



No New Nursing Facility at Fircrest: Washington State can and should support people with IDD in the community instead of spending millions on outdated institutions

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) should not be required to live in segregated, institutional settings when their support needs can be met in the community. Disability Rights Washington (DRW) has a long history of advocating for this, largely in response to the clear directives of our constituents: people with IDD, including current and former residents of the state institutions. There are also many well-documented safety and security issues in our state institutions. Several are facing serious loss of federal funding for ongoing safety and health violations.

During the 2020 legislative session SB 6419 was passed which recommended the state build a new nursing facility at Fircrest. However, the budget for building the nursing facility was not approved and as a result will be up for consideration again this year. Last year, DRW opposed this and continues to do so for the following reasons:

- Individuals who require a nursing facility level of care are served in community settings.**
 DSHS has developed a variety of Medicaid waivers that allow people who require nursing facility level of care to live in the community but receive appropriate level of care.ⁱ The current residents of the Fircrest nursing facility (“Y buildings”) could receive care and supports in the community through a Medicaid waiver.
- Individuals with high-acuity support needs are successfully served in community settings.**
 A 2010 DSHS report demonstrated that individuals with the highest level of support needs were successfully served in community residential service settings.ⁱⁱ Nursing facilities are not necessary to provide support to people with high-acuity needs and residents of the “Y buildings” can have their care needs met in community settings. The state has thus far failed to consider overall reduced costs of this option for “Y building” residents.
- Individuals have successfully moved from RHCs to community placements.**
 In 2019, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) reported that 47 individuals successfully moved out of the Rainier School to community placements. The individuals in the “Y buildings” deserve the same opportunity to live in a quality community setting instead of remaining isolated at an institution.
- The \$6.7 million allocation for facility design could be used for state-operated community placements.**
 The capital budget includes \$6.7 million to design the new Fircrest nursing facility. Last year, the State allocated \$4.2 million to create 15 state-operated community placements for individuals moving out of Rainier School. Thus, the proposed \$6.7million could be invested in creating approximately 24 state-operated community placements for individuals instead of being spent on design plans for a new facility.
- Community placements can be developed more quickly than a facility can be built.**
 The state describes the “Y buildings” as being in disrepair. Individuals need to be moved out of these buildings and into a safe, quality setting as soon as possible. Designing and building a new nursing facility will likely take many years. The residents of the “Y buildings” could move safely into community settings much more quickly.
- Washington State should invest in closing institutions.**
 The RHCs in Washington have a long history of being sites of abuse and neglect against people with IDD.ⁱⁱⁱ Several of the RHCs have been recently decertified or closed by regulators for lack of compliance with essential health and safety regulations.^{iv} Washington State should not continue to invest in a system that harms and segregates people with IDD. It is time to focus on expanding the capacity and quality of services in the community and not investing millions in outdated institutions.

For questions, please contact:

Darya Farivar, Director of Public Policy
 daryaf@dr-wa.org, 206-471-9425

Beth Leonard, Staff Attorney
 bethl@dr-wa.org, 206-324-1521



ⁱ <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/Waiver-Descript-Factsheet/WA-Waiver-Factsheet.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/rda/documents/research-5-35.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/programs/treatment-facilities/reports/>

^{iv} <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/office-communications/media-release/dshs-continue-transition-remaining-residents-facility-persons-developmental-disabilities-following-federal->