
*A Letter to Legislators from
Advocates and Self-Advocates
across Washington State*

Close Rainier School and Yakima Valley School: A Smart and Necessary Choice

Washington State has the opportunity—and the obligation—to close outdated facilities that fail to serve people with developmental disabilities.

Pass [Senate Bill 5393](#) and [House Bill 1472](#) to ensure individuals receive the care they deserve—safe, dignified, community-based support—while saving taxpayers millions.

Why Closing These Residential Rehabilitation Centers (RHCs) Makes Sense

Governor Bob Ferguson’s proposed budget calls for the closure of Yakima Valley and Rainier Schools. This is a smart decision on multiple fronts:

- All the research shows quality of life vastly improves for residents of these facilities when they are able to live in the community.
- The median cost for these facilities is \$1,892 per resident per day. At a time when the state faces a historic budget shortfall, closing them is a common-sense financial decision that would save the state millions of dollars.
- Rainier School has a lengthy history of abuse and neglect.
- Existing capacity at Lakeland Village and Fircrest School, the other two residential habilitation centers, can be utilized.

If enacted, [Senate Bill 5393](#) and its companion, [House Bill 1472](#), would close Rainier School and Yakima Valley School by June 20, 2027.

It’s a Myth that Those with the Most Significant Disabilities Can Only be Served in a Residential Habilitation Center

Over 99% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live in the community where they receive the same services and support as those in residential habilitation centers. People can now receive nursing care, behavior supports, and medical and dental care in the community. As of 2020, [18 states](#) have closed all their RHCs while continuing to provide supports.

Support is Already Available to Successfully Transition People from Facilities to the Community

The proposed legislation states that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) “has thoughtfully and successfully transitioned many of the residents at residential habilitation centers into smaller supported settings. The legislature finds that this has been successful because of intentional efforts to honor personal choice, deliberate and transparent work with residents, families, and staff, and expanding capacity of community home-based options.”

A December 2024 [report](#) prepared by DDA documents the success of the department’s transitional care management teams in moving people out of facilities. Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, 32 individuals moved from a RHC into their chosen community setting, with the [help of other families](#) who have gone through the process.

Following Closure of Another RHC, Former Residents are Stable in Their New Homes

In May 2011, the Legislature directed the closure of Frances Haddon Morgan Center. That December, 52 individuals who lived at the RHC were moved to community-based residences and other DDA institutions *with no loss of jobs*.

A May 2013 [DSHS report](#) shows that one year after the closure, former Frances Haddon Morgan Center residents were stable, safe, and happy. They obtained employment, learned new skills, and gained access to their community.

People in the community can choose where to live, where to work, where to socialize, and who they want to form a relationship with.

Inspiring Success Stories of Community Living are the Norm, not the Exception

There are countless success stories of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities living independently outside of RHCs and institutions. Here are some of their stories:

- [KING 5 Investigators report on Shawn Fanning](#), former resident of Fircrest
- [Compilation of stories from the Family Mentor Project](#), including those of former residents of Rainier School
- [Article about Brock Williams](#), former resident of the Frances Haddon Morgan Center.

Closing Rainier and Yakima Schools Won't Hurt our Economy

In fact, it can [create new job opportunities and expand community-based services in areas of the state where they are needed](#). As has been done in the past, workers at Rainier and Yakima Schools can transition to support people in the community.

Dangerous Conditions at Rainier School are Repeatedly Confirmed

Rainier School's well-documented failures make it clear it's not just outdated, it's dangerous. Investigations have found cases of severe neglect, including one resident losing an eye due to a lack of medical care and another disappearing, presumed to be dead. These incidents and others are outlined in an [overview of regulatory history of RHCs](#) prepared by Disability Rights Washington.

Legislators Should Take the Side of People with Disabilities—Not a Broken System

Legislators, you have a choice: continue funding facilities with a documented history of neglect and isolating residents, or choose a future where people with developmental and intellectual disabilities have freedom, dignity, and community integration. Advocates, families, and self-advocates are united:

Please Pass SB 5393 / HB 1472

This message is supported by The Arc of Washington, SAIL, People First of Washington, Community Residential Services Association, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council, Disability Rights Washington, Office of Developmental Disabilities Ombuds, Adult Family Home Council and Community Employment Alliance.

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