

Anchorage Youth Advisory Board Policy Brief
November 12, 2025

Youth Access to Essential Services

1. **Problem:** Public Benefits are difficult to navigate and often communicate through the mail. Many young people don't have a stable address and even if they do they receive their appointment information in the mail after the appointment was scheduled to happen.

Solutions to Explore: Could we modernize and simplify the application and renewal process for SNAP, Medicaid, Housing, and other benefits.

- Require a mobile-friendly platform with SMS/email notifications.
- Allow flexible verification for people experiencing homelessness (e.g., no fixed address required).
- Require timely notice of interviews + option for phone/video interviews.
- Expand acceptance of service provider addresses.

2. **Problem:** Many young people who end up experiencing homelessness do not know the resources available to them until it is too late.

Solutions to Explore: Require schools and after-school programs to provide students with information on SNAP, Medicaid, housing resources, and youth homelessness services.

3. **Problem:** Access to resource assistance call lines like 211 are not 24 hours. Many young people are unable to access them during the hours they are open.

Solutions to Explore: Fund a 24 hour a day resource navigator line.

4. **Problem:** Young people experiencing homelessness have difficulty navigating health care and Medicaid.

Solutions to Explore:

- Simplify Medicaid enrollment and renewal for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure a continuity of coverage when youth exit OCS or juvenile justice.
- Expand medical debt relief for low-income youth.
- Require state-licensed providers to visibly post patient advocacy contacts in common areas.

5. **Problem:** Young people have trouble getting and keeping their ID and important documents that are needed to access many of the public benefits. Replacing these documents is costly and often takes a long time.

Solution to Explore: Create a free and expedited process for young people experiencing homelessness to get their documents.

System Accountability and Workforce Capacity

- 1. Problem:** Many employees working in public benefit programs are aging and struggle to relate to young people experiencing homelessness.

Solution to Explore: Create paid peer positions in state agencies that hire and train young adults with lived experience to support peers accessing public benefits.

- 2. Problem:** Employees in state agencies and schools are under enormous stress which causes them to not be able to be a consistent support for the young people who need them.

Solutions to Explore: Increase wages, benefits and retention incentive for state and school employees.

- 3. Problem:** Many young people who end up experiencing homelessness have had multiple challenging experiences while in foster care.

Solutions to Explore: Strengthen OCS Oversight & Accountability

- Require regular youth check-ins.
- Increase foster home monitoring.
- Require public reporting on outcomes and incidents.
- Limit over-medication; require second-opinion policies.