



# Geographic Equity in Youth Development

## The needs in Okanogan County

Okanogan County, like other predominantly rural counties in Washington state, is particularly strongly positioned to benefit from a state youth development grant program. There are 23 Okanogan youth programs registered in Elevate Washington, a statewide youth program directory; these programs provide critically needed supports for youth in the county across large geographic service areas and in immediate need of public investment.

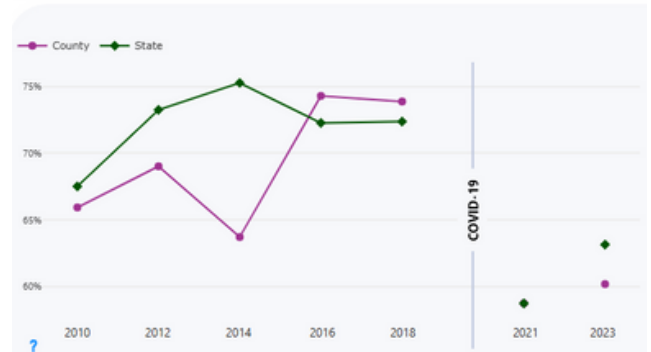
Multiple data points indicate a high need to strengthen access to youth programs in the region. Youth responding to the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey reported a significant drop in access to youth development opportunities in 2021, which has remained low in 2023 and falls below the state average. Further, given the relatively small number of youth surveys in Okanogan, it is possible that this low rate is actually overstated.

Alarming, 15.4% of 8th graders in Okanogan also reported that they had no adult to turn to when feeling sad or hopeless (the fourth highest rate in the state)—a youth mental health risk that can be addressed through connection to youth programs.

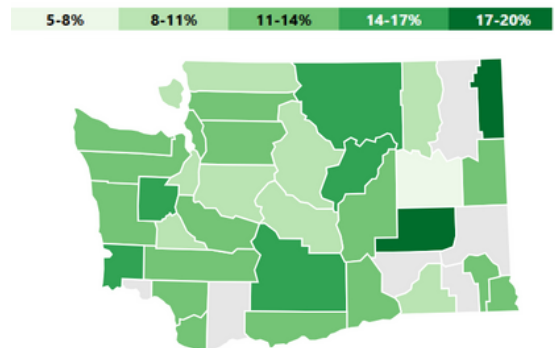


Chart: Percent of Okanogan County 8th graders reporting they have access to youth development opportunities in their communities over time. *Healthy Youth Survey, 2023*

**Measure:** Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement  
**Location:** Okanogan County



Percent of Washington state 8th graders reporting they have no adult to turn to when feeling sad or hopeless



## A solution for Okanogan County

State funding is necessary to address the geographic equity gaps in access to youth development in Washington state.

**An open, transparent, and accessible state grant program for youth development is urgently needed as a more efficient, impactful, and equitable approach to funding critically-needed youth development programs.**



Youth Development  
Strategy Table

# Geographic Equity *in Youth Development*

## It's time to invest in youth development

Investing in afterschool, summer, and mentoring programs means investing in Washington's future. Young people spend most of their time outside school, yet access to high-quality youth programs remains limited, especially in BIPOC and rural communities. It's about time for Washington legislators to prioritize youth development and ensure resources reach all young people. Funding youth development means providing equitable opportunities for our youth to reach the future they envision. **The time to act and invest in our youth is now.**

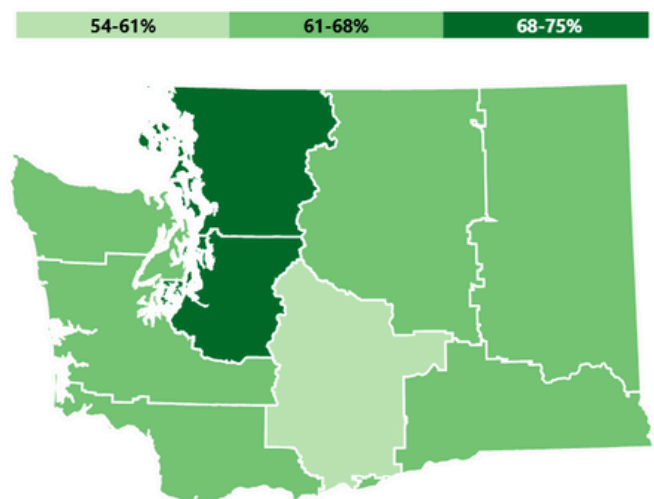
## State investment is essential to advancing equity in Washington State

Parent fees, private philanthropy, and local public funding are currently the primary funding streams for youth development programs in Washington. Availability of these funds is highly uneven across the state, resulting in highly inequitable access to youth programs in many parts of our state, especially in rural communities and communities of color.

Currently, there is no state investment in the broader youth development sector. Left with no open way to access state dollars, some organizations have been able to secure some funding through individual budget provisos, but far too many have not. An analysis of provisos for youth development in last year's state supplemental budget showed an inequitable geographic impact: **over \$5M** of funds were directed to programs in specific regions or counties, with **only 6% benefiting youth in counties east of the Cascades.**

Further, there are small pockets of state funding for subsets of programs, but **without an overarching strategic investment in the sector, each of these initiatives is hampered** by the lack of sustainability and capacity of youth-serving organizations to partner in many under-resourced parts of our state.

Map: Percent of Washington State 10th graders reporting they have access to youth development opportunities in their communities, by Education Service District (ESD).  
*Healthy Youth Survey, 2023*



Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement (CPF) across Education Service Districts ranged from 58.4% to 72.2%