

## Downtown Seattle YMCA 2010 Advocacy Positions

The Downtown Seattle YMCA's advocacy positions support funding for housing and services for foster youth and other youth in out-of-home care.

### Oppose Further Cuts to Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) for High Need Children in Care and their Families

**Key Message to Legislators:** We oppose cuts in the Governor's budget to BRS funding and we oppose further cuts to the children and families being served in intensive therapeutic care under BRS funding.

**Background:** On average in other states, 19% of youth in out of home care receive this type of intensive care (called BRS care); in Washington State, just 9% do. These youth and their families have very high emotional and behavioral needs, and an average of 8 placements prior to BRS care. Funding to children receiving this care was cut by 20% in 2009. Since the cuts, more children are disrupting from family placements, resulting in an increase in the level of challenges the children face in finding a permanent home. Further cuts would severely jeopardize the quality of care for our most high need, dependent children, who would likely need more intensive services later in life in the school, juvenile justice and mental health systems.

### Maintain Funding for Housing and Educational Advocacy for Foster Youth

**Key Message to Legislators:** Continue to fully fund the Independent Youth Housing Program and the Foster Care to 21 Program to ensure vulnerable youth in foster care need safe and supportive housing beyond age 18. Continue to fully fund the Educational Advocacy Program to preserve students' rights and help them stay on track in school.

**Background:** Housing programs provide housing to foster youth beyond age 18, when WA State usually discharges youth from care. The Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP) provides case management and rent assistance to youth able to live independently. The Foster Care to 21 Program allows select youth to remain with a foster family while attending college. Educational Advocacy serves 2,400 foster children and teens by providing education plans and support that help them complete high school. Note: These housing programs were not cut in Governor's proposed budget. Educational Advocacy was fully cut.

### Permanent Homes for Children and Youth in Care

**Key Message to Legislators:** Support HB 2680 which establishes guardianship as an option for children in foster care through the appointment of a guardian and dismissal of dependency. If your Representative is on the House Judiciary Committee, please contact him/her to express your support for the bill.

**Background:** Many relatives and unrelated foster parents of children in out of home care are interested in becoming permanent guardians for children in their care. The children are eager to have a permanent family home with these trusted, adults. Too often, these families are of low or modest income, and are not eligible to become guardians, or to receive short or learn term subsidies to support the often high needs of the children. Relatives and licensed foster parents who have fostered a child for at least six months are eligible to receive a guardianship subsidy. The department is directed to waive certain standards for relatives who seek to become licensed foster parents when this action is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

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## Downtown Seattle YMCA 2010 Additional Advocacy Positions

The Downtown Seattle YMCA has positions on additional mission-aligned priorities that improve the well-being of our community, particularly the most vulnerable.

### Preserve the Housing Trust Fund

**Key Message:** Support HB 2906, which preserves funding for affordable housing by appropriating \$100M to replenish the Housing Trust Fund via revenue through a recording fee. (Fund was \$200M in 07-08, cut to \$100M in 09-10 and already depleted.)

### Preserve Housing for Runaway, Homeless and Foster Youth

**Key Message:** Preserve funding for HOPE Centers (30-day emergency shelter for homeless youth ages 13-18) and Responsible Living Skills Programs (housing for older foster youth with multiple placements). Both programs were eliminated in the Governor's budget.

### Ensure Legal Representation for Foster Youth

**Key Message:** Support HB 2735. Ensure adequate legal representation for foster youth and other dependent youth age 12 and up by requiring DSHS and court-appointed volunteers to notify youth of their right to an attorney. Vulnerable youth have a right to legal representation.

### Increase Safety for Runaway Youth

**Key Message:** Support HB 2752 and SB 6446, which extend the maximum time an organization serving homeless or runaway youth may wait to report a minor away from home without parental permission to 72 hours (from 8 hours), allowing time for agencies to build trust with minor. No budget impact.

### Ensure Youth Voice in Foster Care Reform

**Key Message:** Add youth or alumni of foster care to HB 2106 Transformation Design Committee. Currently youth have no voting rights on committee.

### Decrease the Number of Children Who Enter the Child Welfare System

**Key Message:** Prevent further cuts in evidence-based home visiting programs (EBHV), restore cuts made to evidence based home visiting programs in 2009, and support a long term plan for adequate funding.

### Provide Sustainable Funding for Public Health

**Key Message:** Support HB 2388, which provides sustainable funding for public health and would benefit work in chronic disease prevention and childhood obesity prevention.

### Create a Food Policy Council

**Key Message:** Support SB 6343, which establishes a Washington State Food Policy Council, providing important program and policy support toward improving health efforts such as chronic disease prevention and childhood obesity prevention.

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