



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Enhanced Respite Services for Children Ages 8-20

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5950
Chapter 376, Laws of 2024
Section 203 1(n)
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Executive Summary

Enhanced Respite Services provide short-term community-based stabilization as an alternative to institutional care. These services support behavioral stabilization of the child, offer respite relief and develop an individualized plan with caregivers to help their child remain in the family home. Washington State Legislature has supported this important resource for Washington families in biennial budgets since 2015.

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5950 23-25 biennial budget](#) directs us to create an annual respite use report. The report must include:

- The number of children who have used enhanced respite services in the fiscal year.
- The location and number of days per month that each respite bed was occupied.

Funding Timeline

- 2015-2017: Initial funds allocated to develop eight enhanced respite beds.
- 2017-2019: Additional funds allocated to support the ERS resource.
- 2019-2021: Funds allocated to support five additional enhanced respite beds.
- 2021-2023: The Legislature approved a 40 percent increase in the ERS daily rate.
- 2023-2025: Maintained current funding for the program.



*“Our son really enjoys his stay and providers did an excellent job taking care of him.”
–Parent of ERS Youth*

Background and Context

In 2011, the Washington State Legislature amended [Chapter 71A.20 RCW](#). This directed the Department of Social and Health Services to establish community crisis stabilization services. No person under age 16 may receive services at a Residential Habilitation Center. Individuals aged 16-20 may receive short-term services at an RHC only if service options are not available in the community.

In 2019, we surveyed families as a part of the [DSHS DDA No Paid Services Report \(2021\)](#) to see what services people need and prefer. Results of the report show that families identify out-of-home respite and behavioral services as essential in caring for their child in the family home. It is important to have out-of-home respite available to meet the needs of the child while also providing therapeutic supports rooted in positive behavior support principles for families raising children with complex behavioral support needs.

"We have reconnected and recommitted to welcoming our child back into a more productive and loving space than we were capable of providing for him when we were in crisis." –Parent of ERS Youth



Occupancy Rates and Number of Clients Served

The table below illustrates enhanced respite bed occupancy for fiscal year 2024. During fiscal year 2023, DDA developed two new providers and established contracts bringing the total number of enhanced respite beds to five. These provider contracts were maintained in fiscal year 2024.

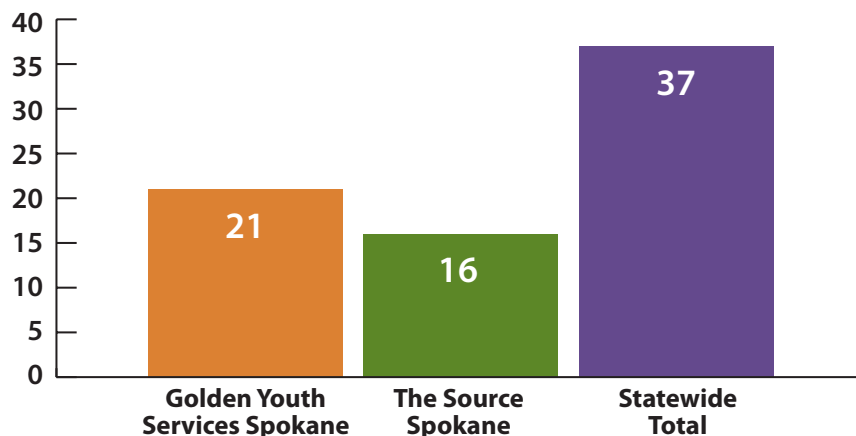
Enhanced Respite Services Occupancy Rates - Fiscal Year 2024

Location	Quarter 1 Jul-Sep 23	Quarter 2 Oct-Dec 23	Quarter 3 Jan-Mar 24	Quarter 4 Apr-Jun 24	Total Year
Golden Youth Services Bed A	95%	75%	35%	64%	67%
Golden Youth Services Bed B	91%	81%	27%	65%	66%
Golden Youth Services Bed C	77%	81%	60%	71%	72%
The Source Bed A	86%	74%	93%	73%	82%
The Source Bed B	88%	78%	87%	66%	80%
Statewide	87%	78%	60%	68%	73%

Children's Residential Stabilization Services Unit, Sept.19, 2024

This next table illustrates the ERS client count statewide by individual provider location for fiscal year 2024. ERS served 37 clients in fiscal year 2024 compared to 12 clients served in fiscal year 2023, more than three times the number of clients served. There was targeted provider development in fiscal year 2023, which paved the way for the large increase in clients served in fiscal year 2024.

Enhanced Respite Services Client Count by Location - Fiscal Year 2024



Children's Residential Stabilization Services Unit, Sept.19, 2024

Service Barriers

"Please get more options for enhanced respite on the west side of the state. It was really hard for our family to drive 6 hours there & back in the day on arrival/pick up."

–Family Member of ERS Youth



Client and Family Specific Barriers

- Some clients behavioral support needs require additional staff. When a client requires 2:1 staffing, two beds must be reserved, reducing overall occupancy.
- Youth in crisis may require interventions that exceed a provider's ability to support.
- Last-minute cancelations by the client create unforeseen vacancies, impacting occupancy rates.
- Services are presently available in eastern Washington, making ERS inaccessible to many clients in western Washington.

Provider Development Barriers

- Prospective providers unwilling to contract at the current rate due to:
 - High operating and administrative costs.
 - High costs related to maintaining qualified and trained staff, including a Master's level consultant.
 - Extensive needs of the clients requesting the service.
- Providers report challenges finding affordable homes due to the limited rental market, city zoning and permitting constraints.
- Start-up costs often include extensive home modifications to increase client access, which can be cost prohibitive or create delays in contracting.
- Prior to contracting, a setting must be licensed, which can take several months to complete.

Resource Development

We are prioritizing resource development of stabilization respite services in our client's local communities. This objective allows clients to access behavioral stabilization and supports while reducing travel for families, maintaining education, enhancing peer relationships and preserving support systems.

To focus on these endeavors, in fiscal year 2024 we have:

- Actively recruited ERS providers.
- Focused resource development to support quality service delivery.
- Developed website platforms to showcase a variety of DSHS DDA services.
- Made an efficient process to help field staff refer individuals to services they need.



"ERS is an incredible program...one that we are so excited we can look forward to participating in again next calendar year." – Parent of ERS Youth

Next steps for fiscal year 2025:

- Contract with prospective providers in western Washington.
- Continue to recruit providers with a goal of contracting for all 13 beds.
- Optimize communications to promote new locations and broaden service access.

Summary

We heard that families need behavioral stabilization services and a break in caregiving as key factors in their ability to continue to meet their child's needs in their own home ([DSHS DDA No Paid Services Report, 2021](#)). Children and youth with complex needs especially have limited respite options. ERS is strategically designed to meet these needs by:

- Building access to supports for young people with complex needs.
- Integrating stabilization and respite options for the client and caregiver.
- Offering services that empower clients to stay and thrive in their local communities.

Enhanced Respite Services continues to expand statewide, tripling the amount of youth served in the past year. With demand expected to grow, we are focusing on provider recruitment in western Washington for fiscal year 2025.



*"The team there is so professional, compassionate, knowledgeable, and accommodating. I felt 100% safe with my child there knowing he was in good hands."
–Parent of ERS Youth*