

Washington Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH)

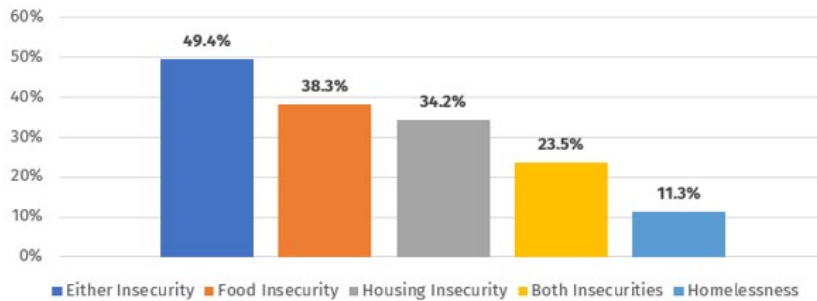
Washington students face growing housing insecurity and homelessness

Basic needs insecurity is a critical barrier to student access¹ and success, undermining persistence and completion rates for postsecondary students.² In Washington, college students face significant challenges to meeting their basic needs while completing their credentials. The gaps in covering critical costs such as housing and food are pervasive among students in both community and technical colleges (CTCs) and public baccalaureate institutions (PBIs).³ Students of color and students who experience marginalization based on their identities and circumstances—such as former foster youth, LGBTQ+ students, and students with dependents—are disproportionately impacted.⁴

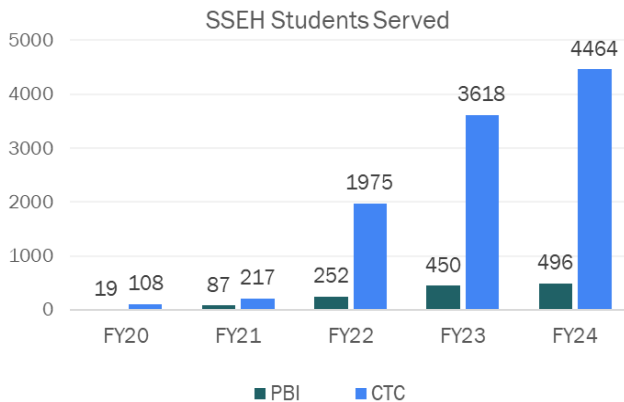
To address this need, the Washington Legislature enacted **Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH)** pilot in 2019 ([2SSB 5800](#)) and then made it permanent for all public postsecondary institutions in 2023 ([ESSB 5702](#)). SSEH provides grants to colleges to build systems to identify and support students facing homelessness and students who aged out of foster care. The Washington Student Achievement Council and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges have administered SSEH, initially with six public colleges and universities, and now with 34 institutions.

How common is food and housing insecurity for Washington students?

Students participating in a [2022 state-level survey](#) reported high levels of unmet basic needs:



"Working with the program made all the difference whether I would graduate. If not for them I would have been forced to drop my schooling to be able to survive." – Student, The Evergreen State College



Who has been served in SSEH?

SSEH has served 11,686 students in 5 years.

In FY 2024 alone, 6,726 students were served.

- **59% of students served were students of color** which echoes national and state data that Black, Native American, and Hispanic/Latinx students are disproportionately experiencing these barriers.
- **66% of students identified as female**
- **70% of CTC students were age 25 or older**, and 25% of PBI students served were in that age range.
- **314 were former foster youth.**

Have students served by SSEH stayed enrolled or completed their credential?

During Fiscal Year 2024:	PBIs	CTC
Percent of students who completed academic term in which they received SSEH support	94%	86%
Percent who stayed in college or completed a credential by the following term	93%	82%

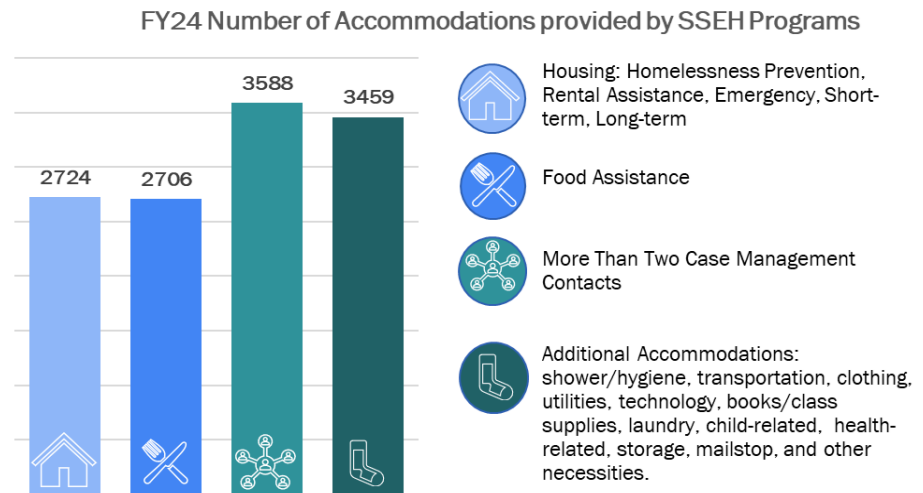
"It allowed me space and time to search for housing and to keep on track with my studies." – Student, Tacoma Community College

Read the full report on Washington Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness:

<https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-Supporting-Students-Experiencing-Homelessness-Pilot-Project-Report.pdf>

What kinds of support are SSEH institutions providing?

"Without [SSEH] I would still be on the streets and end up failing my classes. I'm going to continue going to school because I need to make more money to support my family." – Student, Edmonds College



Relationships and partnerships with other college programs and community organizations are integral in SSEH. SSEH Case managers have made **over 32,000 referrals to external agencies and programs**, such as community food pantries, 211 Washington, WA Connection, Community Action Councils, Housing Authorities, WorkSource, United Way, and an array of other housing, domestic violence, youth, health, and service providers. SSEH case managers made **over 30,000 referrals to other college programs and resources**, such as campus food pantries, financial aid, college workforce grant programs, career services, health services, and student support services.

"Your endless kindness and understanding not only eased my stress and anxiety but also helped me refocus on my education. The resources you provided were invaluable." – Student, Lake Washington Institute of Technology

How can Washington increase support for students experiencing homelessness?

SSEH institutions have developed a variety of recommendations for policy and practice. Highlights include:

- Increase affordable housing options for students on and off college campuses and promote community and regional partnerships to address housing shortages.
- Increase funding for SSEH to ensure funding for case management and to provide additional housing support for students given increases in cost of living. Include Washington's accredited tribal institution.
- Fund further research regarding effective interventions to support students experiencing homelessness
- Fully fund full-time Benefits Navigators associated with the Washington Postsecondary Basic Needs Act ([2SHB 1559](#) 2023)

For more information about Washington Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness:

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¹ [Path to 70 Update: Why Washingtonians Value Credentials but Aren't Completing Them](#). December 2022. Washington Roundtable, Partnership for Learning, & Kinetic West

²Ortagus, J., Skinner, B.T., & Tanner, M. (2020). Investigating why academically successful community college students leave college without a degree.

³ The Myth of "Full-Ride" Financial Aid (2023) [COA Gap Myth of Full Ride Financial Aid \(03.20.23\).pdf \(wa.gov\)](#)

⁴Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students (2023) <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023.BasicNeedsReport.pdf>