HOUSE Liaison Center

Housing and Opportunities that are Useful for Students' Excellence

2025

Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Support Pilot Projects

Introduction

In the fall of 2024, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) invited institutions to participate in the Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Support Pilot Project by applying for grants of up to $25,000 per institution. ICCB funded eleven grants to selected community colleges to support the development of pilot programs to respond to the specific needs of students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

Grant objectives

To develop campus-level activities related to student outreach efforts, training for HOUSE Liaisons and other campus staff, and/or efforts to deepen collaboration across campus divisions to increase support for students.

To create direct student support pilot programs on campus to assist students who are at risk for homelessness or who are currently experiencing homelessness.

To develop or enhance collaboration with local resources to provide increased support for students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, including building partnerships and expanding collaboration with local McKinney-Vento Liaisons to help with the transition between high school and college and/or working with the college's local Continuum of Care and other local resources including emergency shelters, domestic and sexual violence centers, and food pantries to help support students' needs.

Each grantee addressed the project objectives in ways specific to their student populations and community resources.

The institutions whose proposals were selected for this pilot include:

02 Heartland Community College: Direct student support

03 Illinois Central College: Rental assistance

04 John Wood Community College: Care Fund

05 McHenry County College: Care packages

06 Rend Lake College: Journey to Success Day

07 Richland Community College: Housing costs

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10 Triton College: Safe Haven Program, Troy Mart, and Troy Rides

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12 Wilbur Wright College: Peer specialists

Heartland Community College

Direct student support

www.heartland.edu | Amount Funded: $25,000

Heartland Community College used this grant to enhance its support for students facing housing instability. This was done through a multi-tiered approach that included emergency rental assistance and temporary shelter options. With the support of HOUSE funds, the College provided direct financial support for housing, including rental subsidies and hotel vouchers. Additionally, Heartland initiated the use of Single Stop, a benefits screener and referral platform that connects students to critical federal, state, and local resources.

Grant funds were braided with existing funds and programs to further enhance the student support ecosystem at Heartland Community College. Ongoing programs at Heartland such as the Student Emergency Fund provide assistance to students for unforeseen hardships that could impact their ability to remain enrolled in school. Student Emergency Funds do not have to be repaid to the college and can be used for unanticipated vehicle repairs, replacement of essential personal belongings, safety-related needs, and overdue utility bills reaching turn-off status. These funds are paid directly to the vendor to expedite the payment process and remove barriers.

Performance measures

- At least 10 students will receive $1,200 each in rental assistance
- A minimum of 5 students will be provided with hotel vouchers valued at $1,100 each
- Among the 175 students using Single Stop, 70% will receive the assistance or benefits they applied for

Project outcomes

Heartland Community College strengthened its support for students experiencing housing instability through a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach. This initiative included emergency rental assistance and access to temporary shelter. In addition, Heartland implemented Single Stop, a benefits screening and referral platform that connects students to essential federal, state, and local resources.

Among students who received housing or temporary shelter assistance, 71% successfully completed the semester by passing at least one course and maintaining good academic standing. Furthermore, 76% of grant recipients reenrolled in the subsequent semester to continue their educational pursuits. Notably, two students graduated in the same semester they received assistance, earning their certificate or degree.

Use of the Single Stop platform also produced valuable outcomes. A total of 192 students accessed the platform, surpassing the target of 175 users. Based on the screening results, the average household was identified as potentially eligible for $25,034 in benefits. Collectively, the total estimated value of newly eligible benefits among students who completed the screening reached $1,602,226.

Illinois Central College

Rental assistance

www.icc.edu | Amount Funded: $24,976

Illinois Central College used their project funds to enhance the College's response to student housing insecurity by developing formal partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local housing providers and through participating in housing related-groups/communities such as continuum of care and HOUSE Summit. These partnerships enabled the College to offer emergency and temporary housing to students in need and become more aware of resources in the community. In addition to housing supports, ICC distributed student stipends for basic needs such as transportation and food access via the on-campus pantry. The College also provided professional development for employees. This session focused on identifying and supporting students experiencing housing instability.

In the design of programs for students experiencing homelessness, ICC considered ways to develop students' capacities to advocate. One example of this was ICC's roommate mixer. As ICC students look for housing in the community, they often find that rental prices are not aligned to their income. By meeting other students looking for housing, students can find housing stability and community. Advertising this type of event required thinking differently about how to advertise programs and services to students. This included using monitors around campus to push information to students using plain language and normalizing asking for help. In doing this, Illinois Central College aimed to create a sustainable framework that meets students' immediate needs while also fostering long-term stability.

One ongoing challenge to project sustainability is that the student need outpaces the College's resources. The cost of essential housing-related expenses (e.g., rent, security deposits, and overdue utility bills) often surpasses the limited funding available for student housing assistance. This creates a gap that is difficult to close.

Performance measures

- 10–12 students will benefit from MOUs for emergency housing during the grant period
- A professional development session will be conducted in Summer 2025
- A Spring 2026 campuswide survey will measure increased awareness of student homelessness and potential solutions

Project outcomes

The HOUSE grant significantly strengthened the college's ability to support students experiencing housing instability while also increasing campus-wide awareness and knowledge of available resources. Through the project, students who were unhoused or at risk of losing housing were able to access direct housing support, creating opportunities for greater stability while continuing their education. Notably, 100% of the students who received housing assistance reported that the support helped them remain enrolled in classes and maintain stable housing, demonstrating the critical role that timely housing intervention plays in student retention and success.

John Wood Community College

Care Fund

www.jwcc.edu | Amount Funded: $23,600

John Wood Community College launched a comprehensive student support initiative that includes access to temporary housing, emergency transportation assistance, and childcare referrals. Grant funds were used to support a newly established Care Fund to support student transportation. This fund offered mileage reimbursements, bus passes, Lyft rides, and gas cards. The college also used the grant to provide stipends, basic needs kits, and other urgent supports tailored to individual student situations.

These grant activities were part of a larger ecosystem of student support at John Wood College. Organizing the campus culture around an ethic of care, JWCC uses The Caring Campus model. This initiative uses seven specific behaviors that when exhibited by staff and faculty, have proven to increase student retention, persistence, and completion. Caring Campus is driven by faculty and staff engagement with students, using interpersonal bonds to create community and support vulnerable student populations.

Performance measures

- The Care Fund will be formally established in Spring 2025
- Immediate implementation of needs assessments, reimbursements, and childcare support referrals

Project outcomes

Through the FY2025 ICCB Homelessness & Housing Insecurity grant, John Wood Community College provided targeted, direct financial support to students facing urgent basic needs through the establishment of a Care Fund in partnership with the College Foundation. A total of $12,000 was distributed to assist 48 students, addressing critical barriers that threatened their ability to persist in their education. Funds were used for eviction prevention, utility assistance to maintain essential services, internet access to support continued coursework, and winter clothing for students experiencing financial hardship. In one case, support also covered necessary car repairs for a student effectively living in their vehicle. These interventions aligned with grant priorities by delivering emergency financial assistance, stabilizing housing and transportation, and ensuring students could continue their education despite significant economic challenges.

McHenry County College

Care packages

www.mchenry.edu | Amount Funded: $25,000

McHenry County College used their grant funds to support students with customized care packages that included vouchers and connections to wraparound services. Another project component was student outreach. These efforts focused on identifying at-risk students who might not otherwise seek help. To organize resources for student use, the college built a centralized Resource Directory to streamline access to community and campus-based support services.

Organizing these moving parts is not a simple task. MCC worked through their institutional team for comprehensive buy-in across the institution. This design supported project implementation so that barriers were quickly overcome. One example of the success of this team was MCC's vision for student laundry facilities. Making a welcoming space for students to do laundry seems like a small kindness, but for students experiencing homelessness, it provides dignity and stability. This ethic of care is a consistent student-centered theme at MCC. It continued in MCC's messaging of their care packages to support student belonging. Care packages came complete with supplies that will serve students well through their college journey—back packs, battery packs, blankets—in addition to more typical toiletry items.

Performance measures

- Begin care package development and student outreach in Q1
- Distribute care packages and issue stipends during Q2
- Launch the completed Resource Directory in Q2
- Conduct a formal evaluation and update services in Q4

Project outcomes

With funding from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Homelessness Grant, the college successfully developed a care package initiative to support students experiencing homelessness and housing instability. A total of 25 comprehensive packages were designed to address immediate needs related to hygiene, health, safety, and daily living. Items included essential supplies such as backpacks, blankets, sleeping bags, clothing, hygiene products, first aid kits, and portable charging equipment. Additional resources, including gift cards and weather-related items, were provided to help students manage day-to-day challenges and seasonal conditions. Since implementation, six care packages have already been distributed by the institutional liaison team to students facing urgent crises, including eviction, displacement from the family home, domestic violence, and loss of belongings due to a house fire. This initiative has had a direct and meaningful impact on students by reducing immediate barriers to stability, preserving dignity, and supporting continued engagement and success in their academic pursuits.

Rend Lake College

"Journey to Success" Day

www.rlc.edu | Amount Funded: $2,831

Making the transition from high school to college can be a challenging aspect of student life. For students who have been working with McKinney-Vento liaisons in high school, having a warm hand-off to the HOUSE liaison at the community college may improve the odds of that student connecting and persisting.

Rend Lake College hosted a "Journey to Success" day aimed at McKinney-Vento high school juniors and seniors. The program is designed to ease the transition to college for students experiencing housing insecurity. The event introduced students to the college's resources, offered opportunities to meet staff, and provided assistance completing applications and the FAFSA.

Performance measures

- Host "Journey to Success" Day in April 2025 with participation from at least 7 local high schools
- Conduct follow-up surveys in May 2025
- Share results in June and reconnect with participants in July 2025
- Reengage with the now-enrolled students in August and visit schools to follow up with juniors

Project outcomes

Rend Lake College invited all of our district high schools to participate in 'Journey to Success' day for local McKinney-Vento representatives and students. Unaccompanied minors and students in DCFS care were invited as well. We hosted two events, one in April 2025 and one in November 2025.

A total of 27 McKinney-Vento students attended Journey to Success events and had the opportunity to visit Rend Lake College. They heard from: RL-Cares, Student Support Services (STARS), Financial Aid, Tutoring and Disability Support Services, the Foundation, our FYE Coordinator, and the Apprenticeships program. They enjoyed lunch and had a tour of the college. They also had the opportunity to work on their FAFSA and our scholarship application during and after lunch time with the guidance of RLC staff.

Journey to Success provided the opportunity for improved awareness of the HOUSE liaison role on campus, contributing to deeper collaboration across campus, increased awareness of working with homeless/at-risk students, and opportunities to build relationships. These relationships were among students, high school staff, and college staff allowing for enhanced support for students as they transition from high school to college.

Richland Community College

Housing costs

www.richland.edu | Amount Funded: $25,000

Richland Community College used HOUSE funds to support students with urgent housing and utility needs through short-term hotel stays, rent and mortgage assistance, and essential utility services. The program integrates access to mental health counseling, academic and financial aid support, financial literacy education, and broader wellness resources.

The college created a resource guide in the form of a course in their learning management system for recipients of HOUSE funds. The module provides information about over 20 services offered for students experiencing homelessness and students in care. The resource guide provides descriptions of services, links to service websites, tutorials for completing applications, along with staff pictures and contact information. Richland has partnered with Busey Bank to offer their Financial Pathways education within one section of the resource guide. The Financial Pathways provides students with self-guided Financial Literacy education. A questionnaire at the end of the resource guide collects information about additional needs students may have. It also offers students an opportunity to request that staff members from various departments reach out to them to answer questions and provide support.

Performance measures

- Serve a minimum of 10 students in 2025
- Design and expand services from February to April 2025
- Formalize partnerships and implement IRIS referral system in early 2025
- Partner with CICD to offer workshops from March to May 2025
- Immediately begin distributing emergency funds and tracking usage and feedback
- Raise awareness through flyers, social media, and info sessions
- Complete a formal evaluation by December 2025

Project outcomes

Partnerships with community organizations and service providers further expanded the College's support network, allowing students to access specialized housing, financial literacy, and stabilization resources beyond what the institution could provide alone. Collectively, these coordinated efforts established a more cohesive and proactive system of care that continues to improve communication, referral efficiency, and student outcomes.

The HOUSE Grant not only provided critical short-term stabilization for students in crisis but also increased campus awareness, strengthened referral pathways, and established sustainable systems of support that will continue to benefit students beyond the grant period.

South Suburban College

Removing Barriers to Basic Needs

www.ssc.edu | Amount Funded: $23,600

South Suburban College launched "Removing Barriers to Basic Needs" (RBBN), an initiative to support students with transportation and essential resources. The program included a funding mechanism for students to receive support and provides workshops and outreach to ensure awareness and access to services.

The college developed an awareness campaign to inform students about the resources available through HOUSE funds. They created an application that students must complete to receive services, and a workshop that walks students through the application process. Bus cards and gift cards have been disbursed to meet transportation and basic needs. The college also created a financial wellness resource for students.

Performance measures

- Launch campaign awareness efforts in January 2025
- Conduct workshops and begin funding distribution in February 2025
- Serve an estimated 200–225 students through December 2025

Project outcomes

Communication about the RBBN Project was distributed to all SSC staff, students, and faculty members. Engagement activities were conducted via resource tables, email campaigns, student-initiated verbal requests, and referrals provided by faculty and staff.

Over 500 students have been engaged in awareness efforts for The RBBN Project. One hundred five students received stipends from The RBBN Project to mitigate challenges satisfying basic needs such as housing and transportation. Many continued to face ongoing financial hardships and returned seeking additional support. In cases of urgent or exceptional need, repeat requests were considered and fulfilled to ensure that students facing the most critical circumstances received timely assistance.

Southeastern Illinois College

Direct stipend program

www.sic.edu | Amount Funded: $25,000

Southeastern Illinois College created a direct stipend program managed by the SIC HOUSE Committee to support student basic needs. Funds covered meal cards, overdue rent, housing application fees, utilities, and temporary housing. Staff training and outreach events ensured broad campus and community engagement.

The college has implemented best practices to educate faculty, staff and students about basic needs and the services available to provide support. The HOUSE liaison team partnered with faculty members to craft syllabus statements. Through community partnerships with resource agencies, SIC will make best efforts to address students' Social Determinant of Health needs, both on and off campus. The team also worked with the SIC HOUSE Committee and other stakeholders to design an efficient referral process. Faculty and staff who encounter students with basic needs will know how to get them to the appropriate services.

Performance measures

- Provide staff training in FY25
- Host a July meet-and-greet with McKinney-Vento and HOUSE liaisons
- Offer workshops to high school students and conduct ongoing outreach throughout 2025

Project outcomes

The Supportive Housing Grant enabled Southeastern Illinois College to provide direct financial assistance and coordinated support to students experiencing or at risk of homelessness, helping to stabilize their housing and promote academic persistence. Over the past year, more than 25 students received assistance, including help with rent, deposits, and housing applications.

Through partnerships with local housing authorities and community agencies, students were connected to longer-term housing solutions and supportive services. The program also helped identify additional students in need, increasing awareness of housing insecurity within the college community. Overall, the grant significantly reduced barriers to student success by improving housing stability, retention, and access to essential resources.

Triton College

Safe Haven Program, Troy Mart, and Troy Rides

www.triton.edu | Amount Funded: $25,000

Triton College's Office of Student Services offers an array of student support services, many of which have been enhanced by this grant opportunity. Through the grant, Triton College implemented the Troy Safe Haven Program to provide emergency housing placements, stipends, and basic needs support for 50 students. An additional 150 students will benefit from expanded access to Troy Mart for food and hygiene products, and Troy Rides for transportation assistance.

In addition, Triton College used funds from the pilot project to strengthen support for student parents including childcare referrals and financial subsidies. Much of the project work is carried out by the interdepartmental Care Team—a group of 10-12 staff from across the institution who collaborate on this grant and related basic needs efforts. One key feature of their work is effective communication, which is facilitated through shared Google docs. This tool enhances speed and accuracy in communication across Care Team members and functional areas. This document also supports training efforts and handbook development for those outside the Care Team who play an integral role in supporting student success.

Performance measures

- Allocate $17,000 in stipends for rent, deposits, and utilities
- Add $5,000 in inventory to Troy Mart and Troy Rides within 45 days of funding
- Launch childcare support program with $3,000 in subsidies by month three

Project outcomes

Through the ICCB Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Support Pilot Grant (FY25), Triton College successfully implemented a comprehensive, student-centered support model through its Troy Safe Haven, Troy Mart, and Troy Rides initiatives. Collectively, these programs served 157 students, providing critical resources including emergency financial assistance, food access, transportation, temporary housing, and basic needs support. In Q4 alone, 72 students received direct services, including 32 emergency stipends, 18 transportation supports, and 8 emergency housing placements, ensuring students could continue attending classes, clinicals, and work-based learning opportunities.

Troy Mart expanded food security efforts through campus-wide initiatives and resource distribution, while Troy Rides reduced transportation barriers, increasing student access and persistence. These coordinated efforts resulted in increased student engagement, improved stability, and strengthened retention by addressing immediate barriers to student success. Through strategic partnerships and trauma-informed outreach, Triton College continues to create sustainable pathways for students experiencing housing insecurity to remain enrolled and achieve their academic goals.

Truman College

Emergency relief stipends

www.ccc.edu/truman/home | Amount Funded: $25,000

Truman College supported at least 45 students with emergency stipends and distribute over 360 Ventra One-Day passes. The initiative also included developing new agreements with local temporary housing organizations and providing broader support around food, transportation, and housing needs. The program aimed to reach 150–200 students who have historically been ineligible for traditional housing supports.

The college used HOUSE funds to meet students' basic needs that emerge during needs assessment in case management. All Chicago has partnered with the college to provide support for students experiencing homelessness. HOUSE funds are used to supplement that support. The college has also streamlined its practices to decrease the amount of time it takes for students to receive emergency stipends. In addition, they have increased their data collecting capabilities for grant projects.

Performance measures

- Conduct data reviews and audits in Q1 to ensure proper referrals and support
- Distribute food cards, transportation passes, and stipends from Q2–Q4
- Hold bi-weekly staff capacity check-ins at the Wellness Center

Project outcomes

Sixty-five students received emergency relief stipends. Thirty-four students received transportation assistance, and thirty-five students were provided with temporary housing support. We were able to expand and add new partnerships to assist students with basic needs support, housing access, emergency funding, and legal support (tenant rights, eviction support). The partnerships will continue to support students to address housing insecurity and persist with their education.

Wilbur Wright College

Peer specialists

www.ccc.edu /wright/home | Amount Funded: $24,996

Wilbur Wright College launched a student assessment and support system led by trained peer specialists and Wellness Center Staff. Five peer specialists were trained to lead workshops, provide direct referrals, and support their peers in accessing food, housing, transportation, and emergency stipends. The initiative also included staff training and a focus on continuous feedback and evaluation.

Peer specialists received training to deepen their understanding of students' basic needs and the lived experiences of those facing housing insecurity. In response to the growing demand for affordable housing in Chicago and a funding gap for rent stipends, the HOUSE liaison is partnering with a Community Housing Navigator. This collaboration engages landlords and helps them understand and participate in rental assistance programs that support students in securing stable housing.

Performance measures

- Train peer mentors and staff in Q1
- Host 15 peer-led workshops and provide emergency supports from Q2–Q4
- Achieve a 20% increase in mental health service utilization
- Reach a 70% satisfaction rate from peer support activities
- Analyze program effectiveness and identify improvements in Q4

Project outcomes

The project significantly strengthened coordination both internally and externally. The project improved campus-wide awareness through multiple engagement strategies including classroom presentations, peer specialist-led workshops, targeted outreach campaigns, and informational materials distributed across campus. Workshops and training sessions were conducted for students, staff, and faculty to increase understanding of housing insecurity, reduce stigma, and promote early identification and referral.

External partnerships connected students to a larger support system. Through these partnerships, 858 students benefited from external partner services, expanding access to housing stabilization, food security, trauma-informed care, and financial support. These collaborations reduced service gaps and provided more comprehensive, wraparound assistance.

Resources

Heartland Community College
- Heartland College resources: https://www.heartland.edu/success
- Education Northwest, Connecting College Students to Public Benefits: https://educationnorthwest.org/case-briefs/connecting-college-students-public-benefits

Illinois Central College
- ICC Mental Health & Wellness: http://icc.edu/mentalhealth
- Montgomery County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/department-health-human-services/about-us/services-end-prevent-homelessness/landlord-supports/landlord-risk-mitigation-fund

John Wood Community College
- John Wood College, Student Resources: https://www.jwcc.edu/student-resources/
- Community College Research Center Brief on Caring Campus: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED612130.pdf
- Institute for Evidence-Based Change, Caring Campus: https://iebcnow.org/caring-campus/

McHenry County College
- McHenry County College, Student Assistance: https://www.mchenry.edu/assistance/
- Laundry Love: https://laundrylove.org/
- Backpack USA: https://www.backpacksusa.com/blogs/blog/ways-to-create-care-packages-for-college-students-in-need

Rend Lake College
- Rend Lake Cares: https://rlc.edu/rl-cares
- SchoolHouse Connection on high school-college transition: https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/youth-homelessness-and-higher-education-an-overview
- National Center for Homeless Education: https://nche.ed.gov/higher-education/

Richland Community College
- Richland Community College, Campus & Community Resources: https://www.richland.edu/student-resources/campus-community-resources/
- Richland Community College, Housing Assistance: https://www.richland.edu/student-resources/campus-community-resources/housing-assistance/
- Busey Bank's Financial Pathways: https://www.busey.com/personal/financial-pathways

South Suburban College
- South Suburban College, Multicultural Wellness Center: https://www.ssc.edu/services/student-services/multicultural-wellness-center/
- South Suburban College, Housing Resources: https://www.ssc.edu/services/student-services/student-life/housing-resources/
- Times Higher Education/Inside Higher Ed on Campus Pantries: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/food-pantry-can-help-support-your-campus-through-costofliving-crisis

Southeastern Illinois College
- Southeastern Illinois College, HOUSE Liaison page: https://sic.edu/student-services/mental-health-wellness/housing-insecurity/
- MiraCosta College, syllabus language: https://miracosta.edu/student-services/care/_docs/basic-needs-canvas-syllabus.pdf

Triton College
- Triton College, Student Services: https://www.triton.edu/students/student-services/
- Generation Hope, Student Parents & Housing Insecurity: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ed7f7e97e1c361545410fe4/t/677d378ea7b3f06185d7e9c2/1736259471390/GH_Breaking_Barriers.pdf

Truman College
- City Colleges of Chicago, Wellness Center: https://prepare.ccc.edu/mheac-wellness-center/
- Truman College, Wellness Center: https://www.ccc.edu/truman/departments/wellness-center/

Wilbur Wright College
- Wright College, Wellness Center: https://www.ccc.edu/wright/departments/Wellness-Center/
- Wright College, Healthy Market: https://www.ccc.edu/wright/departments/Wright-Healthy-Market/
- All Chicago, Coordinated Entry System: https://allchicago.org/coordinated-entry-system/

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Rev. 5/26