



Youth Access and Resource Program (YARP) Charter

Background:

The 2021 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey shows that suicide is the second leading cause of death for Washington teens 15-19 years of age and that 45 percent of 12th graders felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped doing their usual activities.

According to the new data in the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey, depressive feelings and contemplation or planning suicide significantly decreased from 2021 to 2023. Even so, 30% of 10th graders reported persistent depressive feelings, and nearly 15% reported contemplating suicide. While this is an unacceptable level of youth struggling with suicidal thoughts, it is also the lowest rate we have seen in Washington in 20 years.

The same improving trends seen among youth in general were also seen among sexually or gender-diverse (LGBTQ+) youth and those reporting a disability. However, many of these students still experience far higher levels of mental health issues. Depressive feelings were nearly two times higher for students who identify as female compared to male, more than two times higher for LGBTQ+ youth, and three times higher among students identifying as having a disability.

Amid ongoing behavioral health needs among youth—particularly those with disabilities—and significant workforce shortages affecting acute care facilities and emergency departments, the Health Care Authority (HCA), Kids' Mental Health Pierce County (KMHPC), and Developmental Disabilities Community Services (DDCS) have partnered to implement regional Youth Navigator Teams statewide. The Youth Navigator Program improves access to and coordination of behavioral health services for school-aged youth, with priority given to those requiring intensive support or seeking behavioral health care in emergency departments.

In 2022, Greater Columbia Behavioral Health—ASO established the Youth Access and Resource Program (YARP) as the designated Youth Navigation program for our region. The program was created with the direction of our Steering Committee, whose continued involvement is critical to sustaining and advancing YARP. Together, we work to identify challenges, address systemic gaps, and acknowledge successes as the program grows to serve increasing numbers of youth and families across our nine-county region.

Our Mission: To establish and strengthen collaborative communication and service coordination, and to facilitate multidisciplinary teams that improve access to and coordination of services for school-aged youth with complex behavioral health needs.

Our Vision: We believe our communities are deeply invested in supporting the behavioral health needs of youth. Our goal is to build on this commitment by developing a diverse coalition of community partners who are motivated to identify service gaps and advance



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creative solutions, ensuring a responsive and well-coordinated system of care for youth and their families.

Our Values: We believe in treating all individuals with dignity, respect, and compassion. We are committed to providing culturally responsive, strength-based services that honor client voice and choice. Our work is dedicated to building a youth and family system of care that reflects these values.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee will be responsible for operationalizing our vision and bringing it to life within our communities. Comprised of key stakeholders from multiple youth-serving systems, the YARP Steering Committee will identify actionable strategies, set measurable goals, and promote community education and advocacy on behalf of youth and their families.

Implementation Teams: As needed, we will engage sub-groups of committed partners who share the mission, vision, and values of the Youth Access and Resource Program to move forward priority projects identified by the Steering Committee. These teams will help ensure continued progress in increasing access to community resources, strengthening stabilization support for youth and families, and advancing education and advocacy efforts.

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT): The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) will include individuals selected by the Steering Committee for their expertise in areas that influence a youth's health and well-being. Staff from Greater Columbia Behavioral Health's YARP program will convene and facilitate the MDT, which will collaborate to address the needs of youth with complex behavioral health challenges.

Within our region, six MDTs are available to support youth and families. These geographically based teams are formed from regional partners and are situated in Benton/Franklin, Columbia/Walla Walla, Kittitas, Whitman, Asotin/Garfield, and Yakima.

Program Roles Defined:

The **Program Administrator** is responsible for overseeing the Youth Navigator Program, facilitating Steering Committee and MDT meetings, and compiling and submitting all required data.

The **Care Coordinator** facilitates care coordination meetings and promotes collaboration and communication among the systems involved with each youth and family.

Youth Navigators function as the primary contacts for youth, families, and community providers. They support navigation of services and ensure timely connection to appropriate resources, programs, and supports.



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Together, the YARP team provides advocacy, education, and resource support to youth, families, and community members. The team also participates in community outreach and educational events whenever possible.

YARP Contact Information:

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