



washington low income  
housing alliance

## Protect Washington's Lifeline for Disabled & Elderly Adults

Strengthen the Housing and Essential Needs and  
Aged, Blind, and Disabled Programs  
Facebook/Twitter Hashtag: #HEN2014

These programs are  
springboards helping real  
people bounce back, to  
survive, recover & thrive.



### Kirk's Story

Kirk had a middle-class upbringing and graduated from Western Washington University. Due to a temporary disability, Kirk lost his job and was unable to keep his home. He describes "times so hard that I had to live in my car and depend upon food banks to feed myself." He was able to get onto the HEN program and turn his life around. Today he is in stable housing and just graduated from Highline Community College's paralegal program.



### Shelby's Story

"[W]hile I was in school, I suffered a terrible head injury, which led to seizures. I was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. [H]aving ABD means I can take care of the basics. I use my ABD \$197 cash grant for rent, bus fare, cleaning supplies, and other personal necessities. I'm lucky to live in an affordable building or would very likely be homeless. I know there are lots of others who don't have the chance to live in affordable housing – the cash grant is probably even more critical for them than it is for me."

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### A disability shouldn't cause homelessness.

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. And to make matters worse, some of these individuals have children in school depending on them having that stable job. **Unfortunately, thousands of Washington families and individuals find themselves in this situation every day.**

### HEN/ABD provide critical support to elderly and disabled adults.

The state's **Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)** program ensures that people with temporary mental or physical disabilities can meet their basic needs and access stable housing when facing extreme economic hardship. The program has provided rental and utility assistance to over 13,000 disabled adults with incomes below \$339 per month since it was implemented in November 2011. HEN assistance ranges from \$50 to \$800 per month, depending on the county and local housing costs. Recipients are also able to access essential basic needs, including transportation assistance and health/hygiene items until they are back on their feet.

The **Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD)** program helps extremely low-income adults with permanent mental health illness or permanent physical disabilities with \$197 per month while they are applying to the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. This can be a multi-year application process. ABD provides the temporary \$197 monthly cash grant to over 20,000 individuals. When people transition to SSI, the state is retroactively reimbursed for the full cost of the ABD cash grant. ABD also provides support to low-income elderly and disabled documented immigrants who are not yet eligible for federal medical and income support benefits.

The ABD cash grant was cut by 42% during the recent economic recession, and many recipients are struggling to keep their homes. However, the grant remains a critical safety net that helps people pay for rent, utilities, and other essentials. Given the rising cost of such basics as rent, transportation, and food, this grant should be restored and strengthened.

### What is the legislative solution?

**HEN and ABD should be protected from new budget cuts.** Additionally, the following two changes are needed to improve program access and recipients' health and housing stability:

- **Increase the ABD cash grant.** Then, permanently disabled and elderly adults can have adequate resources to secure stable housing while their SSI application is pending. Any increase in funding to the ABD grant will lead to better health and housing stability outcomes and will be reimbursed to the state if recipients transition to SSI.
- **Extend HEN eligibility to people whose primary disability is chemical dependency.** Stable housing is critical for the success and survival of people undergoing chemical dependency treatment and recovering from an addiction.