



Ending Family Homelessness (working program title)

This year the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction reported 27,390 homeless students in the 2011-12 school year; 18,332 doubled-up with family or friends and 7,853 in shelters or motels. Worse yet there are approximately 1,205 children who are living outside, in a car, or in a building not meant for human habitation.

In response to that announcement, Governor Inslee directed DSHS and the Department of Commerce to create a plan for addressing homelessness among children in Washington. We brought our departments together to develop a cross-agency strategy to meet his directive.

State investments, smarter strategies, and improved data and analysis helped reduce unsheltered family homelessness by 65 percent since 2006. This initiative will build on that success to reduce family homelessness for those who are living in shelters, motels or are unsheltered. Our goal is to reduce homeless for this group by an additional 50 percent by 2015. This effort is only the beginning. It is a laboratory that will inform future strategies to eliminate *all* chronic homelessness for families with children.

How will DSHS and Commerce reduce family homelessness?

Commerce and the DSHS will work to reduce homelessness by 50 percent in two years for the 9,058 children who are unsheltered or living in shelters or motels. We estimate that those children are in living in about 5,000 families.

To accomplish this goal we will:

- Change the way we do outreach by linking DSHS to Commerce-contracted local housing providers.
- Screen families who access emergency shelters for TANF eligibility and actively connect them to the full range of TANF services
- Fund rent assistance for families eligible for Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) or Diversion Assistance.
- Immediately begin rapid rehousing at a few initial sites to help prepare for implementation statewide (existing homeless grant contracts will be amended to expedite implementation).
- Use performance-based contracts to incent providers to keep clients permanently housed.
- Formalize the process for DSHS, school districts, and health care providers to refer families to housing services.
- Advocate for the maintenance of current funding for existing homeless programs including Housing and Essential Needs.
- Recommend that the Interagency Council on Homelessness in collaboration with the Vulnerable Families Action Partnership develop outcome measures and a plan to continuously improve this initiative.