



Snohomish County
Dave Somers
County Executive

Contact:

Kelsey Nyland
Kelsey.Nyland@snoco.org
425-407-3071

Executive Somers Announces \$6.5 Million Investment in Youth Mental Health and Wellness

Plan Will Increase Mental Health Services for Highly Impacted Youth, Reduce Barriers Including Cost

Snohomish County, Wash., June 21, 2023 – Executive Dave Somers today announced a \$6.5 million investment to expand mental health services for young people. This includes increasing the number of qualified mental health professionals, developing community-driven programs, and addressing challenges faced by disproportionately impacted populations. This funding comes from the County’s federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation. Addressing the impact COVID-19 had on young people was identified as a [top community priority](#) during the County’s pandemic recovery outreach.

“There’s no denying that the pandemic took a significant toll on young people. We’re seeing an increase in anxiety and disconnectedness among our youth, with highly vulnerable young people even more impacted,” said Executive Somers. “With these investments, we’re increasing the availability of mental health services that meet the diverse needs of our young people to help ensure they can access care where and when they need it.”

The [statewide Healthy Youth Survey](#) indicates that 10th and 12th graders in Snohomish County are experiencing significantly more anxiety compared to before the pandemic. Similarly, many more students are reporting they are unable to stop or control their worrying. Countywide [high school dropout rates](#) are similar overall to [pre-pandemic rates](#). However, youth experiencing homelessness, youth who speak a language other than English at home, and youth in the foster care system have seen a 20 percent, 25 percent, and 40 percent increase in the dropout rate when compared to 2019, respectively.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth in our community suffered unimaginable damage to their mental health and disruptions in their lives during an already challenging time. I am proud that Snohomish County is putting an emphasis on funding for supportive programs and activities for our youth to regain normalcy in their lives while prioritizing mental health,” said Chair Jared Mead ([District 4](#)).

“Our youth were some of the hardest hit from the pandemic shutdowns. Lack of broadband access and transportation barriers make these challenges even worse for many youth living in rural areas,” said Vice Chair Nate Nehring ([District 1](#)). “These investments will help young people access much-needed care and will also make up for some of the learning loss over the past three years.”

“The pandemic has been especially difficult for young people because of the disruption to their development during a critical time for growth in their lives,” said Councilmember Megan Dunn ([District 2](#)). “As a mom to two teenagers in public school, I can empathize with parents and families and I’m glad that the County will be able to support services that will help make up for lost time.”

“Imagine trying to navigate through high school when you don’t even know where you’re going to sleep tonight? Or worrying about getting kicked out of your house just for being who you are? Our kids are hurting and these investments will help stabilize and keep our kids healthy and engaged,” said Councilmember Strom Peterson ([District 3](#)).

“It is vital all of our communities have access to behavioral health services. The youth in particular in Snohomish County has seen a greater impact on their mental health than most and I am grateful we have funds going out to provide services where they are so crucially needed,” said Councilmember Sam Low ([District 5](#)).

The County will use this funding to enhance and expand existing mental health and wellness activities and invest in new strategies that do not rely on certificated or licensed mental health professionals. Focus populations for these efforts include LGBTQ+ youth, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth, and youth who are experiencing homelessness.

The spending plan breaks down as follows:

- Supporting Vulnerable Youth, \$3,200,000
- After School Behavioral Health Support, \$1,500,000
- Onward Learning, \$1,200,000
- CASA Sensory Room, \$100,000
- Youth Career Exploration, \$500,000

Descriptions of each program [are available here](#).

Given the urgency of need in the community and ARPA’s compressed timeline, the County’s intention is to distribute the vast majority of funding by the end of 2023.

Executive Somers established the Office of Recovery and Resilience to guide the County’s recovery work by ensuring federal pandemic relief is administered quickly, effectively, and equitably. Information on the County’s recovery work can be found at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/recovery.

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