

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2667

C 48 L 18
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning eligibility for the essential needs and housing support and the aged, blind, or disabled assistance programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Macri, McBride, Ormsby, Stanford, Senn, Stonier, Kloba, Jinkins, Gregerson, Appleton, Ortiz-Self, Wylie, Doglio, Pollet, Slatter, Fey, Goodman and Santos).

House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Background:

Aged, Blind, or Disabled Program.

The Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) program provides cash assistance to low-income individuals who meet program eligibility requirements. Eligible individuals must be aged 65 or older, be blind, or have a long-term medical condition that is likely to meet federal disability criteria and result in qualification for the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

An ABD program recipient with a medical condition must cooperate with the federal disability application process. To assist with this process, the ABD program recipients receive SSI facilitation. The SSI facilitators help the ABD program recipients file applications for SSI and gather necessary medical evidence. The state receives a reimbursement for the cost of providing ABD program cash assistance when recipients are successfully transitioned to SSI. These reimbursements are referred to as ABD recoveries.

The maximum ABD program monthly cash grant is \$197. In fiscal year 2017 the ABD program caseload averaged 20,064 cases per month. The ABD program caseload is forecasted and funded with state general funds appropriated in the biennial operating budget.

Essential Needs and Housing Support Program.

The Essential Needs and Housing Support program, commonly referred to as HEN, provides rental assistance and other housing support as well as essential needs items such as personal hygiene and household supplies, bus passes, and laundry tokens. Housing support is

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assistance provided to maintain existing housing when the recipient is at substantial risk of becoming homeless; to obtain housing; or to obtain heat, electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and water services when the recipient is at substantial risk of losing these services. Recipients of HEN referrals do not receive a cash grant.

Eligible individuals must meet income requirements; be temporarily unable to work for at least 90 days due to physical or mental incapacity; and be ineligible for the ABD program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, and other cash assistance programs.

The average monthly HEN benefit ranged from \$450 to \$500 per month, and a monthly average of 6,759 clients were referred to the HEN in fiscal year 2017. The HEN is funded by state general funds appropriated in the biennial operating budget.

Program Referrals.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for the ABD program and the HEN. A person is ineligible for both programs when incapacitated primarily due to alcohol or drug dependency. If the person has a separate impairment in addition to alcohol or drug dependency, the individual may be eligible to receive either HEN or ABD program assistance if he or she participates in drug or alcohol treatment.

If an individual is eligible for the HEN, the DSHS refers that person to the Department of Commerce (COM). The COM administers the HEN by contracting with local housing assistance providers. Local housing assistance providers determine priority for the rental assistance component of the HEN and prioritize HEN recipients who are homeless and unsheltered.

A HEN recipient must be reviewed for ABD program eligibility every 12 months and may apply for the ABD program at any time. A HEN recipient may be transitioned to the ABD program if the recipient turns 65 or if his or her condition worsens and he or she becomes likely to meet federal SSI disability criteria.

When the Social Security Administration issues a final SSI disability denial or if the individual's condition improves, an individual may be transitioned from the ABD program cash assistance to a HEN referral.

An individual may not receive ABD program cash assistance and a HEN referral at the same time.

Summary:

A recipient of ABD program assistance who meets HEN program requirements is eligible for a referral for the HEN program within funds appropriated to the COM. The ABD program recipient may receive both ABD program and HEN assistance concurrently while an application for federal SSI benefits is pending.

A HEN recipient who transitions to the ABD program may receive both HEN and ABD program benefits concurrently.

The restriction that disqualifies an individual for HEN if she or he is unemployable primarily due to alcohol or drug addiction is removed.

The DSHS must share recipient data for HEN-eligible individuals with the COM and the HEN providers. The COM must provide designated HEN providers in each county with a secure and current list of individuals eligible for the HEN. The list must be updated at least monthly and must include, as available and applicable, the individual's name, address, phone number, shelter location, and case manager contact information.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	88	10	
Senate	32	17	(Senate amended)
House	90	7	(House concurred)

Effective: June 7, 2018
March 13, 2018 (Sections 1 and 2)