

Automatic WA Grant Enrollment for SNAP Recipients

Increase access to state financial aid by removing the application requirement for Washingtonians receiving other public benefits.

The Problem

The complex financial aid application process is a barrier to accessing aid and enrolling in college or job training. People from low-income families often qualify for multiple public benefits programs, including financial aid for education, but eligible people must separately seek out and apply for these various forms of support.

The Solution

The state can eliminate the burden of applying for state financial aid by verifying income eligibility via other public benefits programs. Washington residents could be notified of being income-eligible for Washington College Grant (WA Grant) based on their enrollment in basic food support. This proactive outreach could increase awareness of financial aid and show education is possible for people who might otherwise consider it out of reach. For eligible people, WA Grant can provide tuition-free college or career training and a pathway to good-paying jobs.

How It Works

Under this proposal, recipients of the Basic Food (SNAP) and Washington Food Assistance Programs could automatically be considered for WA Grant without completing a FAFSA or WASFA financial aid application. Through HB 1835 (2022), the Legislature previously authorized this approach for several smaller benefits programs; WSAC could build on this existing infrastructure in expanding to those receiving food benefits. Higher levels of education among eligible populations could decrease reliance on public benefits in the future.

By the Numbers

- 71% of Washington Basic Food clients do not have any college experience or degree.
- While not increasing the number of eligible people, this proposal would reduce barriers and increase awareness of financial aid, making college and job training more accessible.
- Recent research from WSAC shows that many of the most economically disadvantaged recipients of need-based financial aid surpass their parents financially within three years of college graduation.
- The cost of this proposal is \$239,000 annually for 1.0 FTE to implement this work.

71%
SNAP recipients
without college
degree

\$239,000
annually