

# Washington’s state-funded rental subsidy programs

## Supported by three state agencies

As of January 2023, there were about 196,000 people currently experiencing homelessness or unstable housing in Washington State.<sup>1</sup> We know from research that homelessness is traumatic and cyclical, and people with mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) are most at risk of becoming homeless. Lack of housing interferes with one’s ability to receive services and jeopardizes a successful recovery.<sup>2</sup> Older adults are one of the fastest-growing age groups of those experiencing homelessness, which is nearly half of the homeless population.<sup>3</sup>

The Washington State departments of **Commerce (COM)** and Social and Health Services’ (DSHS’) **Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA)** and the **Health Care Authority (HCA)** work together and separately to house vulnerable individuals through rental subsidy<sup>4</sup> programs.

## Types of assistance

### Housing stabilization benefits

These benefits provide temporary assistance to help individuals obtain/maintain housing until a longer-term or permanent subsidy becomes available. Bridge subsidies are often used for people who:

- Have exited inpatient or institutional settings.
- Have severe housing barriers.
- Are on waiting lists for other long-term subsidies.
- Are establishing stable employment.

**Table 1: Examples of state-funded housing stabilization benefit programs**

Examples include, but are not limited to:

Program name	Administering agency	Program description
<b>Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (HARPS)</b>	HCA	<p>For individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience behavioral health disorders (either a mental health disorder, SUD, or both).</li> <li>• Demonstrate a medical necessity for inpatient behavioral health services.</li> </ul> <p>View the <a href="#">HARPS fact sheet</a>.</p>
<b>Forensic Housing and Recovery through Peer Services (F-HARPS)</b>	HCA	<p>For individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience behavioral health conditions (either a mental health disorder, SUD, or both)</li> <li>• Have frequent involvement with the criminal court system</li> <li>• Have been ordered for competency evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>Individuals must meet other criteria listed in the <a href="#">Forensic HARPS fact sheet</a>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Read the Department of Commerce’s [Snapshot of Homelessness Report](#).

<sup>2</sup> View DSHS’ [Making the Case for Change](#) document, created in partnership with HCA.

<sup>3</sup> Read [Homelessness Among Older Adults: An Emerging Crisis](#).

<sup>4</sup> Rental or housing subsidies provide temporary rental assistance (a set amount of money)—paid by the state—to help a person find and/or keep stable housing. Short-term subsidies, also called **bridge or transitional subsidies**, help people transition to stable housing.

<b>SUD short-term housing subsidies</b>	HCA	<p>For individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a medically diagnosed or self-attested SUD and/or co-occurring condition, including opioid use disorder and/or stimulant use disorder.</li> <li>• Who are homeless or at risk of homelessness without intervention.</li> </ul> <p>Individuals' income should not exceed 50% of the median income for the area at time of enrollment.</p>
<b>Foundational Community Supports (FCS) – Transition Assistance Program (FCS-TAP)</b>	HCA	<p>FCS is a supported housing service funded under the Medicaid Transformation Project (MTP).<sup>5</sup> The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) can be accessed by FCS enrollees who are seeking to maintain or transition into housing of their choice through a participating FCS supportive housing service provider.</p> <p>View the <a href="#">FCS-TAP fact sheet</a>.</p>
<b>Rapid re-housing</b>	COM	<p>The <a href="#">Consolidated Homeless Grant</a> consists of several funding sources and is issued to 'balance of state' counties. Counties then issue this temporary rent assistance through programs, such as rapid re-housing, homeless prevention, and eviction prevention.</p>
<b>Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)</b>	COM	<p>HEN provides access to essential needs items and potential rental assistance for low-income individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a physical and/or mental incapacity.</p> <p>Although DSHS' Community Services Division determines eligibility for referral to the HEN program, COM determines eligibility for rental assistance and essential needs through a network of homeless and homeless prevention service providers.</p> <p>Visit our <a href="#">Consolidated Homeless Grant</a> page.</p>
<b>Community Transition and Sustainability Services</b>	ALTSA	<p>For those assessed eligible for Home and Community Services for meeting functional and financial eligibility. Several funding sources (state, federal, state with federal match) are available to pay for goods or services to support an individual's transition to or maintaining housing.</p> <p>Examples include background checks, application fees, deposit, basic furniture and household items, pest eradication, deep clean, and more.</p>
<b>Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)</b>	ALTSA	<p>For those assessed eligible for Home and Community Services for meeting functional and financial eligibility. ERA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes direct payments to landlords on behalf of a person enrolled in ALTSA services who is facing an immediate eviction due to non-payment of rent.</li> <li>• Pays for a short-term motel/hotel stay for an individual who has a move-in date for permanent housing and has nowhere to stay in the interim.</li> </ul>

## Long-term subsidies

Each of the long-term subsidies below have unique characteristics and eligibility criteria depending upon the fund source.

- **Tenant-based rent assistance** is usually attached to the person but can be used in scattered-site or single-site housing.
- **Project-based rent assistance** is usually attached to the unit. Individuals need to meet eligibility criteria. The rent assistance stays with the unit if/when the person leaves.
- **Sponsor-based rent assistance, also called global leasing**, is where an organization may lease several units or a single-site, and then sublease to individuals. The organization is using rent assistance to obtain the units and cover any risk associated with the sublease for eligible individuals.

<sup>5</sup> MTP is Washington State's Section 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver.

**Table 2: Examples of state-funded long-term subsidy programs**

Examples include, but are not limited to:

Program name	Administering agency	Program description & eligibility
<b>Community Behavioral Health Rent Assistance (CBRA)</b>	COM	CBRA provides a long-term rental subsidy for high-risk individuals and households with behavioral health conditions. When combined with programs offering long-term supportive services provided by our service partners, highly vulnerable persons with complex behavioral health needs have opportunities to live independently in communities of their choice.
<b>Apple Health and Homes (AHAH) Rent Assistance Pilot</b>	COM	The AHAH Rent Assistance Pilot provides tenant-based and project-based rent subsidies for individuals eligible and enrolled in FCS community support services. Eligibility is defined in <a href="#">RCW 74.09.886</a> and the coordinating entity must authorize the housing resource.
<b>Governor’s Opportunity for Supportive Housing (GOSH)</b>	ALTSA	GOSH is available for individuals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are choosing in-home settings.</li> <li>• Are willing to work with a Supportive Housing Provider.</li> <li>• Qualify for ALTSA services (financially and functionally eligible).</li> <li>• Are discharging or being diverted from Eastern or Western State Hospitals.</li> </ul>
<b>ALTSA subsidy</b>	ALTSA	The ALTSA subsidy is available for those who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessed eligible for Home and Community Services for meeting functional and financial eligibility.</li> <li>• Exiting a Skilled Nursing Facility.</li> <li>• Transitioning to the community for In-Home Services.</li> </ul>
<b>Global leasing</b>	ALTSA	Global leasing is available for those who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have been assessed eligible for Home and Community Services for meeting functional and financial eligibility.</li> <li>• Meet eligibility for the ALTSA or GOSH subsidy.</li> <li>• Have higher barriers to renting an apartment.</li> <li>• Can be referred to sublease a unit via Global leasing.</li> </ul>

## State contacts

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