



Housing is an essential foundation for children to succeed in school

The Washington Families Fund is working with education systems to provide stable housing for families, so children can learn and thrive in school.

What we know—the impacts of homelessness on children and schools:

- When children don't have a stable home, they struggle in other areas, like school.
- Children who are homeless often switch schools frequently: constant adjustment to new situations leads to stress and a decline in educational achievement.
- Research shows that homeless children are more likely than their peers to drop out of school, repeat a grade, perform poorly on tests and in the classroom, disengage in class, and suffer from learning disabilities and behavior problems.
- High mobility also impacts the school—there is little continuity of learning and student-teacher relationships are harder to make
- Created in 2004 by the Washington State Legislature, the Washington Families Fund (WFF) is a unique public-private partnership dedicated to reducing and ending family homelessness statewide by funding model programs and innovative strategies that address the problems of homelessness both at a systems and family level.

Homelessness and Washington state schools:

- 27,390 children in Washington were homeless in the 2011-2012 school year.
- 1 in 38 students in Washington are homeless. This represents a 5 percent increase from the previous school year and a 63 percent increase from 2006–2007.
- At least 1 in 20 students is homeless in 60 Washington school districts.
- At least 1 in 20 students is homeless in seven Washington state counties: Asotin, Grant, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Mason, Pacific, and Pend Oreille.
- Almost one-third (32 percent) of homeless Washington children attend school in rural counties.
- 48 percent of homeless students are in 5th grade or below.

Schools are in a unique position to address family homelessness because they are a system that regularly interacts with families:

- Most homeless school-age children do attend school.
- Students may reveal they are homeless at school where they develop relationships with trusted teachers and school staff.
- The education definition of homelessness includes families who are doubled up—one of the leading situations that cause families to go into shelters.

Washington Families Fund programs that provide solutions for homeless school children:

Elementary school intervention—McCarver School Project

- McCarver elementary is one of the highest poverty schools in the state and has the largest population of homeless students in the school district.
- McCarver students are highly mobile with a transiency rate on average of about 125 percent with a high of 179 percent. This means that in the course of one school year an entire class can turn over more than once.

Finding a solution to support families and strengthen the school

- The Washington Families Fund provides funding for the project that pairs housing assistance and support services for families with children in the elementary school.
- The Tacoma Housing Authority provides a rent subsidy for up to five years to 50 eligible families with children at McCarver Elementary.
- Families must agree to meet the program requirements including active participation in their child's school curriculum, a family improvement plan geared towards self-sufficiency, and a commitment to keep students in the school for five years.
- The program is based on the belief that Stable Housing provides children with an opportunity for educational success.

McCarver Early Results from October 2012 report are encouraging

- The formerly homeless or borderline homeless students in the Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver program consistently outperformed other homeless students across the district.
- Program students showed a 22 percent increase in reading test scores in grades K-5 and 29.2 percent gain in grades K-2.
- Mobility for students in the program was only 4.5 percent compared with 114 percent for the rest of the student population.
- Family progress is demonstrated by increases in household income, employment, education, and job training.

Early Childhood Intervention—Family Homelessness and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

- Building Changes and King County co-fund Neighborhood House to work with families involved with ECEAP and who are at risk of homelessness.
- Case managers work with the families to create a plan that promotes self-sufficiency through employment, access to public benefits, household financial management, and parenting support so that the family will have the resources to continue to support the educational gains of their children.