



Housing and Essential Needs

Preserve this safety-net program



"I injured my back and am unable to work. I have three children and their father passed away the same year I broke my back. We have been in many homeless shelters in the past, but we now live in a one-bedroom house. At least we are together. Without this program, we would be homeless, or worse, separated."

- HEN recipient, November 2011, Spokane.

"Without the help from HEN today I would be homeless. I have been dealing with ongoing medical issues for the past ten years and it has gotten significantly worse in the past two years, requiring me to have major surgery in September. My current landlord has gone above and beyond, but I am now over three months behind on rent and I see no immediate changes to my situation for an unknown period of time."

- HEN recipient, November 2011, Spokane

Fighting to End Homelessness

The Housing & Essential Needs program helps individuals across the state avoid homelessness by providing rent and utility assistance. Currently homeless individuals can get help with housing costs when they find a new home.

The Need is Great

13.4% of people in Washington are living in poverty

132,000 extremely low-income people in Washington are spending more than half of their income for rent, putting them at high risk of homelessness

The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program helps ensure that temporary disabilities don't force people onto the streets, by providing emergency rent & utility assistance and by providing access to some of life's most basic household and sanitary needs.

Housing and Essential Needs began after Disability Lifeline ended on November 1st, 2011, and every county in the state has since enacted a local program that reaches people on the brink of homelessness. The program was funded at \$64 million in 2011 — a significant cut from the last funding level for Disability Lifeline — and was eliminated in the Governor's budget proposal.

With over 13 percent of people in Washington struggling to survive with incomes at or below the poverty line, safety net programs that prevent homelessness are needed more than ever.

Who is Served?

Counties across the state have implemented this program to serve people who have lost their Disability Lifeline grants and who receive Medical Care Services. The program provides emergency rent and utility assistance — paid directly to the landlord — and provides access to basic needs like hygiene products and bus tokens through an Essential Needs Bank.

Hear from the Salvation Army, a provider in Spokane

"With the Housing and Essential Needs program in Spokane, we serve people who have medical care services through DSHS and who are eligible in the DSHS system.

As of November 28, 2011, we have made 522 appointments and have seen 314 individuals. Salvation Army staff have been able to get rents lowered and have helped 28 homeless individuals get into housing.

Without housing assistance and medical assistance, hope for this population is bleak. People are in this program for various disabilities and illnesses. We have people with surgeries scheduled, chemo treatments, many mental health issues, etc. They are staying in rooms, basements, apartments, treatment facilities, transitional housing, etc. They will be on the street without assistance. A large part of this population does not do well in traditional shelters and in Spokane those are full.

This program is set for elimination in the current [Governor's] proposed budget cuts. This disabled population will have no income, no medical insurance, no treatment, no rent or utility assistance and no essential needs, which equals no hope."