

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5959

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Providing assistance to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove, Kilmer, Shin, Sheldon, Kohl-Welles, Delvin and McAuliffe).

**Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Housing**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** The Transitional Housing Operating and Rent (THOR) program provides funding to non-profits, local government, and housing authorities to provide housing and services to homeless families with children. The program has operated within the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) since 1999; however, the program is not currently in statute.

The program is the result of a Washington State Supreme Court decision mandating that CTED and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) create a Homeless Families with Children Plan and provide services to assist homeless children and their families. In 1999 the Legislature included a budget proviso of \$5,000,000 for the 1999 - 2001 biennium to fund the THOR program as well as several other initiatives to help homeless families with children. The THOR funding has remained consistent at \$5,000,000 a biennium since 1999.

Only families with children and with a family income at or below 50 percent of the area median income are eligible to receive THOR services. Services include rental assistance up to 24 months, security or utility deposits, and case management services.

In 2006 1,358 families received THOR services and 471 exited the program. Of those exiting, 74 percent achieved permanent housing, 49 percent of which was unsubsidized. It is estimated that the THOR program is meeting approximately 19 percent of the need of families with children for transitional housing assistance and services. CTED currently reports on the THOR program as part of the State's Homeless Housing Strategic Plan.

The Washington State Quality Award (WSQA) program is a nonprofit organization that evaluates performance standards for organizations who apply for review. After an intensive screening process, the WSQA provides feedback to those organizations in how to improve quality performance and recognizes those that have achieved performance excellence.

**Summary:** The THOR program is created within CTED. The purpose of the program is to assist homeless individuals and families secure and retain safe, decent and affordable

housing. CTED will provide grants to eligible organizations to operate the program and is authorized to develop requirements, procedures, and guidelines for the program as needed.

Grantee organizations may use the funds to provide:

- rental assistance, including security deposits and moving expenses;
- case management services designed to help the client move toward self-sufficiency;
- operating expense subsidies for transitional housing facilities that serve homeless families with children; and
- administrative costs of the grantee organizations.

Those that are eligible to participate in the THOR program are:

- families with children who have household incomes at or below 50 percent of the area median income who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
- individuals or families without children who have incomes at or below 30 percent of the area median income who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
- individuals of families who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless and who have a household with an adult member who has a mental health or chemical dependency disorder; and
- individuals or families who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless and who have a household with an adult member who is an offender released from confinement within the past 18 months.

The THOR account is created as a non-appropriated account.

Data on all program participants must be entered and tracked through the Homeless Management Information System. Grantee organizations are encouraged to have a quality management system and apply to the Washington State Quality Award program to evaluate that system. CTED must produce an annual THOR report addressing specific performance measures to be included in the State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan.

The statute providing for landlord immunity from civil liability for the criminal conduct of the landlord's tenants is repealed.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0	
House	65	29	(House amended)
Senate			(Senate refused to concur)
House	96	0	(House amended)
House			(House reconsidered)
House	95	2	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 12, 2008