



Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)



Every young person deserves a fair shot at success in and out of school. For students to achieve academically, they need stable housing so they can focus on their studies, not where they are going to sleep. But there is a dire crisis in Washington State: **40,000+ K-12 public school students are homeless, of which 61% are youth of color,¹ contributing to racial disparities in educational outcomes.**

The Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) is the first program of its kind in the nation, requiring coordination between education and housing services. Grants are made to both school districts and nonprofits to identify students experiencing homelessness, coordinate support, and provide housing resources to students and their families. **This vital program desperately needs greater investment to address the devastating crisis leaving many of our youth behind.**

The legislature can reduce student homelessness and improve educational outcomes by increasing HSSP funding from \$4.4M to \$10M.

Created by the legislature in 2016, HSSP provides funding through two state agencies. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) awards grants to school districts for staff, training, and support services for students experiencing homelessness. The Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) awards grants to nonprofit organizations to connect students and families with housing services and flexible funding for urgent needs such as emergency rental assistance, move-in costs, and utility payments. Building Changes facilitates collaboration between these two agencies and provides training and technical assistance, capacity building, and research and evaluation support to OHY and their grantees.

According to the most recent data, HSSP has a high success rate. In the last HSSP cohort, OHY grantees served 473 households, with 1,412 clients including 761 students. Of the households that exited a program, **66% secured stable housing**. OSPI grants served 13 districts and 6,145 students. By increasing HSSP funding from \$4.4M to \$10M, legislators can make greater inroads into the student homelessness crisis and help improve educational outcomes.

"I connected to a student who had been living with a grandparent who passed away from COVID-19, and the mother couldn't keep up with the bills. Because they didn't have resources to move into another place, they had to stay in their car, and then the student started missing school. With HSSP funding, we helped this family get a hotel, transportation to get that student to school, groceries, and medical needs. Finally, after a couple months—through the help of amazing partners and our school district—we pulled our resources together and helped this family get permanently housed again."

—ECHO ABERNATHY, McKinney-Vento/Foster Care Liaison, Bethel School District

¹ According to analysis of 2015-2019 state data by Building Changes. See: bit.ly/WA-k12outcomes-2015-19



How School Districts Use HSSP Funding:

- Increase identification to serve more students experiencing homelessness.
- Build relationships in local communities to streamline referrals and needed services.
- Improve staff capacity to help students experiencing homelessness graduate from high school, address mental health needs, and connect to housing services.



How Housing Organizations Partner with Schools Through HSSP:

- Collaborate and share resources across schools and housing organizations to serve students experiencing homelessness more effectively than if working separately.
- Use flexible, creative, data-driven strategies tailored to meet students' individual needs to equitably address housing crises across both urban and rural geographic areas.
- Provide flexible funding assistance to cover expenses such as security deposits, application fees, hotel/motel expenses, utilities, moving costs, and essential household items.



Recent Examples of HSSP Grantee Racial Equity Strategies:

- Prioritize youth of color, who make up the majority of the population of students experiencing homelessness.
- Employ staff reflective of the communities they serve (e.g., BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, bilingual).
- Provide real-time translation assistance with scheduling appointments and filling out applications.
- Direct families experiencing homelessness to appropriate housing by tracking apartments with reduced barriers and those where clients report facing discrimination.
- Use trauma-informed, culturally specific practices and continually review policies, procedures, and tools to make them more equitable and inclusive.
- Create internal working groups focused on disproportionate impacts of homelessness on students and families of color, as well as LGBTQ2+ youth.



Why HSSP Needs Additional Investments to Address the Dire Crisis of Student Homelessness:

- 40,000+ Washington State students are experiencing homelessness. A crisis of this proportion urgently demands a stronger response. By increasing funding to \$10M, the legislature can expand HSSP's reach across the state and increase capacity for school districts and housing organizations. This will not only provide more housing resources for young people, it will also support better educational outcomes.
- Roughly 6 out of 10 students experiencing homelessness are youth of color. By making additional investments in HSSP, the legislature can also address racial disproportionality in both homelessness and educational outcomes.
- Youth are often ineligible or not prioritized for many homeless and housing programs. For many students experiencing homelessness, HSSP is the only avenue of support.
- There is an overwhelming unmet need reflected in the HSSP grant application process. In the last RFP cycle, applicants requested almost three times the amount OSPI had available to grant and almost five times the amount OHY had available to grant.