

## About the Homeless Student Stability Program

Student homelessness in Washington State has almost doubled in the last decade. Out of the more than 40,000 students who were experiencing homelessness in the 2018-19 academic year, 16% were unaccompanied, 62% were students of color, 73% lived in doubled-up households, and only about half of this student population graduated within four years of high school. Students experiencing homelessness need individualized support from schools and housing organizations to ensure that their academic, housing, and basic needs are met.

### What is the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP)?

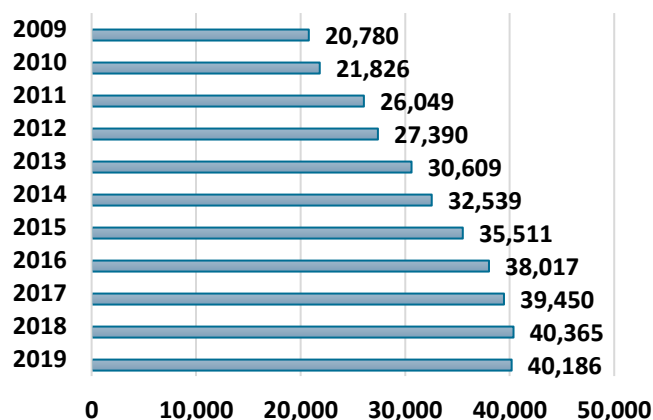
Established by the Washington State Legislature in 2016, the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) awards grants to school districts and nonprofits. Its purpose is to improve educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness and provide housing support services. HSSP funds are administered by two agencies: the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), which awards grants to school districts; and the Department of Commerce (Commerce), which awards grants to nonprofit organizations that work with local school districts to create partnerships between housing support services and schools.

HSSP encourages school districts and nonprofit partners to develop effective strategies that directly address the academic and housing needs of students experiencing homelessness. It was one of the first programs in the nation to provide comprehensive support for students experiencing homelessness through a statewide competitive grant program.

### What makes HSSP unique?

- HSSP fosters intentional partnership across the education and housing systems at the provider level.
- Each system defines homelessness differently and has historically focused on serving only the populations that meet their specific definition. HSSP strives to bring the education and housing systems together to find opportunities to meet students' needs in a collaborative way, with the goal of improving housing and academic outcomes.
- HSSP helps address the definitional misalignment between federal and state education and housing agencies by focusing on housing instability as a genuine academic barrier for students experiencing homelessness. HSSP funding promotes deeper partnerships between OSPI, Commerce, and nonprofit partners. This active collaboration provides opportunities to align state and local work to support students experiencing homelessness.

Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington, 2009-2019



## Why is HSSP funding important to schools?

- In 2020-21, OSPI awarded HSSP grants to 13 school districts that served 7,761 students experiencing homelessness. Almost a quarter of those students (1,745) were unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.
- With HSSP funding, grant recipients:
  - Increased identification efforts to serve more students experiencing homelessness.
  - Built relationships in their local communities to streamline referrals and needed services.
  - Offered training to community providers and internal district staff on how to best support the educational and housing needs of students experiencing homelessness.
  - Increased staffing capacity and efforts to support students experiencing homelessness to graduate from high school.
    - For example: North Thurston School District helped 83.8% of their senior high school students experiencing homelessness graduate and supported them in accessing more than \$790,000 in college scholarships.

## What impact does HSSP have in partnerships between schools and housing systems?

- In the 2019 fiscal year, Commerce HSSP grant recipients served 650 households (1,520 people served), and 74% of those households secured stable housing.
- Commerce reports that every year since 2017, the number of households served by HSSP grant recipients has increased.
- With HSSP funding, school districts and housing providers:
  - Provided rental assistance for housing-related costs, such as security deposits, application fees, hotel/motel expenses, utilities, moving costs, and essential household items.
  - Formalized agreements between nonprofit and school district partners on how to meet the needs of students and families experiencing homelessness by having memoranda of understanding in place.
  - Collaborated and shared resources across systems to serve students experiencing homelessness more efficiently and effectively.

## Why does HSSP need additional investments and support?

- School districts in Washington State have reported that they need closer to \$29 million a year to identify and support students experiencing homelessness, yet they only receive \$2.5 million a year.<sup>1</sup>
- Each year the funding requests for HSSP exceed the available grant amount.
  - In 2019, Commerce granted \$1.73 million in competitive grants to 5 projects out of 27 applications requesting a total of \$8.2 million.
  - In 2020, OSPI granted \$1.75 million in competitive grants to 13 projects out of 26 applications requesting a total of \$3.39 million.



***Our Vision:*** Communities thrive when people have safe and stable housing and can equitably access and use services.

***Our Mission:*** Building Changes advances equitable responses to homelessness in Washington State, with a focus on children, youth, and families and the systems that serve them.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Washington State Auditor. (2019). Performance Audit: Opportunities to Better Identify and Serve K-12 Students Experiencing Homelessness. Retrieved from [https://www.sao.wa.gov/performance\\_audit/opportunities-to-better-identify-and-serve-k-12-students-experiencing-homelessness/](https://www.sao.wa.gov/performance_audit/opportunities-to-better-identify-and-serve-k-12-students-experiencing-homelessness/)