



Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)



Every young person deserves a fair shot at success, and 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. According to 2021-2022 K-12 public school data, **39,801 students are experiencing homelessness, of which 64% are youth of color, contributing to racial disparities in educational outcomes, as unhoused students score lower in math and English Language Arts than housed peers.**

Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) makes grants to both school districts and nonprofits to identify students experiencing homelessness, coordinate support, and provide housing resources. This vital program needs greater ongoing investment to address the crisis leaving so many youth behind.

Created by the legislature in 2016 to reduce student homelessness, **HSSP is the first program of its kind in the nation.** Funding is provided to two state agencies. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) awards grants to school districts for staff, training, and support services, and the Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) awards grants to partnering nonprofit organizations to connect students/families with housing services and flexible funding. Building Changes facilitates school and community collaboration and provides training, capacity building, research, and evaluation.

HSSP has a high success rate. According to the most recent data, OSPI grants served 13 districts and 6,145 students. From July 2022-March 2023, OHY grantees served 297 households, with 1,024 clients including 483 students.

Of the 204 households that exited a housing program, 63% secured permanent housing.

“One student had been living with a grandparent who passed away from COVID, and the mother couldn’t keep up with the bills. They didn’t have resources to move, so they stayed in their car, and 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 helped this family get permanently housed again.”

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

To reduce student homelessness and improve educational outcomes, the WA State legislature can provide ongoing HSSP funding of \$2.6M.



How School Districts Use HSSP Funding:

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



How HSSP-Funded Housing Organizations Partner with Schools:

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



How HSSP Grantees Use Racial Equity Strategies:

- Prioritize youth of color, who make up the 64% of students experiencing homelessness.
- Employ staff reflective of the communities they serve (e.g., BIPOC, LGBTQ2+, bilingual).
- Provide 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-sensitive 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 Crisis:

- 39,801 WA State students are experiencing homelessness. A crisis of this proportion requires an urgent response. By changing the \$2.6M in funding to ongoing funding, the legislature can expand HSSP's reach to students experiencing homelessness, provide more housing resources, and support improved educational outcomes.
- 64% students experiencing homelessness are youth of color. By investing more, we can 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.