

## Short-term housing vouchers

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### Background

To address criminal court system responses to drug use and possession and expand behavioral health outreach, treatment, and recovery support services throughout the state, Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5536 (2E2SSB 5536 or “the Blake bill”) was passed during the 2023 Special Session on May 16, 2023.

Section 33 (8) authorizes the Health Care Authority to administer short-term housing vouchers for persons with substance use disorders (SUD).

The SUD housing vouchers are focused on serving the 5 most populous counties in the state.

### Overview

The Health Care Authority’s Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery distributed the funds to support individuals in all spectrums of recovery from substance use disorder (SUD).

A portion of the subsidies are provided to 20 organizations focusing on the five most populous counties of the state with the intent of reaching individuals in underserved communities experiencing a SUD.

This portion of the vouchers are provided using a housing first and harm reduction approach for individuals and their families. Abstinence is not a prerequisite to receiving housing or housing services. “Programs meet people where they are at and help them get to where they want to be.” There are many different pathways a person might access housing vouchers. This includes referrals from treatment centers, county jails, street outreach, tribes, behavioral health agencies and self-referrals.

The remaining amount of funding is provided for people living in a level 1 (Peer Run) or level 2 (Monitored) recovery residences. Level 1 recovery residences are known as Oxford Houses and are democratically run, self-supporting and drug free. Level 2 recovery residences are meant to provide a home-like setting free from alcohol and illicit drug use with a focus on peer support, assistance with obtaining addiction services, and other services

82-0631 (11/24)

and support. These homes will have paid staff on site and offer a little more support than a level 1 Oxford House.

### Eligibility requirements

To be eligible for housing vouchers , someone must:

- Have a SUD (this can be medically diagnosed or self-attested)
- Be unhoused or at imminent risk of becoming unhoused

These funds can be used for rental and utility arrears, move-in costs, deposits, and associated moving costs.

To be eligible for the Oxford Houses or Recovery Residences someone must be an adult who is actively participating in SUD treatment or in recovery from SUD, including those receiving medication-assisted treatment or living in or accepted into a Oxford House or Recovery Residence

These funds can be used for deposits, rent and to hold bed space for someone waiting for treatment or entering detox.

### Budget SFY25

\$3,750,000 from the general fund state

- \$2,250,000 was divided across 20 grantees to provide housing subsidies, this includes Oxford Houses, Recovery Residences, and individualized housing.
- \$1,500,000 was awarded for vouchers specifically for people living in level 1 Oxford House and for level 2 Recovery Residences.

### Partners

Starting in February 2024, 20 providers were awarded \$125,000 each to provide short-term Vouchers; 4 in Clark County, 4 in King County, 4 in Pierce, 4 in Snohomish County, and 4 in Spokane County.

As of July 30, 2024 there were a total of 60 provider/operators of 187 recovery residences across 18 counties, and 355 Oxford houses across 25 counties for a total of 542 accredited recovery residences across Washington state.

## SFY24 project outcomes

### Housing first and harm reduction approach

791 people received short-term housing first vouchers.

- 248 or 31% of recipients were unhoused and became housed.
- 423 or 53% of recipients who were at imminent risk of becoming unhoused was able maintain their housing.
- 120 people (15% of supportive housing subsidy recipients) were either not housed or it is unknown what their current housing situation is.

### Level 1 and Level 2 Recovery Residences

- 853 people utilized the subsidy to obtain or maintain their housing in an Oxford House.

- 688 people utilized the subsidy to obtain or maintain their housing in a Recovery Residence.

### Additional information

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