

Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill (2E2SSB) 5536

Overview

To address criminal court system responses to drug use and possession and expand behavioral health outreach, treatment, and recovery support services throughout the state, Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5536 (2E2SSB 5536 or “the Blake bill”) was passed during the 2023 Special Session on May 16, 2023.

[Read the complete bill text](#)

SURSAC and the substance use recovery services plan

In January 2023, Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) submitted the [Substance Use Recovery Services Plan](#) to the governor’s office and the Senate Law & Justice subcommittee. This plan outlined 17 recommendations from the Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee (SURSAC) for consideration during the 2023 legislative session. Many of the committee’s recommendations were adopted in 2E2SSB 5536.

Expansion, funding, and changes

Several existing programs under HCA’s Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) were provided expansive directives and funding within 2E2SSB 5536. The following programs are included.

Arrest and Jail Alternatives (AJA)

Section 33(1) provides appropriations for Arrest and Jail Alternative funding.

- \$3,600,00 from the Opioid Abatement Settlement for State Fiscal Years 2024-2025
- \$700,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024
- \$700,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) expansion

Section 13 amended [RCW 71.24.589](#) to support expansion of the pre-booking diversion LEAD grant

program and allocates funding to expand LEAD from a pilot program to a statewide grant program.

- \$2,500,000 GF-S, State Fiscal Year 2024
- \$2,500,000 GF-S, State Fiscal Year 2025

Recovery Navigator Program (RNP)

Section 25(3) instructs HCA to revise its uniform program standards by June 30, 2024. The revised standards will provide guidance for Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organizations (BH-ASO) to follow in the design of their recovery navigator programs to achieve fidelity with the core principles of the law enforcement assisted diversion (LEAD) program.

Section 25(4) indicates that, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated, the authority shall provide funding to each BHASO for the continuation of and revisions to the recovery navigator programs they fund. This section also directs the authority to arrange for technical assistance to be provided by the LEAD national support bureau to all behavioral health administrative services organizations, contracted providers, and independent stakeholders and partners, such as prosecuting attorneys and law enforcement.

Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) rural expansion

In section 33(5), funding is provided for the authority to increase the number of mobile methadone units operated by existing opioid treatment providers, increase the number of opioid treatment provider fixed medication units operated by existing opioid treatment providers, and to expand opioid treatment programs with a prioritization for rural areas.

- \$3,768,000 from the Abatement Settlement for State Fiscal Years 2024-2025

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) family navigators

Section 33(7) provides appropriations to provide grants to support SUD family navigator programs.

- \$500,000 from the Opioid Abatement Settlement for State Fiscal Years 2024-2025
- \$750,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024

- \$750,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

Behavioral health co-responder services

Section 33(10) provides appropriations to support the provision of behavioral health co-responder services on non-law enforcement emergency medical response teams.

- \$1,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024
- \$1,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

Bridge program

Section 33(11) provides appropriations for HCA to increase contracts for services to provide information and support that is associated with safe housing and support services for youth exiting inpatient mental health and/or substance use disorder facilities to stakeholders, inpatient treatment facilities, young people, and other community providers that serve unaccompanied youth and young adults.

- \$250,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024
- \$250,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

Recovery Housing

Section 17 directs HCA to conduct outreach to rural and underserved areas to support development of recovery residences, including adequate resources for women, LGBTQIA+ communities, black, indigenous and other people of color communities, immigrant communities, and youth.

Under this section, HCA is also directed to coordinate training for housing providers regarding appropriate service to LGBTQIA+ communities, black, indigenous, and other people of color communities, and immigrant communities. Moreover, this training shall include consideration of topics like harassment, communication, antiracism, diversity, and gender-affirming behavior. and ensure applicants for grants or loans related to recovery residences receive access to the training.

Housing Voucher Program

Section 17(2) authorizes HCA to establish a voucher program to allow accredited recovery housing operators to hold bed space for individuals waiting for treatment.

- \$3,750,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024

- \$3,750,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

Funding is allocated for the authority to provide grants for the operational costs of new, staffed recovery residences that serve individuals with substance use disorders who require more support than a level 1 recovery residence, with a focus on providing grants to recovery residences that serve individuals in the five most populous counties of the state.

- \$2,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024
- \$2,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

New program and project directives

2E2SSB 5536 contained new directives for the HCA's Division Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), including the following programs:

Health engagement hubs pilot program

Section 26 directs HCA to implement a pilot program for health engagement hubs by August 1, 2024. Hubs are an all-in-one location where youth and adults who use drugs can access a range of medical, harm reduction, treatment, and social services, including linkage to housing, transportation, and other support services.

The pilot program will include at least two sites; one site will be in an urban area and one will be in a rural area.

- \$4,000,000 from the Opioid Abatement Settlement for state fiscal years 2024-2025

Substance Use Disorder Intake, Screening, and Assessment (SUDISA) work group

Section 36 directs HCA to convene a work group to recommend changes to systems, policies, and processes related to intake, screening, and assessment for SUD services. This workgroup will make recommendations that broaden the workforce capable of administering SUD assessments and make the assessment process low-barrier and easier for people seeking services to navigate.

Recommendations are due to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2024.

Training for caregivers of children and transition-age youth with SUD

Section 20 establishes training for parents of adolescents and transition-age youth with substance use disorders to provide education, communication strategies, means to obtain opioid overdose reversal medication, self-care, and suicide prevention. HCA, in partnership with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), will develop this training by June 30, 2024.

Education and employment grant program

Subject to funding, the authority shall establish a grant program for providers of employment, education, training, certification, and other supportive programs designed to provide persons recovering from a substance use disorder with employment and education opportunities. The grant program shall employ a low-barrier application and give priority to programs that engage with black, indigenous, persons of color, and other historically underserved communities.

23-Hour Crisis Relief Centers

Section 33(3) provides appropriations for the authority to award grants to crisis services providers to establish and expand 23-hour crisis relief center capacity.

- \$1,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2024
- \$1,000,000 GF-S, State Fiscal year 2025

SUD data collection

Section 38 tasks the authority with reporting to the legislature on the prevalence of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and interactions of persons with SUD with service providers, nonprofit service providers, first responders, health care facilities, and law enforcement agencies.

- Preliminary Inventory Report: due Dec. 1, 2023
- Final Inventory Report: due Dec. 1, 2024

5536 Implementation Reports offer data related to recovery residences, education and employment grants, RNPs, health engagement hubs, and LEAD grants from July 2024 to July 2026.

Authority

Funding for most of these programs and services was authorized through Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5536, Section 33; Chapter 1 (2023).

Oversight

HCA's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, Clinical Quality Care Transformation, and Medicaid Programs Division oversee the implementation of the programs included in this factsheet. From 2023 through 2026, SURSAC is tasked with providing consultation to HCA related to the implementation of the Substance Use Recovery Services Plan, which includes many of the programs supported by 5536.

For more information

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