



Housing and Essential Needs / Disability Lifeline

Protect Washington's Most Vulnerable People #HEN2013

"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."

- Housing and Essential Needs recipient in Spokane, November 2011.

"Without the help from Housing and Essential Needs, 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."

- Housing and Essential Needs recipient in Spokane, November 2011.

Fighting to End Homelessness

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

Imagine experiencing a severe condition that temporarily prevents you from working. For some barely making ends meet, it becomes a struggle to keep their home and afford their basic needs as they recover. They live each day on the edge of homelessness. Thousands of Washingtonians find themselves in this bind daily. The state's Housing and Essential Needs¹ program helps by providing rental assistance and such essential needs as toiletries and hygiene supplies until they're back on their feet. Thus, supporting this program helps the state's extremely vulnerable keep their homes. These individuals may be your neighbors or live just down the block from you. Make sure that a temporary disability doesn't result in homelessness.

History

Housing and Essential Needs began after Disability Lifeline ended on November 1, 2011. While the former Disability Lifeline program provided cash assistance to nearly 32,000 low-income people that were unable to work due to a temporary disability, Housing and Essential Needs now grants funds to every county in the state to enact a local program reaching people on the brink of homelessness. The program was funded at \$64 million and then sustained a further cut of \$5 million, a significant decrease from the last funding level for Disability Lifeline.

How It Works

The Housing and Essential Needs 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.

Who the Program Serves

Thousands of people with a permanent or temporary disability in Washington struggle to survive with incomes at or below the poverty line. These safety net programs that prevent homelessness are needed now more than ever.

The Need is Great

- 13.4% of people in Washington are living in poverty.
- 132,000 extremely low-income people are spending more than half of their income for rent, putting them at high risk of homelessness.

Our Goals

- Protect the funding for Disability Lifeline.
- Improve the program structure, given Medicaid expansion.
- Ensure people undergoing treatment for behavioral health issues can avoid homelessness and afford housing while they're recovering.
- Preserve DSHS incapacity evaluations.
- Change the program name back to the more accurate "Disability Lifeline."

Updated 1/3/2012

¹ In this document, we use both terms "Housing and Essential Needs" and "Disability Lifeline" to indicate the same program.