

# Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington

## Washington students face growing housing insecurity and homelessness

Basic needs insecurity is a major barrier for college students. When students lack stable housing, enough food, or other essentials, it becomes harder for them to stay in school and finish their programs. In Washington, college students face challenges in meeting these basic needs while completing their credentials. Gaps in covering key costs are common among students in both two-year and four-year colleges. Students of color and students who are marginalized based on their identities and circumstances — such as former foster youth and students with dependents — are affected at higher rates.

To address this need, the Washington Legislature enacted the **Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH)** pilot in 2019, which was made permanent for all public postsecondary institutions in 2023 ([ESSB 5702](#)). SSEH provides grants for colleges to support students facing homelessness or who have aged out of foster care. The Washington Student Achievement Council and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges administer SSEH with 7 public and tribal universities and 34 colleges.

## How common is food and housing insecurity for Washington students?

Students reported high levels of basic needs insecurity in a [2024 state-level survey](#): **34% of students reported experiencing housing insecurity, and 11% reported experiencing homelessness**, which means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate residence.

*“[SSEH] stopped me from being homeless and starving. It has given me the opportunity to continue my education even with all the instability I've been facing.” - SSEH student, Western Washington University*

## Who has been served in SSEH?

SSEH has served **17,438** students since the SSEH program began in 2020.

In fiscal year 2025 alone, **5,752** students facing homelessness and former foster youth were served.

- Over half of the students served were students of color, and over half were female.
- Over 64% of two-year college students were age 25 or older.
- 346 were former foster youth.

## Have students served by SSEH stayed enrolled or completed their credentials?

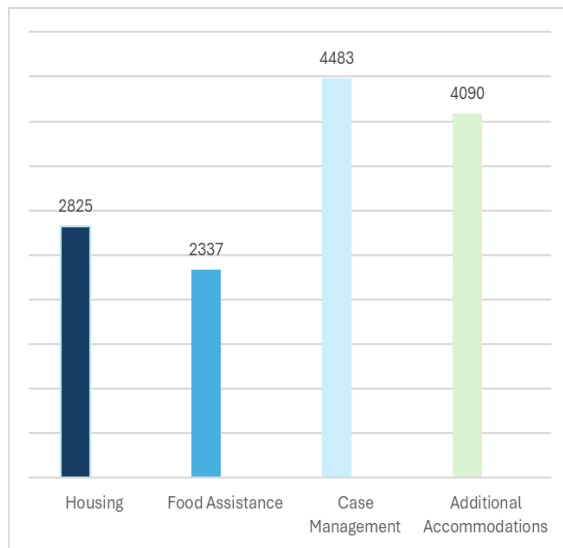
Fiscal year 2024-25	Universities	2-Year Colleges
Percent of students who completed the academic term in which they received SSEH support	90%	87%
Percent who stayed in college or completed a credential in the following term	98%	81%

*“We were able to move multiple students from unstable living situations (car, shelter, etc.) into our student housing using SSEH funding.... It leads to success for these students.” – SSEH Program Director, Green River College*

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What kinds of support are SSEH colleges and universities providing?

FY 2025 Number of Services Provided by SSEH Programs:



**Housing:** Homelessness prevention, rental assistance, emergency, short-term, long-term.

**Case Management:** More than two contacts.

**Additional Accommodations:** Shower/hygiene, transportation, clothing, utilities, technology, books/class supplies, laundry, child-related, health-related, storage, mailstop, and other necessities.

*"I cannot tell you enough how much (SSEH support) means to me... I think I would have given up on school had it not been for the help I have received." - SSEH student, Evergreen State College*

**Relationships and partnerships with community and campus programs are integral.** Case Managers have made **over 38,827 referrals to community programs and resources**, such as public benefits, community food pantries, 211, Community Action Councils, Housing Authorities, WorkSource, and an array of other providers. SSEH case managers made **over 33,845 referrals to other college resources**, such as campus pantries, financial aid, workforce programs, career services, health services, and more.

*"Thank you so much for your tremendous efforts in helping me find resources. I also have great news—I got approved for an apartment, and I'm signing the lease on Monday." – SSEH student, Lake Washington Institute of Technology*

**How can Washington increase support for students experiencing homelessness?**

SSEH colleges and universities have developed a variety of recommendations for policy and practice:

- 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 case management and additional housing support for students who face increases in the cost of living.
- Fund further research regarding proven ways to support students experiencing homelessness.
- Fully fund Benefits Navigators associated with the [WA Student Basic Needs Act \(2SHB 1559\)](#).

**For more information about Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness:**

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- **Read the [state report on WA Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)**