



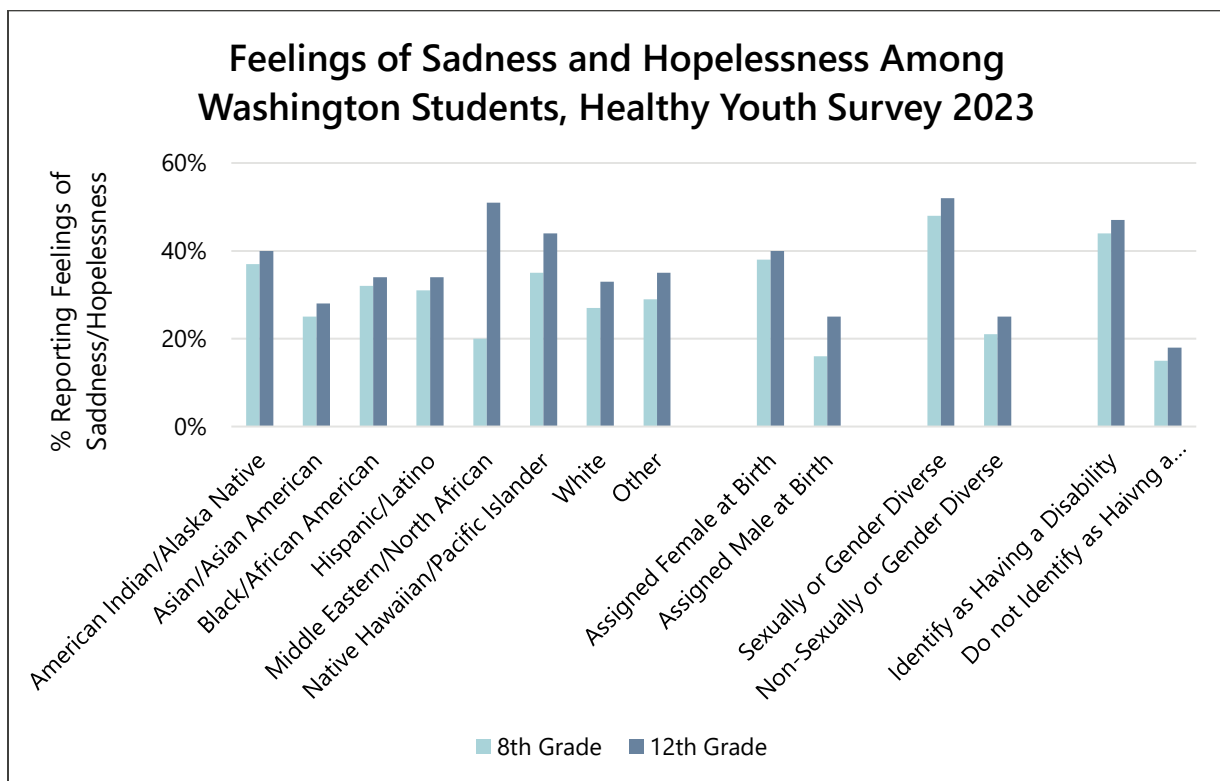
# A Community Approach to Supporting Youth Mental Health

*Community Partner: Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describe the specific need within the K–12 system

According to a report published by the Washington State Auditor in 2021, two national surveys completed in 2018 found that mental health and substance use disorders were reported as more prevalent in Washington students than the national average.<sup>1</sup> The 2023 Healthy Youth Survey showed increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts among teens, with students who self-identify as members of historically underserved groups including students of color, students with disabilities, and students who identify as LGBTQ+ being at a higher risk for mental health concerns.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Office of the Washington State Auditor. (2021, June 22). *K-12 Student Behavioral Health in Washington*. <https://sao.wa.gov/reports-data/audit-reports/k-12-student-behavioral-health-washington#:~:text=two%20recent%20surveys%20found%20mental%20health%20and%20substance.health.%20Historically%2C%20schools%20have%20not%20provided%20these%20services.>

<sup>2</sup> Washington State Department of Health. (2024, March 13). *2023 Healthy Youth Survey results offer signs of hope and resiliency among Washington students*. <https://doh.wa.gov/newsroom/2023-healthy-youth-survey-results-offer-signs-of-hope-and-resiliency-among-washington-students>

The Washington State Report Card shows lower graduation rates than the statewide average for some students of color and for students with disabilities. With corresponding overrepresentation among students struggling with mental health disorders, efforts to close this opportunity gap must confront and address these students' mental health needs.

While the K–12 system at large has an integral role to play in addressing student mental health at the state level, students' mental health struggles persist beyond the school day, outside the reach of even the best trained counselors, educators, and staff. The state's approach must include investment in groups that can reach children outside school hours—in the evenings, on weekends, and over the summer. Only an expansive and multifaceted intervention strategy will be sufficient to confront and address the ever-growing mental health needs of K–12 students.

### **How a state investment in community partnership meets this need**

Effective mental health support requires a focus on direct services, and unlike a centralized state agency, community organizations are uniquely poised to provide these types of supports in the communities in which they operate. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington (BGCWA) launched a three-year pilot program in 2022 to support 14 Club organizations with programs centered on youth mental health in nearly all of BGCWA's 169 sites. Currently, 14 full-time Behavioral Support Specialists coordinate a wide range of mental health promotion activities, including:

- Training for organization staff in a variety of trauma-informed mental health care practices;
- Facilitation of small and large group mental health promotion activities with Club kids and teens, utilizing evidence-based or promising practice curriculum;
- Improved access for at-risk families to a variety of mental health supports; and
- Review of organizational practices with a focus on equity and cultural responsiveness.

Over two years, the program has trained over 1,000 direct service youth development professionals across Washington in evidence-based, trauma-informed mental health care. Over 25,000 youth participated in group mental health promotion activities in 2023, and more than 15,000 received direct one-on-one behavioral health promotional services through BGCWA that same year. Referrals for additional mental health supports from participating families more than doubled in the program's second year, from 475 in 2022 to 1,122 in 2023. BGCWA hosted and/or supported 100 family and community events around mental health in 2022, and 164 in 2023, and provides subgrants to other non-affiliated organizations such as the YMCA to further expand mental health supports for at-risk youth. As the program enters its third year, BGCWA will expand training to include teens that will be able to provide direct support to peers. As federal emergency relief funding disappears, BGCWA will need robust state investment to be able to continue providing and expanding its mental health services.

### **Describe existing or previous state investment in this work**

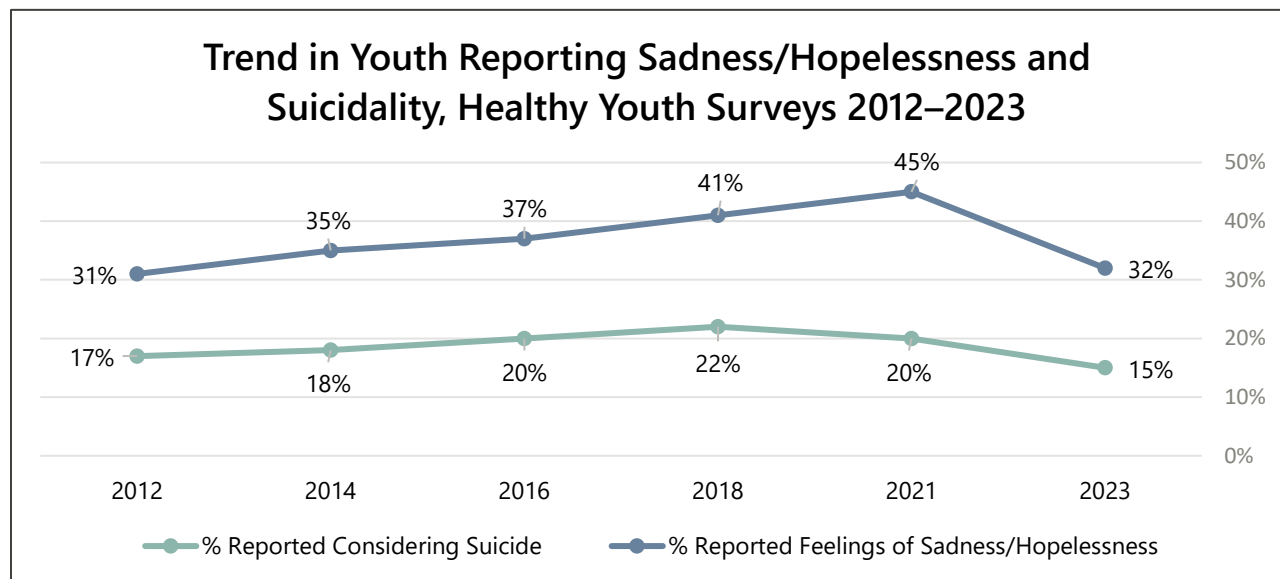
Since 2019, Washington state has invested in BGCWA through the Academic, Intervention, and Mentoring (AIM) program, currently found in the state Operating Budget (Senate Bill 5950, Section 522[4][I]). The BGCWA mental health pilot program was funded for its three-year

duration by OSPI’s federal emergency relief dollars. An investment from the state is needed to maintain these services.

## SUPPORTING DATA AND EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT

BGCWA conducted a year-long evaluation on the pilot program’s success and impact. The year-end outcomes report on the 2023–24 fiscal year cites a steady need for these services. Referrals more than doubled compared to the previous year, a result of the trust that Clubs have built with families in their local communities.

According to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey, both feelings of sadness and hopelessness, and rates of suicidal thoughts among teens have begun trending down after peaking in 2021, which was the first Healthy Youth Survey following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The state and federal governments invested billions in K–12 education in response to the pandemic, including significant investments in services and supports targeting youth mental health, like those offered by BGCWA. If states do not continue these investments, direct mental health services for youth will not be as widely and readily available, and rates may again increase.



## FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Fund 001-1 (program 010)	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000
<b>Biennial Totals</b>	<b>\$3,340,000</b>		<b>\$3,340,000</b>	

<b>Staffing</b>	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Average Annual</b>	<b>0.0</b>		<b>0.0</b>	
<b>Object of Expenditure</b>	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>
Obj. C	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000	\$1,670,000
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>
	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Biennial Totals</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>	

## ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

OSPI received \$1 million in fiscal year 2024 and \$1 million in fiscal year 2025 in Section 501(4)(ee) of the 2023–25 omnibus Operating Budget for a behavioral health pilot.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

### Contracts:

OSPI requests \$1,670,000 annually to contract with The Boys and Girls Clubs of Washington to continue a program that trains adults and youth in direct mental health supports and provides mental health supports and programming for youth participants outside of schools.

Historical funding:

There is no funding in carry-forward level budget to continue this project into 2025–27.

### Fiscal Year 2026

- FTE = 0.00
- Total Funds = \$0.00
- Near General Fund = \$0.00
- Other Funds = \$0.00

### Fiscal Year 2027

- FTE = 0.00
- Total Funds = \$0.00
- Near General Fund = \$0.00
- Other Funds = \$0.00