

Meeting Minutes: SWWA REGIONAL FYSPRT Meeting 6/15/26 – Hybrid

Presentation: Carelon SW WA Youth Navigator Program

Presenters: Brook Vejo

Overview

The Youth Navigator Program was developed to help address youth boarding in emergency departments due to behavioral health needs and lack of appropriate placement or discharge options.

Carelon Behavioral Health began operating its Youth Navigator Program in 2023 and has received nearly **600 referrals** for youth and families since that time. The team is expanding and will include four outreach specialists along with a project manager.

Eligibility & Access

The Youth Navigator Program is available to school-aged youth living in:

- Clark County
- Skamania County
- Klickitat County

The program is:

- Free to families.
- Available regardless of insurance status.
- Accessible to youth with Medicaid, commercial insurance, or no insurance.
- Available through referrals submitted through the Youth Navigator website.

Youth Navigator Services

Youth Navigator outreach specialists provide intensive case management and work to connect youth and families with appropriate behavioral health and community resources.

Services include:

- Reviewing and responding to referrals.
- Connecting families to behavioral health resources.
- Coordinating with WISE teams.
- Coordinating with crisis teams.
- Providing recommendations to families, schools, and community partners.
- Helping intervene before youth reach an acute behavioral health crisis.
- Maintaining and vetting behavioral health resources for families and community partners.

The team emphasized the importance of identifying and referring youth **before behavioral health concerns escalate to an acute crisis**.

Family Support & Multidisciplinary Team Meetings

Outreach specialists typically work with families for approximately three months, although services may continue longer depending on individual needs.

The team offers **Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings** for families needing additional coordination. Meetings may include:

- Families
- Behavioral health providers
- Crisis teams
- WISE teams
- Community partners
- Other professionals involved with the youth

Meetings may be large multidisciplinary discussions or smaller, quickly coordinated meetings depending on the needs of the youth and family.

Community partners interested in participating in MDT meetings may contact the Youth Navigator team. Participation includes a brief orientation and confidentiality requirements.

Rural Community Access

The Youth Navigator team continues to work with community partners and the Washington State Health Care Authority to identify behavioral health gaps in rural communities.

Challenges discussed included:

- Limited behavioral health providers in rural areas.
- Difficulty locating therapists who serve younger children.

- Ensuring Klickitat and Skamania County families have access to appropriate services.
- Communicating rural behavioral health needs at statewide meetings.

Youth Boarding in Emergency Departments

Youth "boarding" was described as situations in which youth remain in a hospital because they cannot safely return home and an appropriate inpatient placement or other discharge option is unavailable.

The Youth Navigator team reported seeing an increase in these situations during spring 2026 and is working with local hospitals to better understand the increase.

YAE (Youth Advocacy & Empowerment) Updates

Presenter: Emma Ocampo

YAE Summer Meetings

YAE is FYSPRT's youth-focused program and provides opportunities for youth to connect, discuss relevant topics, participate in activities, and share their perspectives.

For the summer, YAE meetings are being held at Legacy High School.

Upcoming YAE Meeting

Date: July 13, 2026

Time: 4:00–5:30 PM

Location: Legacy High School

Meetings include:

- Youth-centered discussions
- Food
- Games and activities
- A \$20 gift card incentive for participating youth

Community partners were encouraged to share YAE information with youth and families who may benefit from a youth-focused group during the summer.

Making Community Connections: FYSPRT Youth & Family Event

FYSPRT is planning an end-of-summer gathering for youth and families.

Date: August 18, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM–4:00 PM

Location: River City Church

Planned activities include:

- Youth and family presentations
- Community resource tables
- Food
- Taco truck
- Kona Ice
- Potential live music
- Opportunities for youth and families to connect with community resources

The meeting clarified that the event will begin at 11:00 AM rather than the previously discussed 10:00 AM start time. Additional information and flyers will be distributed as planning continues.

Real Talk Discussion:

Barriers to Accessing Behavioral Health Services

The group discussed barriers youth and families continue to experience when trying to access behavioral health and community-based services throughout Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties.

Commercial Insurance

Participants identified significant gaps for youth with commercial insurance.

Key concerns included:

- Limited intensive behavioral health options for commercially insured youth.
- Some publicly funded services are unavailable to families because of insurance eligibility requirements.
- Virtual intensive services may be available but do not meet the needs of every youth or family.

- WISE services are not currently available locally for youth with commercial insurance. Participants noted that accessing standard outpatient therapy may be somewhat easier, but intensive services remain particularly difficult to obtain.

Youth Engagement

Youth engagement was identified as another significant barrier.

Families may be aware of available programs and activities but struggle to encourage youth to participate.

The group discussed:

- Difficulty engaging youth in summer activities.
- Youth declining behavioral health services or therapy.
- School avoidance.
- Difficulty engaging youth ages 13 and older.
- The importance of how programs and services are presented to youth.
- Incentives as one possible strategy for encouraging participation.

Participants emphasized that youth cannot simply be forced to participate. Encouragement, relationship building, and thoughtful communication with youth are important components of engagement.

Family & Natural Supports

WISE providers identified additional family-level barriers, including:

- Parents managing multiple responsibilities.
- Limited respite opportunities.
- Lack of natural support systems for caregivers.
- Family circumstances affecting the ability to consistently participate in services.

These challenges can directly affect a family's engagement with intensive behavioral health programs.

School Engagement

The group also discussed school avoidance and challenges engaging youth in education.

Participants shared concerns that:

- Parents may struggle to get youth to attend school consistently.
- Youth may learn that they can continue advancing academically despite significant absenteeism.
- Schools vary in their ability to consistently respond to attendance and behavioral concerns.

The discussion highlighted the connection between youth engagement, family support, school participation, and behavioral health services.

Next Meeting: Monday, July 20, 2026 – virtual