



Opportunity Youth

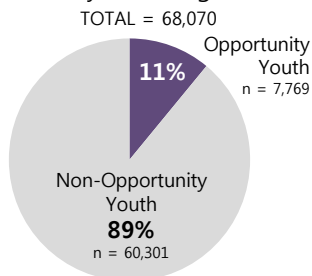
Young People Disengaged from School and Work in South King County

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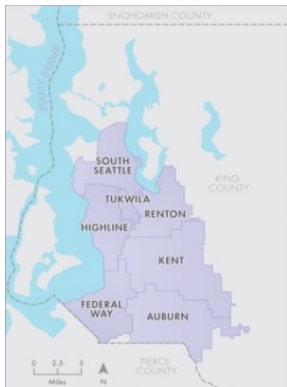
Report to the Community Center for Education Results, the Office of Financial Management's Education Research & Data Center, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.
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THIS REPORT EXAMINES DSHS-served youth, aged 16 to 24, who were not engaged in school or work in Academic Year 2012 and who had previously attended school in the Road Map region of south King County.¹ Of the total population of youth ages 16 to 24 who were served by DSHS between 2000 and 2012 and attended Road Map schools, about 11 percent had no connection to school or work in Academic Year 2012. African American, Hispanic, and American Indian youth are over-represented among Opportunity Youth.² We aim to identify key segments of this population and the barriers they face, report risk factors observed and services they received in prior years, and understand how programs may better serve and engage these young people.

Served by DSHS, Ages 16-24



SOUTH KING COUNTY ROAD MAP REGION



SOURCE: Community Center for Education Results, Seattle WA, 2015

Q. What current barriers do Opportunity Youth face that may keep them from school and work and what have they experienced in the past?

Key Findings

Opportunity Youth have current life situations that make it difficult to engage in school or work. Common barriers that may explain disengagement include parenthood, incarceration, disability, and homelessness.

Opportunity Youth have also experienced a number of risk factors prior to becoming disengaged. Opportunity Youth are more likely to have a history of court involvement, substance abuse, mental illness, and child welfare involvement than other DSHS-served youth. These risks may accumulate over time leading to future disengagement.

There are opportunities to connect disengaged youth to education and employment. Opportunity Youth have interacted with multiple systems, including the criminal justice, behavioral health, child welfare, and public assistance systems. There are opportunities to better connect youth served by these systems to education and the workforce so that they are supported, disengagement is prevented, and those who become Opportunity Youth are provided pathways to reengage.

¹ See technical notes for information about the process used to identify Opportunity Youth in south King County's Road Map region.

² See technical notes for demographics of the population.

Key Segments of the Opportunity Youth Population

First, we examine key segments of the Opportunity Youth population that have clear barriers to engaging in employment or education.

Youth Who are Parents

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Overall prevalence = **34%** n = 2,668 of 7,769

HIGH RISK SUBGROUP ▶ WOMEN = 49%



Over 1 in 3 Opportunity Youth ages 16 to 24 (male and female) had parented a child according to birth records, child support records, Department of Corrections visitation data, or public assistance household data.

- The figure was highest for women—1 in 2 female Opportunity Youth had a child.

Parenting responsibilities and the need for childcare may make engaging in work or school difficult for Opportunity Youth who are parents.

Homeless Youth

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Overall prevalence = **29%** n = 2,291 of 7,769

HIGH RISK SUBGROUP ▶ ALL DROPOUTS = 34%

Homeless?



Nearly 1 in 3 Opportunity Youth were facing homelessness during the year.

- Rates were slightly higher among Opportunity Youth who lacked a high school degree.

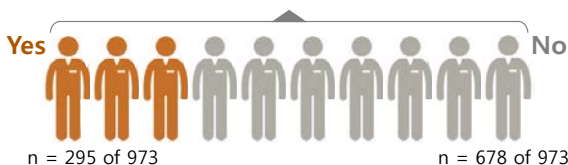
For a segment of Opportunity Youth, stable and safe housing may be a more immediate need than education or employment.

Youth with Disabling Conditions

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Overall prevalence = **16%** n = 1,219 of 7,769

HIGH RISK SUBGROUP ▶ MALE GRADUATES = 30%



16 percent of the Opportunity Youth population has a disabling condition.

- Male high school graduates in the Opportunity Youth population have higher rates of disabling conditions at 1 in 3.³

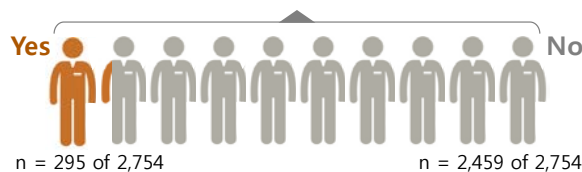
Some youth face barriers to work or school because of their disability or—for those receiving SSI benefits—concerns about wages disqualifying them from SSI cash and medical assistance.

Youth with Incarceration Histories

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Overall prevalence = **5%** n = 393 of 7,769

HIGH RISK SUBGROUP ▶ MALE DROPOUTS = 11%



5 percent of the total DSHS-served Opportunity Youth population has been incarcerated.

- 11 percent of male dropouts—1 in 10—in the Opportunity Youth population have been in a prison or juvenile rehabilitation facility.

These youth may be disengaged because they are currently incarcerated or were released but face reengagement barriers due to their criminal history.

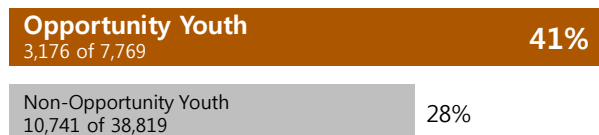
³ Mental illness and developmental disabilities are the most common primary disabling conditions among adult SSI recipients in Washington State; Mancuso, D. et al. (2012). [Disability Caseload Trends and Mental Illness](#), DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division.

History of Risk Factors and Services among Opportunity Youth

In addition to facing barriers in their current life, Opportunity Youth may have experienced more risk factors when they were growing up compared to youth who maintain connections to school or work. To examine this, we look at 5-year service histories of DSHS-served Opportunity Youth and compare them to DSHS-served youth who have maintained connections to work or school.

Arrested or Convicted | past 5 years

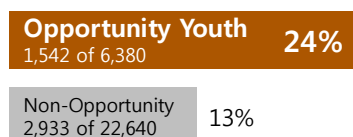
Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012



Court involvement was measured using arrest and conviction/adjudication data. While 41 percent of DSHS-served Opportunity Youth had been court-involved, only 28 percent of DSHS-served youth who are engaged in work or school had been arrested or convicted/adjudicated.

Substance Use Disorder | past 5 years

Medically Eligible Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012



Substance use issues were identified using health service or criminal justice records that identified diagnoses, treatment, or arrests associated with substance use problems. Twenty-four percent of DSHS-served Opportunity Youth had evidence of a substance use disorder, relative to only 13 percent of DSHS-served youth of the same age who were in school or working.

Mental Health Condition | past 5 years

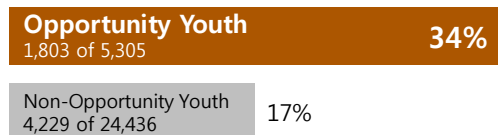
Medically Eligible Youth Age 16-24 on Medical, South King County, AY 2012



Youth with a mental health condition were identified if they received mental health services, prescriptions for psychotropic medications, or a mental health diagnosis. Forty-one percent of Opportunity Youth had a mental health condition, compared to 26 percent of DSHS-served youth who were working or in school.

Child Welfare Services | past 5 years

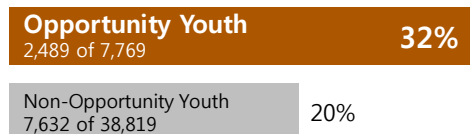
Youth Age 16-21, South King County, AY 2012



Youth were identified as receiving child welfare services if they had been served by the DSHS Children's Administration.⁴ Thirty-four percent of Opportunity Youth had received child welfare services (including but not limited to foster care), compared to 17 percent of DSHS-served youth who were engaged in work or school.

TANF Receipt | past 5 years

Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012



We identified youth who received cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. About one-third of Opportunity Youth lived in families that had very low financial resources—as indicated by TANF receipt—relative to 20 percent of DSHS-served youth who were working or in school.

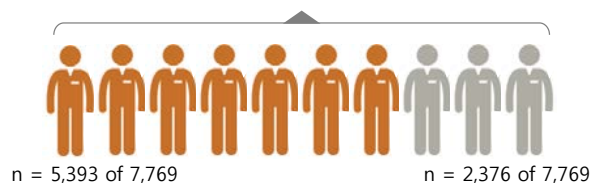
⁴ We limited the child welfare indicator to youth ages 16-21, as older youth may not have been eligible for services due to age.

Educational Experiences of Opportunity Youth

High School | No high school diploma

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Percent without diploma = **69%**



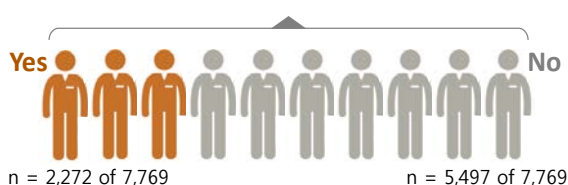
69 percent of Opportunity Youth do not have a high school diploma.

- A majority of Opportunity Youth leave school without ever attaining a high school diploma.
- About 14 percent of Opportunity Youth who left high school without a diploma later earned a GED. While this is encouraging, economic returns for a GED are generally not equivalent to those for a regular high school diploma.⁵

Special Education | While in K-12

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Overall rate = **29%**



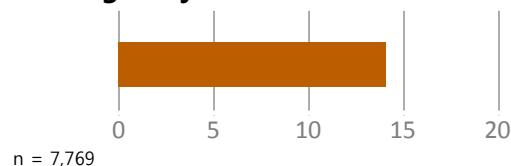
29 percent of Opportunity Youth had an IEP while enrolled in K-12 education.

- About 1 in 3 Opportunity Youth had an Individualized Education Program (IEP). About 13 percent of non-opportunity youth had IEPs.
- For this measure, education records were observed over a seven-year period from AY 2005 to 2011.

Attendance | Days unexcused, 9th grade

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Average days unexcused = **14.1 days**



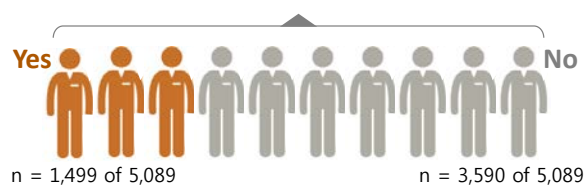
On average, Opportunity Youth missed 14 days of school during their 9th grade year.

- For comparison, non-opportunity youth missed about 9 days on average.
- Research indicates youth disengagement from school is often a long-term process, with poor attendance a common precursor to eventual dropout.⁶

Mobility | Three or more school moves

Opportunity Youth Age 16-24, South King County, AY 2012

Percent with 3+ moves = **29%**



29 percent of Opportunity Youth changed schools at least 3 times in their last 3 years of enrollment in K-12 education.

- While about 1 in 3 Opportunity Youth had changed schools 3 or more times in their last 3 years of enrollment, 14 percent of non-Opportunity Youth had this experience.
- Similarly, while 60 percent of Opportunity Youth had a school move in their final year of enrollment, only 35 percent of non-Opportunity Youth changed schools that year.

⁵ Cameron, S. V., & Heckman, J. J. (1993). The Nonequivalence of High School Equivalents. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 11 (1): 1-47.

⁶ Rumberger, R. W., & Larson, K. A. (1998). Student mobility and the increased risk of high school dropout. *American Journal of Education*, 107 (1): 1-35.

Discussion


A few key segments of the Opportunity Youth population—parents, current and past offenders, those with disabling conditions, and those who are homeless—face significant barriers that may make participating in school or work difficult. Additionally, relative to their same-age counterparts who are engaged in work or school, Opportunity Youth have risk factors and service histories throughout their adolescence and young adulthood, including criminal justice involvement, behavioral health needs, and child welfare involvement. Many Opportunity Youth are dropouts, required special education services while in school, and had educational enrollment and attendance histories that denote instability.

Those wishing to reengage Opportunity Youth in school or work must take into account that Opportunity Youth may face immediate barriers—such as a lack of stable housing or childcare—and engage with these youth, in their current situation, to provide extra supports. For example, to serve key segments of the Opportunity Youth population, service providers must consider:

- Childcare and family responsibilities for those youth who are also parents;
- The barriers to full participation among the formerly incarcerated such as the need to disclose criminal records to potential employers;
- The unique needs of those with disabilities such as SSI benefit planning; and
- The immediate needs of those who are unstably housed.

In addition, providers serving young parents, those currently or previously incarcerated, those with disabilities, and those facing homelessness should consider ways to better connect these youth to services related to education, training, and employment.

Combining what we know about the Opportunity Youth population and risk factors faced in their youth, a web of overlapping systems emerges. Many Opportunity Youth have been touched by—or are in need of services from—one or more systems, including child welfare, criminal justice, disability assistance, behavioral health, and housing. Collaboration across systems is necessary both to prevent young people who interact with these systems from becoming Opportunity Youth and to mark clear paths for youth to reengage if they become disconnected from the education and employment systems.



More findings . . .

Additional findings and a more detailed look at prevalence of various risk factors by age, gender, and graduation status are available online:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/rda/research-reports/dshs-opportunity-youth-data-project-findings>

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/rda/research-reports/road-map-region-opportunity-youth-dshs-service-histories>

Also . . .

The Community Center for Education Results (CCER) has information about the Road Map Project at:

<http://www.roadmapproject.org/>

TECHNICAL NOTES

This analysis provides a profile of DSHS-served Opportunity Youth in the Road Map region. Opportunity Youth are defined as 16 to 24 year-olds who are not in school or working.

STUDY POPULATION

The study population included Opportunity Youth, defined as 16-24 year-olds who were not in school or working. Using the INVEST 2012 database, we identified youth who were aged 16-24 during Academic Year 2011-2012, not enrolled in either K-12 or higher education, and not employed. Using school enrollment files, we limited the population to youth who were enrolled in one of the schools in the Road Map region (see map on page 1). For comparison purposes, we also identified 16-24 year-olds in the Road Map region who were engaged in school or work in Academic Year 2011-2012.

DEMOGRAPHICS

	Opportunity Youth		Non-Opportunity Youth	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
White	3,081	40%	24,378	40%
African American	1,886	24%	12,068	20%
Asian	618	8%	10,555	18%
American Indian/Alaska Native	331	4%	1,197	2%
Hispanic	1,444	19%	8,837	15%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	152	2%	1,052	2%
Two or more races	197	3%	2,032	3%

DATA SOURCES AND MEASURES

The INVEST 2012 database includes service records for DSHS clients served at any point between SFY 2000 and SFY 2012 who were age 35 or younger as of January 1 of a fiscal year in which they received a DSHS service (or any age if they received a service from the DSHS Economic Services Administration in this 13-year period). The INVEST database contains individual-level data (without direct identifiers) from the following sources:

- DSHS Integrated Client Databases (ICDB), which contain detailed information on social and health services, risk and protective factors, and involvement with other systems outside of DSHS.
- The Office of Financial Management's Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) P-20W system, which contains education data from the following sources:
 - Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) data from the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), including student enrollment information, grades, assessment information, and program participation.
 - State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) data on students in the state's 34 community and technical colleges, including records on enrollment and completion.
 - Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) data on enrollments and completions at state public four-year higher education institutions.

MEASURES

- Status as a parent: An indicator that the youth is a parent (as of June 2012), based on birth records from the Department of Health, child support records from the Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS), Department of Corrections visitation data, and/or TANF household composition data recorded in the Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES).

- Homelessness: An indicator of homelessness identified in one of the following systems: 1) Automated Client Eligibility System (public assistance), 2) Homeless Management Information System (homeless housing assistance), 3) TARGET (chemical dependency), 4) Consumer Information System (mental health), 5) ProviderOne (medical), or 6) FAMLINK (child welfare).
- Ever incarcerated: An indicator that a youth has ever been incarcerated in a Juvenile Rehabilitation or Department of Corrections facility (as of June 2012).
- Disabling condition: An indicator of a physical or mental disability based on SSI-related medical assistance, services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, or services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Arrest or conviction: Youth are flagged as having an arrest or conviction if they have evidence of convictions, deferments, convictions with a sentence of detention, diversion, conviction and sentencing to Juvenile Rehabilitation, and/or they have one or more arrests recorded in the Washington State Patrol database.
- Substance use disorder: Data from three information systems—ProviderOne (medical), TARGET (chemical dependency), and Washington State Patrol (arrests)—were used to identify probable substance use disorders based on diagnoses, prescriptions, and treatment records, as well as drug and alcohol-related arrests. This measure is restricted to the population on Medicaid or similar medical coverage.
- Mental health condition: Data from ProviderOne (medical) and the Consumer Information System (mental health service records) were used to identify the presence of mental illness based on diagnoses, prescriptions, and treatment records. This measure is restricted to the population on Medicaid or similar medical coverage.
- Child welfare services: An indicator from the ICDB of involvement with the DSHS Children’s Administration, the public child welfare division of DSHS that serves abused and neglected children and their families.
- TANF receipt: We use the ICDB to identify youth who received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance in the past five years as either a child or adult.
- Lacking a high school diploma: We identify youth who lacked a high school diploma by using exit codes from the CEDARS data system. We include both students who have a dropout code in CEDARS and those we flag as probable dropouts. Probable dropouts include students whose final enrollment code was a transfer to another school or district, and who do not show up as an in-transfer anywhere in the State of Washington. Although this code could potentially correspond to out-of-state transfers, we restrict the Opportunity Youth population to those who continue to reside in Washington State as of Academic Year 2012.
- Special education: Students in special education are identified as those who had an IEP according to OSPI records. Note that this definition does not include students who have only section 504 plans.
- Days unexcused: Number of unexcused school absences comes directly from CEDARS records.
- Three or more school moves: We identify students who changed schools three or more times in their last three years of enrollment, excluding expected promotional moves (such as middle school to high school). This measure is only reported for the subset of students who have three consecutive years of school enrollment in the study period.



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