

RCW 28B.50.295 Emergency assistance grant program. (1) (a)

Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the emergency assistance grant program is established to provide students of community and technical colleges monetary aid to assist students experiencing unforeseen emergencies or situations that affect the student's ability to attend classes.

(b) The college board shall administer the competitive grant program in accordance with this section.

(2) The college board shall establish eligibility criteria for community and technical colleges to apply for grants under the grant program. At a minimum, to be eligible for a grant, a community or technical college must:

(a) Demonstrate the need for grant funds. Demonstrating need may include producing demographic data on student income levels, the number of students experiencing food insecurity or homelessness, the number of students who meet the definition of "needy student" under *RCW 28B.92.030, the number of students accessing the college's food pantry, if one is available, and other information specific to the student population;

(b) Ensure that students' access to emergency aid funds will be as low barrier as possible and will not require the student to have to fill out the free application for federal student aid to receive emergency funds. However, the college must require the student to request assistance in writing;

(c) Allow flexibility in which students may apply for emergency aid funds. Students who may not meet the definition of "needy student" but who may be experiencing emergency situations must be able to apply for emergency aid funds; and

(d) Indicate how the college will prioritize the disbursement of emergency aid funds.

(3) In selecting grant recipients, the college board must consider a community or technical college's demonstration of need and the resources and programs already in existence at the college.

(4) A community or technical college shall use grant funds to provide students emergency aid in the form of monetary grants to assist the student in, for example, purchasing food, paying utilities or rent, paying for transportation, child care, or other goods or services that the student needs in order to continue to attend classes. Emergency aid under the grant program is considered a grant and a student is not required to reimburse the community or technical college.

(5) The college board must begin accepting applications for the grant program by December 1, 2019.

(6) The college board shall submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature beginning December 1, 2020, and each December 1st thereafter. At a minimum, the report must:

(a) Identify the community and technical colleges receiving grants and the amounts of the grants; and

(b) Summarize how the community and technical colleges distributed funds to students, and provide the number of students, the amounts, and the emergency conditions for which funds were granted.

[2019 c 407 § 1.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 28B.92.030 was amended by 2019 c 406 § 21, deleting the definition of "needy student."

Findings—Intent—2019 c 407: "(1) The legislature finds that students who receive supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits in the form of an electronic benefit transfer card cannot use these benefits to purchase food items from on-campus food retail establishments at institutions of higher education. On-campus food retail establishments or point-of-sale locations such as cafeterias, bookstores, and cafes do not qualify as retail food stores under the federal food and nutrition act of 2008 because these on-campus food retail establishments either do not sell enough categories of staple foods or do not gross over fifty percent of their total sales from staple foods.

(2) The legislature recognizes that students perform better in classes when they are well-nourished, yet finds that students who receive supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits have to travel off campus to use their benefits at a participating vendor, incurring extra travel costs, reducing study time, and causing unnecessary stress.

(3) The legislature finds that this limitation on the use of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits is a barrier that prevents public and private institutions of higher education from providing equal access to food retail establishments on campuses to all students, faculty, and staff regardless of economic status. The legislature recognizes that eliminating this barrier is vital to assuring equal access to every aspect of Washington's public and private institutions of higher education.

(4) The legislature intends to have the department of social and health services request a waiver from the United States department of agriculture to allow students to use their electronic benefit transfer card at on-campus food retail establishments at Washington's public and private institutions of higher education." [2019 c 407 § 2.]

Conflict with federal requirements—2019 c 407: "If any part of this act is found to be in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state." [2019 c 407 § 6.]