

Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness Pilot

Year One Progress: 2SSB 5800 Pilot Program

Washington students are facing growing housing insecurity and homelessness

Housing and food insecurity are critical barriers that undermine persistence and completion rates for postsecondary students.¹ Around the country, 2020 public health and economic crises have increased the number of students experiencing financial hardship and instability.² In Washington, college students face significant challenges meeting their basic needs while completing their credentials, with disproportionate impacts on students of color and students with marginalized identities and circumstances.³

I really needed this time to feel safe and somewhere to call home until I found a forever home. This was a great program to get me and my son back on our feet in the midst of a terrible time in our story.

Student, SPSCC

Addressing these barriers, Washington’s **Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) Pilot** was enacted in 2019 legislation ([2SSB 5800](#)) and is administered by the Washington Student Achievement Council and Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. SSEH Pilot is building support systems for students facing homelessness on six public campuses: **Eastern Washington University, Edmonds College, South Puget Sound Community College, Walla Walla Community College, Western Washington University, and Yakima Valley College.**

The SSEH Pilot institutions have supported students during this year’s unprecedented public health and economic crises. The continuation of funding and systems change efforts will increase postsecondary attainment among vulnerable students, enhancing the state’s efforts to ensure an equitable economic recovery.

How common is food and housing insecurity on Pilot campuses?

Students reported high levels of unmet basic needs in the fall of 2019:

Institution*	Food Insecurity	Housing Insecurity	Homelessness
Eastern Washington University**	33%	41%	22%
Western Washington University	39%	49%	19%
Edmonds College	39%	51%	19%
South Puget Sound Community College	43%	53%	21%
Yakima Valley College	48%	59%	18%

* WWCC data not available at the time of this report, ** EWU used Active Minds Survey; all others used #RealCollege Survey from Hope Center for College, Community and Justice

(SSEH) has enabled me to focus on my studies rather than worrying about paying my rent. It made me realize that I am able to pursue nursing even after a long break from school.

Student, Edmonds College

Who are the students served by the Pilot in 2020?

(SSEH) gave me stability, shelter and food I would not have had otherwise. This saved me from sleeping in my car every night or worse, and I am extremely grateful.

Student, WWU

Pilot institutions served **109 students** in the five months of the start-up year (February - June).

All students served were experiencing or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness, and 83% reported low or marginal food security. Despite these barriers, all SSEH students completed the term and persisted to their next term.

Within a range of student demographics, the average student age was 29, the majority identified as female, and 61% were supporting dependents. A third of the students served were employed at least part-time. Preliminary race and ethnicity data is limited and will require further analysis in completion of the pilot.

¹ “Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits.” 2018. United States Government Accountability Office. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696254.pdf>

² Goldrick-Rab, Vanessa Coca, Gregory Kienzl, Carrie R. Welton, Sonja Dahl, Sarah Megnelia. “#RealCollege During the Pandemic: New Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity And Student Well-Being.” The Hope Center. Accessed November 1, 2019. https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Hopecenter_RealCollegeDuringthePandemic_Reupload.pdf

³ “Washington State Community And Technical Colleges #RealCollege Survey.” February 2020. Accessed November 1, 2019. https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_WashingtonState_Report.pdf

What kinds of accommodations and services are the SSEH Pilot institutions providing?

The SSEH Pilot institutions had just begun to identify and serve students in February 2020 when they had to quickly pivot to remote operations because of the state's COVID-19 Stay Home, Stay Healthy measures. Although campus closures and new safety protocols impacted previously planned service models, SSEH Pilot institutions modified their plans and implemented several critical accommodations to support postsecondary students experiencing homelessness.



Housing: Emergency, Short-term and Homelessness Prevention was provided in a variety of models.

- EWU and WWU provided on-campus residence stays, including between term periods.
- SPSCC leased apartments for flexible-length stays for students experiencing homelessness.
- EC connected students with community housing resources and emergency hotel stays.
- All SSEH Pilots provided emergency rental assistance.



Food assistance addressed basic food insecurity that is often intertwined with homelessness.

- EC and WWCC connected students with Basic Food benefits.
- EC served students with campus pantries and referrals to community food resources.
- All SSEH Pilots provided pre-paid grocery cards to improve access during campus closures.



Case management and referral to campus and community resources supported complex needs and longer-term stability.

- EC partnered with the Jean Kim Foundation to employ a part-time case manager.
- SPSCC connected students with housing and additional community resources.
- EWU provided case management with the support of graduate students.
- WWU leveraged Passport Program staffing to provide case management.



Showers and hygiene, laundry, storage, and mailstop access were provided as discrete services or woven into residence hall and apartment stays.

- EWU, WWU, and SPSCC provided housing inclusive of these accommodations.
- EC provided staffing and access to showers on campus and nearby hygiene center.
- WWCC and YVC distributed hygiene kits to students.



Technology support became especially important for the quick transition to remote learning during the pandemic.

- All SSEH Pilots provided computers, internet devices, and services by leveraging resources.



Transportation

- EC and YVC provided public transportation passes and prepaid gas cards.

(The Case Manager) was very helpful and seemed genuinely concerned about me losing my home during this pandemic. I can't thank her enough for staying in touch and getting me back on my feet during these tough times.
Student, YVC

(SSEH) is so valuable to our marginalized students who come from poverty or who are without homes while attending school. This program helped a student I referred from having to choose an unsafe housing option or be homeless. Mental Health Counselor, WWU

How is the SSEH Pilot leading Washington's basic needs efforts?

In the second program year, pilot campuses are focusing on adaptive solutions to support students who are experiencing homelessness, sharing effective practices, and improving Washington's understanding of addressing postsecondary basic needs.

- Pilot campuses are serving increasing numbers of students as they solidify improvements in campus coordination, communication, and external partnerships.
- Campuses statewide are learning effective practices through a quarterly learning community, with over 500 participants so far this year.
- SSEH partners are planning the development of a Washington assessment for institutional, regional, and statewide data on postsecondary unmet basic needs.

For more information about the Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness Pilot:

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