

2025-2026 PROPOSED BUDGET  
**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER**

**HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT (HSD)**

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This paper highlights selected policy considerations related to the Human Service Department's (HSD) 2025-2026 Proposed Budget. Considerations included here are not intended to be exhaustive and others may surface as Central Staff continues its analysis of the proposed budget. For more information about HSD's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget, please see the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget Overview Papers.

Policy Considerations 6, 7 and 8 all address funding reductions or eliminations in the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget. While there are other proposed reductions and eliminations in HSD, these were included as policy considerations because they were of interest to multiple Councilmembers. Overall, HSD has stated that given the GF revenue shortfall, they made the difficult decision to prioritize funding for direct services that were core to HSD's mission.

**Policy Considerations**

**1. Proposed \$2 million investment for commercial sexual exploitation interventions**

The 2025 Proposed Budget includes \$2 million (ongoing) in new funding to support survivors of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), including the provision of appropriate community-based support resources. This investment is broadly consistent with the goals of [ORD 127086](#). That ordinance, passed by the Council in August, made several changes to the Seattle Municipal Code Criminal Code pertaining to prostitution-related crimes. The intent of the legislation was to broaden the ability of law enforcement and prosecutors to take action against sex buyers and sex traffickers while creating a range of diversion opportunities for CSE survivors. Council identified an emergency receiving center (ERC), with estimated ongoing operating costs of \$700,000, as an especially critical investment in supporting and diverting CSE survivors. The HSD proposal neither precludes the establishment of an ERC nor specifically references it.

The \$2.0 million allocation includes position authority for 5.0 FTE: 4.0 FTE Victim Advocate and 1.0 FTE Victim Advocate Supervisor. Total 2025 position costs would be \$706,000. HSD intends to allocate half of the remaining \$1.3 million to community-based organizations (CBOs) through a competitive funding process and retain the rest for department-initiated interventions. The proposed new positions would be housed in HSD's Victim Advocacy Program in the Supporting Safe Communities BSL. Other Victim Advocates incumbent in HSD provide victim-support services to survivors of sexual assault and domestic or gender-based violence, for instance as their cases are investigated by Seattle Police Department (SPD) detectives.

It is possible that service provision to CSE survivors could be more effective and/or better received under a different model. The concept for an ERC is that CSE victims can call an advocate at any moment and request temporary placement in the ERC as a first step to leaving the CSE ecosystem. Other service requests may also arise from CSE survivors other than during standard business hours. Although HSD intends that the Victim Advocates are available to work nights and weekends responsive to need, incumbent HSD staff in this job classification work weekdays during standard business hours, and because they are represented the impacts of this change in their working

conditions would have to be bargained. In addition, Councilmembers learned during discussion of ORD 12708 that existing local community-based organizations (CBOs) have experience performing the same type of outreach and systems navigation as is contemplated under the Executive proposal and already operate from a position of trust and non-judgment in communities where CSE is taking place. Staff members at these CBOs may also be able to provide these services in a more efficient and cost-effective manner than new City staff would be able to.

**Options:**

- A. Do not authorize some or all of the positions included in the 2025 Proposed Budget and reallocate associated funding to CBOs with experience providing outreach and systems navigation and/or in operating an ERC for CSE victims. This option could include the adoption of a proviso on funding other than for position costs, requiring that HSD and the Adult Survivor Collaborative, or similarly constituted body, develop a framework for these funds' expenditure.
- B. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent that includes policy guidance for the award of funding, including contract funding, pursuant to this budget allocation.
- C. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that HSD provide updates to Council on the establishment of an ERC funded by this budget allocation.
- D. No change.

**2. Proposed \$4.25 million investment for gun violence interventions**

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget includes ongoing funding of \$4.25 million for a new suite of school-based programming that would seek to address gun violence, consistent with the goals of the Seattle Community Safety Initiative (SCSI) and in partnership with Seattle Public Schools (SPS). The funding would be allocated across (1) support for school-based violence intervention specialists; (2) geographical expansion of existing safe passage programs;<sup>1</sup> (3) expansion into schools of existing case management for students most impacted by, or likely to be involved in, gun violence; and (4) school-based family resource funds for those participating in this case management. The family resource funds would fund the purchase of clothing, school supplies, and other basic needs of students and families. The proposal also includes funding and position authority for 1.0 FTE Planning and Development Specialist, Sr., who would manage the expansion of the SCSI's current scope, coordinate with Seattle Public Schools staff, and perform reporting related to the funded new programming.

HSD's budget includes ongoing support at approximately the same level for the existing Seattle Community Safety Initiative (SCSI), an initiative that seeks to advance effective, community-led, and culturally responsive safety programs and services. The SCSI follows the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) approach, which the federal Office of Justice Programs describes as using evidence-informed strategies to reduce violence through tailored community-centered initiatives. Organizations that receive SCSI funding (1) provide critical incident response and (2) safe passage; (3) remediate hotspots to reduce violent incidents; and (4) offer a range of intervention and support services to stabilize young people, families, and the community at large.

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<sup>1</sup> Safe passage programs are community-based violence intervention programs that provide guardianship in areas that have been identified as hot spots for violence (e.g., assaults and fights) before and after the school day begins. They use a restorative-justice approach to mitigate such activity.

Current SCSi operations are based at three community safety hubs, each located in communities that HSD identified as having experienced historic disinvestment. These hubs recognize the need for tailored initiatives in the vicinity of three SPS high schools – they are neighborhood based. The proposed investment would instead be school based. It is intended to increase both the reach of current SCSi programming (to 11 locations, including middle schools<sup>2</sup>) and its scope (allowing a greater focus on individual students based on their observed and expressed needs while they are at school.)

HSD has developed this list of 11 focus schools as a result of a multi-departmental collaboration led by the Mayor’s Office that drew on data from SPS, the Seattle Police Department (SPD), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This analysis took into account both in-school incidents of violence and incidents of violence in or around school campuses. The CVI framework recognizes that early interventions responsive to incidents like fights and assaults are an upstream mitigation for potential future gun violence.

HSD is engaged in discussion and planning with SPS and each of the focus schools to develop the spending and implementation plans for these investments, seeking to tailor them to the needs of each school and its students. In the meantime, a financial plan for the proposed new funding, for instance one that spreads funding across the four identified program areas, is not yet available, nor is HSD’s proposed methodology for making sub-allocations of the referenced \$4.25 million or information about how funding will be distributed or the degree to which schools will have discretion to make expenditures from their distributions. HSD is currently developing agreements with SPS that will ensure the consistency across all schools of data that will measure the outcomes of this proposed investment. The specific dimensions that those data will measure are not known at this time.

Council may wish to review and approve an implementation plan for the proposed new funding allocation, including a financial plan and information about how funding impacts will be measured and tracked. This could include imposing a proviso on some of the proposed funding until that information is provided (understanding that this may delay the rollout of funded programming). Council may want to review more fully the rationale for proposed new investment in any area – such as safe-passage programs and support services – that already receives SCSi funding, as well as the basis for the proposed increased investment level outside of the SCSi.

**Options:**

- A. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that HSD provide an implementation plan, financial plan, and additional program information for the proposed new investment.
- B. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that HSD clarify the interrelationship of the proposed new investment and the SCSi or other current City programs and the basis for proposed additional investment in any currently funded program area.
- C. Impose a proviso on some of the proposed new funding until information referenced in either A or B or both is provided.
- D. No change.

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<sup>2</sup> Current SCSi programming is in the vicinity of Chief Sealth, Garfield, and Rainier Beach High Schools. The proposed expansion would include Franklin and Ingraham High Schools and Aki Kurose, Denny, Meany, Mercer, Robert Eagle Staff, and Washington Middle Schools.

### 3. Proposed \$1.9 million funding for Third Avenue Project

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget makes ongoing funding of \$1.9 million for the Third Avenue Project (TAP). Funding for TAP in the 2024 Adopted Budget was one-time. The City launched the Third Avenue Project, in partnership with We Deliver Care (WDC), in the fall of 2022 to address and improve public safety on Third Avenue. WDC outreach workers establish relationships and earn the trust of individuals, offering care and connection to resources to individuals suffering from substance use disorder and using drugs in public places along Third Avenue. WDC staff are also trained in de-escalation techniques, which can prevent public-order concerns from becoming public-safety concerns that require a police response, and in the administration of Narcan to those who have experienced a drug overdose. This year to date, WDC staff have participated in the administration of Narcan 94 times.

Earlier this year, WDC staff submitted a budget request to the Executive for \$2.8 million for 2025 costs to maintain TAP. According to WDC, the proposed funding increment of \$1.9 million (32 percent less than the requested amount) will require it to make staffing and service reductions that significantly affect program operations. Due to current-year budget constraints, WDC is already staffing TAP below the level that it considers appropriate for the scope of work, which means that there is not always coverage for staff to respond to and disperse multiple incidents at the same time. As business owners and managers in the area become more aware of TAP and WDC's role in it, they are increasingly calling the TAP Community Response Line phone and requesting that a WDC staffer come to a specific location and address a public-order or drug-related situation in process. When this response is taking place, WDC's ability to perform proactive monitoring and intervention is further decremented.

If TAP is funded in 2025 at the proposed funding level of \$1.9 million, WDC would need to reduce its staffing and its hours of operation. Potential results of these reductions include a decline in public order and public safety, the need for dispatched SPD response units to provide de-escalation that WDC staff currently provides, increased operational constraints for businesses, and missed opportunities for the administration of Narcan.

#### Options:

- A. Increase funding for WDC's 2025 contract by an amount up to \$900,000.
- B. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that the Executive include up to \$900,000 in the 2025 Mid-Year Supplemental Ordinance and up to \$2.8 million ongoing in the 2026 Mid-Biennium Proposed Budget Adjustments to fully support TAP operations.
- C. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that the Executive detail the reductions it recommends for the maintenance of TAP at the \$1.9 million funding level, including the impacts of those reductions.
- D. No change.

#### **4. Repurposing of \$1 million intended for a new safe lot**

The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) currently receives about \$12 million in ongoing operating support for its 11 Tiny House Villages (THVs) and one enhanced shelter. However, LIHI has indicated that this amount is insufficient to fully cover operating costs and the behavioral health services that are needed for many THV residents, and that it requires an additional \$2.5 million of ongoing support. In the 2023 Adopted Budget, LIHI received \$2.5 million in one-time funding to cover operational costs and provide behavioral health services at their 12 projects. In the 2024 Adopted Budget, LIHI received \$500,000 of ongoing funding and \$500,000 of one-time funding to close that operating gap and provide behavioral health services. In 2024, LIHI stated that without the full \$2.5 million, they would need to close three THVs comprising 150 units.

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would provide \$1 million in new ongoing funding for LIHI to support THVs. Additionally, the Executive has directed LIHI to use \$1 million from its 2023 safe lot award to instead support existing THVs, bringing the total amount of ongoing support to fill its operational THV gap to \$2 million plus the \$500,000 of ongoing revenue provided in the 2024 Adopted Budget.

LIHI's total 2023 safe lot award was in addition to their Salmon Bay safe lot award and was intended for establishing an additional safe lot. The King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) estimates that there is still sufficient funding for LIHI to develop and operate a new safe lot with about 30 spots, rather than the 60 originally projected. LIHI has not yet secured a site for the new safe lot, and thus has not begun incurring operational costs. Additionally, LIHI's lease for the Salmon Bay safe lot will end in May 2025 and the program will close at that time; that would free up additional operating funds if or until LIHI finds another location for the program.

##### **Options:**

- A. Reallocate a different ongoing source of \$1 million for LIHI's THVs, to preserve the original safe lot award to LIHI.
- B. No change.

#### **5. End of one-time funding for homeless services programs**

Beginning in September 2020, HSD provided \$5.1 million in one-time COVID federal relief funding for 16 projects at 12 different homelessness services agencies<sup>3</sup>. Of those 16 projects, 11 are shelters, three are day centers, one is a rapid rehousing program, and one is a diversion program (see Attachment A). By the end of 2024, two shelters will be closed for reasons unrelated to the one-time funding, leaving nine shelters on this list.

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<sup>3</sup> While the Navigation Center is one of the projects that received one-time COVID funding, it is not included in this analysis, as the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget provides additional ongoing revenue for the project. See the HSD Proposed 2025-2026 Budget Overview Paper for more information.

Below is a description of funding for these programs in the 2024 Adopted and the 2025-2026 Proposed budgets:

- These programs received a total of at least \$5.1 million in 2024. HSD provided about \$2.4 million, and King County provided \$2.7 million, for the first time, via a state grant<sup>4</sup>.
- In the 2025 Proposed Budget, HSD would provide no one-time funding while King County's one-time funding would continue at \$2.7 million. This would reduce the amount of one-time funds available by 53 percent in 2025.
- In the 2026 Proposed Budget, HSD would provide no one-time funding. King County also would not provide any one-time funds. This reduces the amount of one-time funds to zero.

In addition to one-time funds, HSD also provides about \$6.9 million annually in ongoing funding for these projects in the 2024 Adopted and the 2025-2026 Proposed budgets.

### 2025 Impacts

As a result of the proposed one-time funding reductions in 2025, \$1.6 million for Afrikatown's Centralized Diversion program, which helps people who have lost housing identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and avoid entering shelter, would be eliminated. That program served 312 households in 2023. Funding for the day centers would be reduced by 8 to 61 percent. Two day centers are operated by YouthCare, and their future is pending the results of YouthCare's strategic realignment. Funding for shelters is generally held steady and none of the remaining nine shelters are anticipated to close in 2025.

### 2026 Impacts

In 2026, the impact of the one-time funding elimination is uncertain and will depend on a number of factors, including when KCRHA implements a system-wide re-procurement, the availability of other fund sources, and how available resources (such as HSD ongoing funding) are distributed to programs. Potential outcomes could be: 1) continuation of shelter and available beds (no change); 2) shelter closure; 3) shelters moving from an enhanced model to a basic model; 4) loss of some beds or hotel vouchers; and 5) conversion of shelter to a day center; and 6) fewer households served with rapid rehousing.

HSD has stated that it will work with KCRHA in early 2025 to understand impacts to 2026 services and determine options. One potential option, used in the past, is utilization of KCRHA underspend from the 2025 Seattle- KCRHA contract to cover 2026 expenses.

### **Options:**

- A. Add funding to replace some or all of the one-time funding ending in 2025 and/or 2026
- B. Adopt a SLI that provides regular updates on the anticipated 2026 service impacts related to the loss of one-time funding and the Executive's plan, if any, to mitigate those impacts.
- C. No change.

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<sup>4</sup> The 2024 Adopted Budget provided a \$500,000 for a one-time 7.5% inflationary adjustment and 2% provider pay increase to these contracts. Because of timing issues related to when the inflationary adjustments and provider pay increases were integrated into contracts, and the added complexity of King County taking over some of the contracts in 2024, the amounts in this paragraph may not fully include the inflationary adjustments and provider pay increase and may in actuality be higher.

## 6. Proposed reduction in investment in food programs

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would reduce direct investments in food security programs by about \$1.4 million. Of that amount, \$992,000 (General Fund) is due to the removal of one-time appropriations in the 2024 Adopted Budget. Those included:

- \$300,000 for meal providers (HSD-005-A)
- \$650,000 for food banks (HSD-807-B)
- \$42,000 for senior meals (HSD-808-A)

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would also make the following reductions:

- *Reduces Culturally Nourishing Foods Sweetened Beverage Tax (SBT) funding by \$350,000.* Contracts for this service started in January 2024 and the reduction will take place beginning in 2026. The remaining amount in 2026 for Culturally Nourishing Foods program is \$381,836, reflecting a 48 percent reduction in SBT funding. HSD staff has not yet determined how to distribute this reduction of \$350,000 – it could involve eliminating funding from some programs, reducing all programs by a certain level or reallocating the remaining SBT Funds for this program to Senior Nutrition Programs and eliminating the Culturally Nourishing Food program. Though this investment is in its first year, the anticipated outcomes are 29,272 cultural meals and 20,541 culturally appropriate grocery bags for seniors, along with 122 cultural activities or social engagements for seniors.
- *Reduces \$80,000 in SBT funds in 2026, eliminating HSD funding for produce bags for in-home family child care providers (aka Farm to Child Care pilot).* This budget proposal would result in discontinuation of this program and non-renewal of a contract with a service provider. In 2023, the program served 84 sites and provided approximately 650 produce bags through bi-weekly deliveries. HSD’s ongoing Child Care Nutrition Program (CCNP) already provides food to children at in-home family child care sites. HSD has stated that while the pilot produce bag program brings best practices of providing local, nutritious food for children at an early age, the produce bags are an additional value-add that augment existing programs.

### Options:

- A. Add funding for some or all of the 2024 one-time food investments.
- B. Restore funding in 2026 for the culturally nourishing food program and/or the Farm to Child Care Pilot.
- C. No change.

## 7. Proposed elimination of funding for legal services

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would eliminate HSD funding for two legal services programs:

- *Eliminate \$50,000 of funding for Solid Ground’s Public Benefits Legal Assistance program, which provides direct legal representation, advice and counsel to single adults and families who have received an adverse decision regarding denial, termination, reduction or overpayment of state public assistance. An estimated 25 fewer people would receive services; HSD funds only 9 percent of program.*
- *Eliminate \$124,000 of funding for Legal Counsel for Youth and Children to provide homeless youth free legal assistance. In 2023, 1,500 hours of attorney time was used to serve youth experiencing homelessness, and 60 youth had cases closed as a result. HSD funds 51 percent of program.*

### Options:

- A. Restore funding for Solid Ground’s Public Benefits Legal Assistance Program and/or the Legal Counsel for Youth and Children program.
- B. No change.

## 8. Removal of \$100,000 in one-time appropriation for United Way of King County’s tax preparation program

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would remove \$100,000 of one-time appropriations in the 2024 Adopted Budget for the United Way of King County (UWKC) to provide free tax preparation services to help individuals and families increase their incomes and create savings. Tax Preparation Assistance helps low- and moderate-income households by connecting them to additional financial and public benefits.

The total budget for the program in 2024 was \$909,200, with HSD funding of \$100,000 comprising 9 percent of the program. Other funders include the IRS, Washington State Commerce and United Way of King County Donors. In 2024, the program served 5,100 individuals and helped generate \$1.1 million in Earned Income Tax Credits for those served.

### Options:

- A. Add funding for UWKC Tax Preparation Services.
- B. No change.

### Attachment:

- A. Homelessness Services Programs funded with one-time funds



**Attachment A: Homelessness Services Programs funded with one-time funds**

<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>2023 Bed Count*</b>
Shelter Services	YWCA of Seattle-King County-Snohomish County	Angeline's Enhanced Night Shelter [13.120]	75 (including 18 hotel vouchers)
Shelter Services	Youth Care	South Seattle Shelter - Emergency	20
Shelter Services	Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle	ULMS Young Adult Shelter	25
Shelter Services	The Salvation Army	Pike Street Shelter - Cos HSD	26
Shelter Services	The Salvation Army	William Booth Shelter - Bills Beds	61
Shelter Services	Roots Young Adult Shelter	ROOTS Young Adult Shelter	45
Shelter Services	New Horizons Ministries	Nest Shelter	30
Shelter Services	Downtown Emergency Service Center	West Wing Shelter	30
Shelter Services	Downtown Emergency Service Center	Kerner-Scott House Women's Shelter	20
Shelter Services	Catholic Community Services	Bunny Wilburn Shelter and Referral Center	40
Shelter Services	Catholic Community Services	The Inn	30
Rapid Rehousing	YMCA of Greater Seattle	Sea/King RRH for YA - YMCA	n/a
Day Center	YouthCare	UDYC Enhanced Day Center	n/a
Day Center	YouthCare	Orion Enhanced Day Center	n/a
Day Center	Lake City Partners Ending Homelessness	God's Li'l Acre Day Center	n/a
Diversion	Africatown International	Centralized Diversion Fund	n/a

\*Source: HUD, 2023 Housing Inventory Count, [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_HIC\\_CoC\\_WA-500-2023\\_WA\\_2023.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_HIC_CoC_WA-500-2023_WA_2023.pdf)