

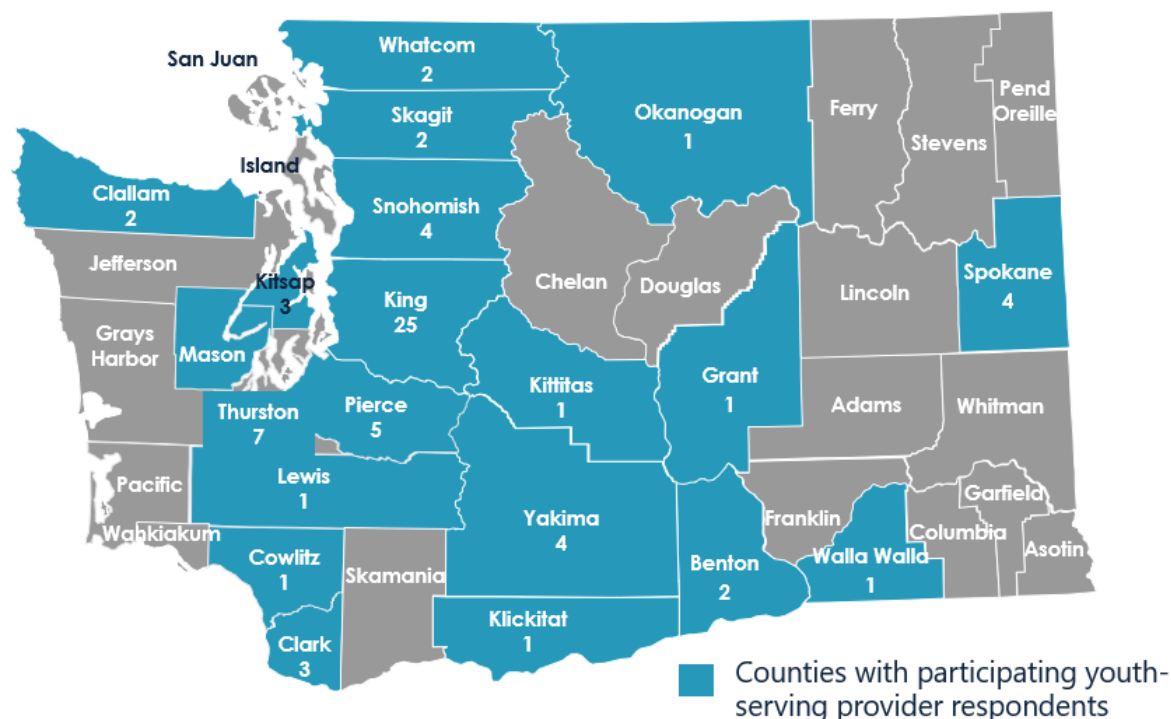
Youth-Serving Provider Perspectives: Adolescent Well Visits

Providers report more young people are going in for their well visits — but they don’t have enough time during the well visit to address all their young patients’ needs and struggle with supporting caregivers and families.

In 2024, the Adolescent and Young Adult Health team at the Department of Health (DOH) completed a **mini-needs assessment to understand the state of adolescent and young adult health** care in Washington and the support needs of those who serve teens and young adults. During a series of engagement activities, youth-serving medical and behavioral health providers and professionals shared their feedback and insight on important adolescent health topics, including adolescent well visits.

Over 70 providers participated in engagement activities:

- 65% were advanced practice providers, like medical doctors or nurse practitioners, or mental health providers, like licensed therapists and social workers
- 60% said more than half of their patients were youth ages 11-24
- 54% served young people in a medical setting like a private practice, community health center, or school-based health center. Many worked in more than one setting.
- Most worked in the Puget Sound region.



Adolescent Well Visits

During engagement activities, providers were asked to share about adolescent well visits in their practice. They shared strategies that are working well, areas that need improvement, and recommendations for health care systems to improve support and care.

Overall, providers note that more young people are going to their adolescent well visits, however, standard appointment lengths heavily impact the quality of the visit. In addition, providers struggle with engaging parents and caregivers, especially around confidential needs that come up during well visits.

What's going well

- Integrating **standardized policies and protocols** like Bright Futures and other recommendations made by the American Academy of Pediatricians into adolescent well visits ensure key elements of the well visit are addressed.
- **Sending families annual reminders** helps with scheduling appointments.
- Using **sports physicals as an opportunity to complete well visits** helps with utilization and ensures key screenings and assessments are completed.
- **Lengthening well visit appointments with teens** ensures there is enough time to address young people's needs and all the key elements.
- **Focusing on what matters most to young patients**, using trauma informed care, and helping young people navigate the health care system helps build rapport, trust and health literacy.
- Starting conversations about **adult health care when patients are 17-21**, using tools like those at GotTransition.com, sending email reminders or letters to parents, helping patients find providers and schedule the first appointment, and offering warm handoffs help ensure the transition is smooth.
- **In-house behavioral health providers** ensure behavioral health needs that come up during well visits can be addressed in the moment, including interventions, referrals, and connections to resources.
- Non-traditional clinic models, **like school-based health centers and mobile clinics**, increase access to adolescent well visits.
- **Encouraging parent and caregiver involvement** helps young people successfully navigate health care and increases access to resources and support for the whole family.

"40-minute appointments for well-visits instead of 20 minutes which is a game changer."

"I try to combine the sports physical with the more comprehensive well-adolescent visit. Takes more time which administrative folks don't like, but it's worth it."

"I start talking about transition to adult care at age 17, encouraging them to establish adult care by 19."

What needs more work

- **Traditional 20-minute appointments are not enough for well visits with teens** and young adults. Lack of time is compounded when significant needs like depression or suicide risks, substance use, or sexually transmitted infections come up.
- **Insurance reimbursement for extended appointment times is too low** and is not proportionate to the care and work being provided.
- **There are many barriers to giving vaccines during well visits**, including upfront costs, documentation requirements, and stigma and misinformation.
- **There are not enough providers or specialists available to refer young people** to for adult health care or behavioral health care, especially for people with disabilities or complex medical or behavioral health needs.
- **Young people with the highest needs and challenges** are not getting their annual well visit and are the hardest to reach.
- Young people and **families experience a lot of barriers to care**, including unstable basic needs and language barriers. These issues impacts underserved communities, most.
- **Navigating confidentiality and privacy during well visits is complicated**, especially as it relates to caregiver involvement. Inconsistent interpretation of minor consent laws makes coordinating care difficult and leads to over-inclusion or over-exclusion of parents and caregivers in young people's care.
- **Some young people's parents and caregivers are overinvolved, underinvolved, or not involved at all in their child's care**, all of which pose a variety of challenges for providers and youth.

"Vaccines remain a barrier in terms of the onerous paperwork and inability to deviate from the rules that I have dropped providing vaccines in my solo practice."

"I think some of the highest risk youth aren't coming in for well checks."

"Time always feels too short during the [appointments], especially when I try to allot time to speak to the adolescent confidentially one-on-one."

"Challenge confidentiality, during the visit and documenting on EPIC [electronic health record system]. Need to create a different payor account, time consuming for front desk"

"Most [adolescents and young adults] I see in this setting have significant ACEs [adverse childhood events] and giving 15 minutes to address preventive measures, depression/suicide risk, substance use and STI/pregnancy prevention (to list a few) is unreasonable and simply bad patient care."

"Sometimes privacy laws for teens...can make coordination of care difficult."

"Our clinic is rigid about having a parent/guardian present for the [appointment] if it is called a well-visit. If they check in without parent/guardian, they are sent away."

Recommendations

- **Increase reimbursement for adolescent health care**, including higher reimbursement for extended appointment times for adolescent well visits
- **Provide funding for projects that increase access to adolescent and behavioral health** care like before/after school clinic hours, mobile clinics, school-based health care, and integrated behavioral health.
- **Provide technical assistance and training for providers** on engaging parents and caregivers, young people, and community
- **Create spaces for youth-serving providers and professionals** to share best practices, successes, troubleshooting challenges, and network
- **Increase access to community vaccines** by reducing upfront costs and paperwork associated with vaccine programs and by providing community vaccine clinics to supplement primary care.
- **Support caregivers** by expanding mailings for developmental milestones to include teens and young adults.

Action

The Department of Health is committed to responding to what we've learned from youth-serving providers and the young people in Washington by taking action.

Over the next four years, DOH's Adolescent and Young Adult Health team will:

- **Collaborate with other DOH programs** to identify action steps to respond to provider feedback on vaccines and parent/caregiver supports.
- Expand **engagement activities to include parents and caregivers** to learn more about their questions, concerns and needs around confidentiality and minor consent for health care and respond to their feedback with action.
- **Work with partners like the Health Care Authority** to increase technical assistance and support to youth-serving providers, including health insurance navigation, billing, and reimbursement, and confidentiality processes.
- **Implement a youth-friendly care certification program** to promote youth-centered care for teens and young adults and support providers who want to enhance or establish youth-friendly care in their practice. Learn more: [Youth Friendly Care Network | Healthier Washington Collaboration Portal](#)

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