient behavioral health treatment. In this context, the term *behavioral health* includes both mental health and substance use treatment.

[The most recent data available](#) show that about 75% of young people exiting a Washington state system of care (including foster care, criminal justice, and behavioral health care) who experience homelessness within 12 months of their discharge left inpatient behavioral health programs. The Bridge Program is designed to change this trend so that young people who have the courage to enter treatment have safe housing and services when they return to community.

THE BRIDGE

The Bridge is a statewide collaboration between community-based housing providers, behavioral health discharge planners, other community-based professionals, and young people with lived experience. The group aims to increase the number of unaccompanied young people who return to community with safe housing and services upon exiting an inpatient behavioral health facility.

SCOPE AND FOCUS

The Bridge will empower these young people and their supporters by:

- **Providing Cross-System Coordination and Training:** Developing relationships among service providers. Providing training, education and awareness of resources, as well as culturally and developmentally responsive best practices for young people returning to community from a behavioral health inpatient treatment program.
- **Coordinating Case Conferencing:** Strengthening the process for young people who face having unstable or no housing upon discharge from inpatient behavioral health programs.
- **Envisioning Lasting Reforms and Securing Resources:** Setting goals for future advocacy and systemic change, identifying policies and practices that could be reformed 1, 3, or 5 years from the present.

Members of The Bridge program will also work together to ensure the gains young people make during the inpatient treatment process are reinforced by creating individualized **Return to Community Plans**. Each plan will include developmentally and culturally responsive safe housing options, supportive services, and enrichment opportunities to meet the young person's needs upon being discharged from inpatient behavioral health programs.

HOW TO ENGAGE

The Bridge Program meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 1:00-2:30 p.m. To learn more or get involved with the group, contact jim@northstaradvocates.org.

If you or someone you know are seeking resources to get help or enter an inpatient program, please visit:

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/free-or-low-cost-health-care/i-need-behavioral-health-support>

