

## Meta Information

URL: <https://www.onlinecolleges.me/resources/housing-insecure-unhoused-students/>

Title Tag: Homelessness in College: The Student Guide to Vital Resources and Support

Meta Desc: Discover a lifeline for unhoused college students. Our comprehensive guide provides essential resources to help you overcome obstacles and succeed in higher education.

Breadcrumbs: Home > Resources > Unhoused Students

On This Page: Use H2s

# Homelessness in College: The Student Guide to Vital Resources and Support

*If you are a student who is housing insecure or currently unhoused, know that resources are available to help you. Let this guide be a starting point to find the help you need to get back on your feet and be successful in college.*

Anyone who has pursued a college degree knows it's a significant challenge. Between balancing school, a social life, employment, and planning for the future, college students are juggling diverse responsibilities. It's normal to experience moments of stress and overwhelm. However, some students have the additional stress of facing housing insecurity or homelessness.

The National Center for Education Statistics released national data on homelessness and food insecurity within student populations in the U.S., revealing that 8% of undergraduate and 5% of graduate students experience homelessness — totaling more than 1.5 million students. But some organizations, like Temple University's Hope Center, offer a more alarming statistic, suggesting that three in five college students do not have enough to eat or a stable place to live, and millions of students experience basic needs insecurity, including a lack of access to adequate housing.

But help is available, and this guide is one such resource. We've compiled the information below as a tool to help unhoused or housing insecure students find resources for financial aid/scholarships, academic, mental health, medical, basic needs resources, and more. Keep reading to find potential answers to your housing resource questions.

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## Housing Resources & Support

If you're experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, you're not alone. Many other students in your community are facing the same thing, but you can be assured that numerous community organizations in addition to your school are ready and willing to provide resources and help you move forward. While it can be difficult to admit that you need assistance, you also deserve to pursue your education and have a safe place to live. We've gathered a list of some of the best housing resources and support and listed them below.

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### Family and Youth Services Bureau - Transitional Living Program

The Transitional Living Program through the Family and Youth Services Bureau assists homeless youth in accessing a temporary safety net and providing a strong emotional support system for young people so they can transition into self-sufficiency. They offer outreach plans, service coordination plans, transitional living plans, extended residential shelter, and a grant program.

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Through advocacy and support services, the [BWEL Foundation](#) focuses on providing college students with stability so they can focus on education. The initial program is educational advancement solutions for low-income parent-students, providing academic coaches and family support advocates that help parent students and their family succeed in school.¶

### HUD Exchange

The HUD Exchange is an online platform for providing program information, guidance, services, and tools to the government's Housing and Urban Development's community partners. Partners include local and state governments, nonprofits, Continuums of Care (CoCs), Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), tribes, and other partners of these organizations.

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### National Low Income Housing Coalition

The National Low Income Housing Coalition offers state and local rental assistance. You can use the searchable database to find a Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance program near you for help with rent or utilities. If you can't find a program in your area, they advise you to call 2-1-1 or your local housing authority for assistance.

### On-Campus Resources

Most colleges and universities will offer some form of support for students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. These services typically include counseling, resource identification, and access to facilities on campus. The Homeless At-Risk Transitional Students (HARTS) Program at City College of San Francisco is a great example of an on-campus program that facilitates a sense of belonging for current housing-insecure students. Another option for students is to apply for a resident assistant position, which would allow you to be employed by the school, with housing included.

## Stand Up for Kids

In operation since 1990, [Stand Up for Kids](#) offers services nationwide focused on ending the cycle of youth homelessness in local communities. They help transition at-risk youth — up to the age of 25 — from crisis to connection, providing safety and hope. They offer housing support, mentoring, street outreach, and outreach centers where young people can access a wide variety of support services.

## The College Sublet

[The College Sublet](#) allows college students to look for inexpensive rooms or apartments suited to college students. Tenants and landlords can search the listings of apartments for rent, sublets, and roommates, or place an apartment for rent. It will also provide tenant agreements and rental contracts.

## Financial Resources

Having options for financial aid and assistance is incredibly important for any college student, but especially so for a student who may be housing insecure. There are a wide variety of financial aid resources available not only to help pay for college, but also to cover additional expenses and help low-income/unhoused students succeed in college. We've gathered a list of financial resources below.

## FAFSA

Filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or [FAFSA](#), is one of the most important steps in your path to college. FAFSA can help students pay for college or career school through grants, work-study, and loans. It can help [low-income](#) students qualify for free aid like grants, in addition to low-interest student loans.

## National Center for Homeless Education - Scholarships

[The National Center for Homeless Education](#) is a robust organization that operates the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance and information center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. They complete research, advocate for homeless citizens, and impact legislation. Their [scholarship page](#) provides a wide variety of scholarships available to youth experiencing homelessness.

## Operation Hope

[Operation Hope](#) is an organization focused on expanding economic opportunity and making free enterprise work for everyone, regardless of their situation. It offers a variety of programs that cover financial literacy, financial wellness, small business education, credit and money

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[The Schoolhouse Connection](#) provides services to help youth overcome homelessness through education. They offer strategic advocacy and practical assistance by partnering with early childhood programs, schools, colleges and universities, etc. They also offer scholarships and practical resources.¶

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management education, and more. The [Youth and Young Adult Program](#) provides resources so young people are instilled with good money management skills.

### Scholarships.com – Homeless/Formally Homeless Scholarships

Scholarships.com is a reliable source of scholarships available to students seeking financial assistance to pursue an advanced degree. The site also has a list of scholarships available specifically for students currently or previously experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

### Take Charge America

Take Charge America is a non-profit organization that works nationwide to assist people in changing their financial outlooks with one-on-one guidance to pay off debts, regain financial independence, and save. They offer credit counseling and help with debt, housing, and budgeting.

### The SchoolHouse Connection

The SchoolHouse Connection provides services to help youth overcome homelessness through education. They also offer scholarships and practical resources through the SchoolHouse Connection Youth Leadership and Scholarship Program, providing financial assistance and staff and peer support.

### U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration offers programs, trainings, and resources to help citizens find employment and succeed in the workplace.

### Academic Support Resources

When a student is experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, it has a definite impact on their academic performance. For example, according to the Basic Needs Study from California State University, homelessness and food insecurity negatively impact students' GPAs.

Schools and universities are dedicated to providing excellent student resources to assist them in every aspect of their education. The vast majority of these support services will focus on students' academics. These include services such as career development, mentorship programs, career placement, resume assistance, learning libraries, and more. We've gathered a list of additional resources that provide academic support and resources for housing insecure students.

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## Better Tomorrows

[Better Tomorrows](#) offers case management services and community programming to low-income adults, seniors, children, and youth. They offer financial literacy, health and wellness, job readiness, and social engagement programs. Their [academic support program](#) provides academic resource and learning opportunities to clients of all ages, along with scholarships.

## BWEL Foundation

[Through advocacy and support services, the BWEL Foundation focuses on providing college students with stability so they can focus on education. The initial program is educational advancement solutions for low-income parent-students, providing academic coaches, tutoring, a family-friendly resource lab, and a supervised play space so you can meet with your academic coaches while your children safely play.](#)

## Covenant House

[Covenant House serves North and Central America, providing immediate and long-term support for young people experiencing homelessness. They offer a variety of services including street and community outreach, crisis care, shelter, physical and mental health, and long-term care support. Their education and workforce development programs allow young people to learn skills, explore career pathways, exploring education opportunities, and more.](#)

## John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

[The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood provides services to youth who were formerly in foster care in their transition into adulthood. Services include education, employment, financial management, housing, emotional support, and healthy connections with caring adults.](#)

## Laptops for Learning

[Laptops 4 Learning was founded to assist students and military veterans who did not have the means to purchase a laptop. Applicants submit a short video application and proof of enrollment.](#)

## On-Campus Services

All universities and colleges offer programs and services to assist their students in their academic endeavors. These services may include tutoring, technology support, access to libraries, education resources and guides, and more. As homelessness among college students rises, more schools are offering specific programs to help homeless students excel in their

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**Deleted:** [On Point for College](#) offers a wide array of services to students to help them overcome the barriers to higher education. These services include academic advising, assistance with financial aid, transportation, tutoring, and more. They also offer a career services program where On Point students and graduates receive assistance in finding career opportunities.  
[John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood](#)  
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[ULoop](#) is an online site that connects millions of students at over 4,000 colleges and universities across the country. College students use the site to find housing and roommates, find jobs and internships, buy and sell textbooks, furniture and other items, search for tutors and scholarships, prepare for tests, and more.

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education. [Florida State University's Unconquered Scholars Program](#) is a great example of a scholarship and academic support program that provides support services promoting the overall success of students who have experienced foster care, homelessness, relative care, or ward of the State status.

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## Mental Health Support & Resources

When a student is experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, it can lead to extreme stress and negative impacts on the student's mental health. The [Basic Needs Study from California State University](#) found that students who experienced both food insecurity and homelessness were impacted with negative health and mental health outcomes that were more severe than other students. You can typically find mental health services at your university; in addition, we have compiled a list here of resources that support the mental health of homeless or housing-insecure students.

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### Back on My Feet

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[Back on My Feet](#) is a unique organization that combines emergency resources and self-sufficiency for members who are homeless or experiencing addiction. The program helps clients focus on adopting healthy routines and coping mechanisms, learning skills and tools, finding employment, managing finances, and securing long-term housing. They ask members to commit to walking or running 2-3 times a week in exchange for programmatic support.

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### Covenant House

[Covenant House](#) serves North and Central America, providing immediate and long-term support for young people experiencing homelessness. While Covenant House appeared earlier on this list, they offer a wide variety of services that address the needs of homeless youth including street and community outreach, crisis care, shelter, education and employment assistance, and long-term care support. All programs at Covenant House are designed for treating the physical

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and mental health of young people, including counseling, substance abuse treatment, and more.

## Healthcare for the Homeless

Through training, research, and advocacy, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council is fighting to build an equitable, high-quality health care system for the homeless. The Grantee Directory offers federally funded Health Care for the Homeless programs and allows people in need of services the opportunity to find health care resources for people experiencing homelessness.

## On-Campus Services

As part of their mental health services, colleges and universities often offer free counseling sessions to students. Counselors are licensed professionals trained in assisting clients with a variety of mental and emotional health issues. Many schools also offer acute psychological care and referrals, personal crises support, and even health and wellness coaches. Saint Louis University is one example of a college offering a robust counseling program to its students.

## Step Up for Mental Health

Step Up for Mental Health supports, educates, and provides services that empower families living with the challenges of mental health disorders. They offer a safe place to share stories and find support to address mental health issues, education, homelessness, and poverty. They match families with resources that will help them move forward. Their programs include assistance in finding mental health providers in your area, a grant program, peer mentoring, and programs for children and the LGBTQ community.

## Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts designed to improve the lives of citizens and their families dealing with mental and substance use disorders.

## ULifeline

ULifeline provides college students with anonymous, confidential, online mental health resources. It's a place where college students can be comfortable searching for the information they need and want regarding emotional health. ULifeline is a project of The Jed Foundation, which works to protect the emotional health of America's college students, free of charge. ↓

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## Basic Needs Support & Resources

Food, housing, medical care, and access to mental health care are basic needs that every college student should have access to. There are a wide variety of resources available for low-income students to receive assistance with basic needs. We've compiled a list of resources below.

### Endeavors

Endeavors serves vulnerable people in crisis. Its Homelessness Prevention & Homeless Assistance program provides case management, financial assistance and crisis intervention for individuals experiencing homelessness, trauma, or other emergency needs.

### Feeding America

Feeding America is a non-profit organization that provides a nationwide network of food banks, food pantries, and local meal programs. They are dedicated to helping people get the food and resources they through a variety of programs. You'll find a search option to locate your local food bank, nutrition education, and more.

### On-Campus Resources

Colleges and universities are dedicated to the health and wellness of their students. Many schools have programs designed specifically to ensure that students' basic needs are met, including finances, food, health and wellness, employment support, and more. Sierra College is a great example of a school offering a wide variety of resources and programs that help students with whatever they need.

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is a government program that provides food benefits to low-income families, expanding their grocery budget so they can obtain nutritious food essential to health and well-being. There is a program for college students who meet specific requirements.

### Swipe Out Hunger

Swipe Out Hunger is the leading nonprofit organization working to solve hunger among college students. They have worked with more than 600 colleges and provided 4.8 million meals to students across the nation. They primarily promote on-campus solutions, policy and advocacy pathways, and community building practices. They also have resources for students.

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Colleges and universities are dedicated to the health and wellness of their students. Many schools have programs designed specifically to ensure that students' basic needs are met, including finances, food, health and wellness, employment support, and more. [Sierra College](#) is a great example of a school offering a wide variety of resources and programs that help students with whatever they need.

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## The Raze Foundation

[The Raze Foundation](#) focuses on providing services for the homeless and other poverty-stricken communities. The organization offers resources such as food, supplies, education, and rehabilitation and a wide variety of programs including housing, counseling, food assistance, social advocacy, and more.

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## Youth and Family Services Bureau's Basic Center Program

The [Family and Youth Services Bureau's Basic Center Program](#) assists community-based organizations in the operation of short-term, emergency shelters to provide crisis care to ~~run-~~ [away](#) and homeless youth who are not already accessing services from other organizations. They may also provide access to food, clothes, counseling, education assistance, outreach, healthcare, and other services.

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## Expert Interview:

Karen Jack [holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has worked in higher ed for 25 years, working with the KEYS Program \(Keystone Education Yields Success\) for 15 years. She is now KEYS Coordinator at Community College of Allegheny County.](#)

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[KEYS](#) is a collaboration between the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and 14 of the 15 community colleges in Pennsylvania. It assists low-income students who are receiving TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families) or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and attending or interested in earning a degree or credential at a Pennsylvania community college.

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[Endeavors](#) serves vulnerable people in crisis. Endeavors serves veterans, migrants, and other citizens in a wide variety of services including disaster relief and recovery, health and wellness, job support, homeless services, and more. ¶

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All KEYS programs are designed to provide a range of services to meet students' needs by connecting them to support services and resources at the college and in the community, including career counseling, supportive services available through the County Assistance Office such as childcare, money for books, and clothing allowances, education resources, tutoring, and more.

### 1. How prevalent is housing insecurity among college students, and are there specific factors that contribute to this issue?

The NPSAS:20 (National Postsecondary Student Aid Study) data show that roughly 8% of undergraduate students, and 4.6% of graduate students, report experiencing homelessness, which translates to approximately 1.4 million undergraduates, and 166,000 graduate students, experiencing homelessness nationwide. According to the Housing Security Index for Community College Students, data indicate that approximately 14% of students were insecure during some point prior to responding to the 2022 CCCSE survey ([Community College Survey of Student Engagement](#)).

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**2. Can you elaborate on the unique challenges that housing insecure college students face compared to the general population of individuals experiencing homelessness?**

Many college students are dealing with not only the devastating reality of housing insecurity, but the extra mental burdens of making it to class on time, storing and transporting textbooks and belongings, and completing assignments, to name a few challenges.

**3. What are the key barriers that housing insecure college students often encounter when seeking assistance, and how does your organization work to overcome these obstacles?**

Students who are experiencing housing insecurity are experiencing uncertainty and anxiety about where they will sleep and what they will do with their personal hygiene and clothing items. This is overwhelming and exhausting, day in and day out, and has to have a negative impact on their academics.

**4. Do any of the services you provide extend to students' families? If so, how?**

The KEYS Program positively impacts the student academically, financially, and most often emotionally, and this, most likely, positively impacts their family life and relationships. Also, we often find that since most of our students are first-generation college students, they pave the way for future generations. They also become amazing role models for their school-aged children and strengthen relationships parent-child when they sit down to the table and do their "homework" together.

**5. Do you find students are reluctant to ask for help?**

There definitely is a stigma associated with basic needs insecurity, and many individuals find it very difficult to ask for help. I often hear students say things like, "Someone else needs the help more than I do. Other students are probably less fortunate than me. Give the money, resources, or funding to them instead."

**6. How does a student's housing situation typically affect their academic performance?**

A student's housing situation absolutely affects their academic performance! If you do not have stable housing, you are spending so much extra time and energy worrying about where you are going to sleep and how and what you are going to eat. That significantly cuts into the time you spend on your assignments and studying.

**7. Do colleges and universities provide services to unhoused students? Are there typically resources available through the school?**

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¶ CCAC ensures students enrolled in the college have access to the resources they need through a variety of services, including:¶

Resource Navigators: These are CCAC administrators who work one-on-one with students to connect them to needed resources.¶

Essential Needs Form: Students complete this form when they have barriers related to food, housing, transportation, technology, books, childcare and more. Resource Navigators then work to connect them to appropriate resources on campus and/or in the community. ¶

Emergency GAP Fund Scholarship: Funded through the CCAC Educational Foundation, this scholarship provides direct support to students with emergency financial needs that may prohibit them from continuing their education at CCAC. Students may use these funds to pay bills, buy essentials or purchase textbooks.¶

Campus Cupboards: Each CCAC campus location has a food cupboard that is open to any student who needs to use it. The goal is to meet the nutritional needs of students so that they can focus on their learning and be successful.¶

Campus Closets: Currently located at South and Boyce campuses, the campus closets provide students with free business and formal attire. ¶  
Loaner Laptops: Utilizing federal funding received during the pandemic, CCAC purchased laptops to be used by students in need of technology assistance. ¶

Benefits Eligibility and Access: Through a partnership between CCAC and the Benefits Data Trust (BDT), CCAC students can work one-on-one by phone with BDT's trained benefits specialists to be screened for benefit programs and get assistance with applying for them. There is also a BDT toolkit that was recently created to help higher education institutions identify and inform students who are likely eligible for programs such as SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) for discounted broadband service, Medicaid, the Child

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Commented [MB8]: Because this is such a detailed, marketing-sounding answer specific to her program, I'm rearranging order to have this at the end. Also, I'm wondering if we can (should?) edit the question to be more specific to the KEYS program at CCAC, as that's how she answered it? I would recommend something like "Tell us about the specific assistance offered by the KEYS program at CCAC to students who may be housing insecure or lacking access to basic needs."

CCAC ensures students enrolled in the college have access to the resources they need through a variety of services, including:

- Resource Navigators: These are CCAC administrators who work one-on-one with students to connect them to needed resources.
- Essential Needs Form: Students complete this form when they have barriers related to food, housing, transportation, technology, books, childcare and more. Resource Navigators then work to connect them to appropriate resources on campus and/or in the community.
- Emergency GAP Fund Scholarship: Funded through the CCAC Educational Foundation, this scholarship provides direct support to students with emergency financial needs that may prohibit them from continuing their education at CCAC. Students may use these funds to pay bills, buy essentials or purchase textbooks.
- Campus Cupboards: Each CCAC campus location has a food cupboard that is open to any student who needs to use it. The goal is to meet the nutritional needs of students so that they can focus on their learning and be successful.
- Campus Closets: Currently located at South and Boyce campuses, the campus closets provide students with free business and formal attire.
- Loaner Laptops: Utilizing federal funding received during the pandemic, CCAC purchased laptops to be used by students in need of technology assistance.
- Benefits Eligibility and Access: Through a partnership between CCAC and the Benefits Data Trust (BDT), CCAC students can work one-on-one by phone with BDT's trained benefits specialists to be screened for benefit programs and get assistance with applying for them. There is also a BDT toolkit that was recently created to help higher education institutions identify and inform students who are likely eligible for programs such as SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) for discounted broadband service, Medicaid, the Child Tax Credit, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

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Karen Jack has a BS degree in Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has worked in higher-ed for 25 years, working with the KEYS (Keystone Education Yields Success) Program for 15 years. She was the KEYS Program Coordinator for 14 years before becoming the KEYS Coordinator at CCAC.

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