

Recommendations for License Exempt Community-Based COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Facilities for Children and Youth

Intent

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on legal obligations and best practices for COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine (I/Q) facilities to serve homeless youth who are under the age of 18 and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (referred to as “unaccompanied minors”).

An I/Q facility is any entity that is operated by a county or pursuant to a contract with a county and that provides temporary services to homeless youth who have been diagnosed with, infected with, or exposed to COVID-19. I/Q facilities are not considered to be “agencies” under RCW 74.15.020(1). Accordingly, I/Q facilities **need not be licensed** in order to accept unaccompanied minors.

I/Q facilities are urged to provide access to unaccompanied minors in order to reduce the risk of community spread of COVID.

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Legal Obligation Identified in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW)

Notification to Parent, Law Enforcement, or Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

[RCW 13.32A.082](#) requires notification as a pathway for an unlicensed facility to obtain legal authority to provide care to youth. The facility shall promptly report the location of the child within eight hours.

Existing shelters who transfer youth to I/Q facilities should take the lead on notification required by RCW 13.32A.082.

If I/Q facilities receive non-transferred youth “off the street” and are unable to notify a parent or legal guardian, under the exigent circumstances of the COVID-19 emergency it may be most expedient to report a youth’s location to DCYF’s intake by telephone at the local CPS number or toll-free 1-886-ENDHARM.

If the child is a state dependent, the unlicensed provider shall receive placement permission from the child’s assigned social worker.

Law enforcement or DCYF intake (either the local CPS number or toll-free 1-886-ENDHARM) must be notified of any youth twelve years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by an adult and is requesting service, and you are unable to serve the child due to his or her age.



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Mandated Reporting

[RCW 26.44.030](#) requires mandated reporters (caregivers) to report suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation to the department (either the local CPS number or toll-free 1-886-ENDHARM). It would be beneficial to include mandated reporter training for all staff and/or have staff sign a mandated reporter statement.

Recommendation from Group Care WACs 110-145

The following recommendations serve as guidance on best practices when serving unaccompanied minors in residential settings

Mandated Reporting

It is recommended that facilities adhere to mandated reporting laws. This includes calling either the local CPS number or the toll free 1-866-ENDHARM line if it is suspected a child or youth has been abused or neglected either in their family of origin or by facility staff. It is also recommended that the facility create an internal protocol and process to address concerns of child abuse or neglect that are not accepted for investigation by law enforcement to ensure safety of children at their facility. This protocol should mirror other unlicensed juvenile facilities in their county.

Staffing Ratio

It is recommended that facilities adhere to the group home licensing staffing ratio. [WAC 110-145-2035](#) and [WAC 110-145-1480](#) provides requirements for staff ratios. Group homes are required to have one direct care staff on duty for every eight children in the group home. This preserves a one staff to eight child ratio during day and evening shifts. During overnight sleeping hours, have at least one awake staff on duty if it is mixed population or there are more than six children in care. It is also recommended that you have one back up or on call staff available at all times to report to the facility as soon as possible but no later than 30 minutes.

Background Checks

It is recommended all staff and volunteers complete a fingerprint-based background check prior to having unsupervised contact with minors placed at the facility. [WAC 110-145-1325](#) provides requirements for background checks for group care staff. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the electronic fingerprint vendor and local law enforcement agencies have closed. This is preventing or significantly delaying providers from completing the required fingerprints. Because of this, DCYF has implemented changes effective immediately. An applicant who requires fingerprints may be conditionally approved for the purpose of the background check if they pass an in-state name and date-of-birth check. They will have to complete the fingerprint process when available.

Shared use of Space

It is recommended that youth do not have contact with adults who are also receiving services in the facility, including shared spaces such as restroom, dining areas, or other common areas. Ideally, unaccompanied minor should not be housed in the same shelter as adults.

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Age Grouping

It is recommended that younger youth be grouped together and older youth be grouped together. [WAC 110-145-2080](#) allows youth ages 13 through 17 to be grouped together and youth 17 through 20 to be grouped together.

Bedroom Sharing

It is recommended that a facility follow the requirements for bedrooms in an overnight youth shelter. [WAC 110-145-2105](#) provides guidance on the number of beds in a shelter and who can share a common sleeping area. The Department of Health (DOH) helps establish the criteria for an overnight shelter.

Reporting Responsibilities when a Child is Missing from Care

Due to the COVID-19 virus, youth who leave the facility put themselves at risk as well as the general public. It is recommended to follow [WAC 110-145-1540](#) when creating policies and procedures when a youth refuses to remain in your care or whose whereabouts are unknown. This is especially critical when serving dependent youth in notifying the DCYF caseworker.

Other

It is recommended that you develop a checklist to ensure that all requirements are met. Below is the checklist the Licensing Division of DCYF uses for licensing group homes and staffed residential homes.



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Health and Safety Recommendations Specific to COVID-19 Pandemic

The following resources had been developed by [WA State Department of Health](#) and [Department of Children Youth and Families](#):

- [Planning Guide For Local Governments, Setting Up Assessment And Recovery Locations For COVID-19](#)
- [Recommendations for Community-Based Facilities during a COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Recommendations for Homeless Shelter Facilities during a COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Novel Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Guidance for Foster Care Group Home Facilities](#)
- [COVID-19 Tips for Homeless Service Providers \(PDF\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Group Care Guidance, Prevention, Intervention and Quarantine Plan](#)
- [Interim Prioritization Guidelines for Allocation of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [Recommended Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Employees and Visitors](#)
- [Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings](#)

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- Local or Tribal Emergency Management Authority

Staff Duties, Responsibilities and Qualification Recommendations

Summary

The primary responsibilities of the Residential Youth Worker is to supervise and support residents and to carry out the day-to-day activities and operations of a residential program. The Residential Youth worker is responsible for ensuring program and facility safety, monitoring resident movement, and supporting structured programming. Work is performed indoors and outdoors in a short term or long term residential setting. These are 24/7 facility, schedules could vary depending on facility need. Daily contact with traumatized children or youth with, emotional and behavior challenges, including some contact with those who may be angry, depressed distraught, ill, or frustrated and/or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities:

- Client Monitoring
 - Performs and documents daily shift activities (day, evening, or overnight) as required by program policies and standards.
 - Assesses and responds appropriately to resident behaviors, attitudes and dispositions.
- Program Operations
 - Conducts physical grounds and facility safety checks
 - Ensures compliance with all health/hygiene, safety and maintenance requirements.
 - Oversees resident chores and cleaning responsibilities.
 - Models competency, good judgment, and self-control in the presence of children and when performing duties
 - Assist with intake and discharge procedures for all residents upon arrival and at exit.
 - Conducts program orientations for newly arrived residents.
 - Prepares informational and incident reports as necessary per supervisor or shift lead direction.
 - Assists in and/ or monitor the delivery, storage, preparation and service of meals.
 - Stores, monitors and dispenses resident medications per prescribed protocol.
- Communication and Collaboration
 - Engages in clear, consistent, and professional communication with all residents, program staff, service providers and community members.
 - Models pro-social and appropriate behaviors and suggests alternatives to inappropriate or disruptive behaviors
 - Promotes and models teamwork and collaboration with co-workers.
 - Attends scheduled staff meetings, program meetings as appropriate or upon request and complete required trainings.

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Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Demonstrate competency, good judgment, and self-control in the presence of children and when performing their duties.
- Have the skills and ability to work successfully with the special needs, behavior challenged, traumatized children.
- Effective communication and problem-solving skills.

Qualifications

- Be at least twenty-one years of age,
- Have a high school diploma or high school or equivalency course of study (GED/HSEC),
- Have at least one year of experience working directly with children (preferred)
- Have the skills and ability to work successfully with the special needs of children in care,
- Have effective communication and problem-solving skills

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