

CHAP – Determining the Path Forward

Background

In 2014 Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) partnered with Tacoma Community College (TCC) to help house homeless college students. The goal of the College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) is to ensure housing is not a barrier to education, especially for first-generation and BIPOC students.

Initially, THA provided 75 subsidies for homeless or near-homeless students to rent on the private market. Later, THA contracted with local property developers to buy down the rents at properties near TCC and the University of Washington, Tacoma (UWT). Currently, THA subsidizes nearly 200 units near the TCC and UWT campuses.

Whether a CHAP participant is renting on the private market with a **tenant-based subsidy** or residing at a partner property with a **property-based subsidy**, they are receiving a fixed subsidy amount that is based on their household size. These subsidies only cover a portion of the rent. The average rent CHAP participants pay is \$520.

THA has had two third-party evaluations conducted on CHAP. Additionally, THA has conducted an internal evaluation of our Housing Opportunity Program (HOP). CHAP participants renting on the private market receive a HOP subsidy, so this study allowed THA to see how they fare compared to other HOP recipients.

The findings from these evaluations suggest that CHAP has not been successful at meeting its intended goals. CHAP does not appear successful in terms of serving the most vulnerable students. Those who are housed through CHAP appear to be worse off than other HOP recipients when their assistance ends.

<i>Ability to Secure Housing</i>	<i>Changes in Income</i>	<i>Loss of Assistance</i>
<p>Only half of those approved for a voucher secure housing.</p> <p>Males and African American/Black students are least likely to secure housing.</p> <p>Students with little to no income face additional barriers. The average tenant share of rent is \$520. Landlords require that tenants' incomes are 2-3x their portion of rent.</p>	<p>CHAP participants were least likely to increase their income (37% experienced an increase) compared to other HOP participants.</p> <p>BIPOC CHAP households were disproportionately less likely to experience an increase in income.</p>	<p>52% of students with tenant-based subsidies had their assistance terminated because they did not maintain eligibility (remain enrolled and/or making academic progress).</p> <p>17% graduated.</p>

THA is seeking community input on whether we should make program modifications and keep CHAP as a program for TCC and UWT students or if we should pivot and find other approaches to support post-secondary access and completion.

As post-secondary institutions, college students, or organizations supporting post-secondary students, we are seeking your input. We want to understand the problem and in doing so to understand how THA can leverage our role as a housing authority to address the problem.

Proposed and Potential Options

	Program Model	Target Population	Problem	Solution	Conditions of Assistance	Assumptions	Success
Current state	CHAP as-is (6 credit, up to 6 mo off, up to 12 mo post-graduation)	Currently enrolled TCC, UWT students facing housing insecurity	Post-secondary disruption	Housing assistance	Enrollment and academic progress, up to 5 years	Housing will prevent further disruptions. Students will complete within 5 years.	Retention and/or post-secondary credential
Proposed changes	CHAP with proposed modifications (5yr time limit, no non-housing program requirements)	Currently enrolled TCC, UWT students facing housing insecurity	Housing insecurity	Housing assistance	5-year time-limit	Students will complete within 5 years. <u>And</u> have income to no longer need assistance.	Exit at time limit (or before) with moderate/no market rent burden
Examples of other options to consider	CHAP via Coordinated Entry	Currently enrolled students (<u>at any institution</u>) facing housing insecurity	Homelessness	Rapid rehousing, diversion, shelter referral, case management Off ramp onto THA voucher?	Shorter term assistance (12-24 months)	Household are able to stabilize and continue studies.	Attain and maintain housing.
	“PAHC” Post-secondary Access for Housed Clients	Housing Authority clients with some post-secondary participation but no credential (58% or 1,600 clients) Housing Authority clients exiting HS	Post-secondary disruption and income stagnation	Remove barriers to re-enrollment and incentivize re-enrollment: Guaranteed Washington College Grant award Grants to cover previous debts(?)		The barriers can be removed/reduced. Credential will lead to living wage job.	Post-secondary re-engagement & credential. Achieving self-sufficiency (exit THA program).

Question & Considerations:

- THA is not a *direct* homelessness service provider. Our housing assistance is often not immediate, and we are not involved in the administration or management of shelters. Our involvement in the homelessness system is often more peripheral.
- What sets homeless/housing insecure students apart from the general homeless/housing insecure population? Does the distinction make the case for THA to give preference to the student population or for students to bypass the exiting homelessness system?
- When it comes to student housing insecurity, what is the problem that we are trying to solve first and foremost? Post-secondary disruption or housing insecurity?
- If housing assistance is conditioned on enrollment, how do we incentivize completion and prevent students from extending their enrollment longer than necessary or taking classes they don't need – while also allowing flexibility so that they can alter their post-secondary goals?
- What is the average/median wage for students who have graduated? What is the rate of graduates who obtain a living wage job? Can we say with confidence that graduates should be self-sufficient 12 months following graduation? Is there data to support that?
- Of current THA household members ages 18-49, 58% (1,655 household members) have enrolled in some college. Yet only 15% have earned a post-secondary credential (10% a certificate, 7% an AA, and 3% a BA¹). What barriers prevent people from re-enrolling/completing their degree?
- In terms of THA's role in increasing post-secondary completion, could we leverage our position by incentivizing post-secondary enrollment and re-engagement for current households and redirect CHAP subsidies to serve people moving through the homelessness system? Stabilize households with housing supports, then incentivize post-secondary participation.²
- The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is interested in providing a guaranteed Washington College Grant award to means-tested populations (e.g., housing authority clients). Households at or below a certain income level can qualify for a full award. The full award would cover tuition and fees at public post-secondary institutions. Incoming THA clients would qualify for the full award. How can we increase awareness and use of the Washington College Grant?

¹ Certificates are often considered “stackable credentials” that are earned along the path to an AA. Therefore, completion by type of credential is above 15%.

² Chicago Housing Authority and City Colleges of Chicago have partnered with this approach.
<https://www.thecha.org/residents/partners-in-education-program>