

January 2001

Evaluation of the HOPE Act: New State Services for Street Youth Interim Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1999, the Legislature enacted the HOPE Act,¹ which created two new state services for “street youth.” Street youth are defined in statute as older adolescents who live outdoors or in an unsafe location.

- **HOPE Centers** are temporary residential facilities where youth can stay up to 30 days while being evaluated for appropriate placement, education, and treatment services, including family reconciliation if possible.
- **Responsible Living Skills Programs (RLSP)** provide both residential placement and transitional living services to state dependent youth aged 16 to 18 whose other foster care placements have been unsuccessful.

Funding was provided in the 1999–2001 biennial budget to begin phased-in implementation of 75 HOPE and 75 RLSP beds between 2000 and 2003 (\$2.6 million), as well as chemical dependency assessment services (\$106,000).

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) was directed to review the effectiveness of HOPE Centers and RLSPs and report findings and recommendations by December 1, 2001. The Institute’s study is organized around three questions:

- What are the characteristics of youth served by HOPE Centers and RLSPs?
- What services are provided through HOPE Centers and RLSPs?
- What outcomes result from participation in a HOPE Center or RLSP?

Interim Report

This interim report covers the following about HOPE Centers and RLSPs:

- A) Legislative Intent**
- B) Implementation Update**
- C) Characteristics of Youth Served: Preliminary Findings**
- D) Services Provided: Preliminary Findings**

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¹ Chapter 267, Laws of 1999.