

**Schoolhouse**  
WASHINGTON  
*a project of* BUILDING CHANGES



**BUILDING  
CHANGES**



# Survey on the Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington State During the COVID-19 Crisis

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

April 24, 2020

# Overview

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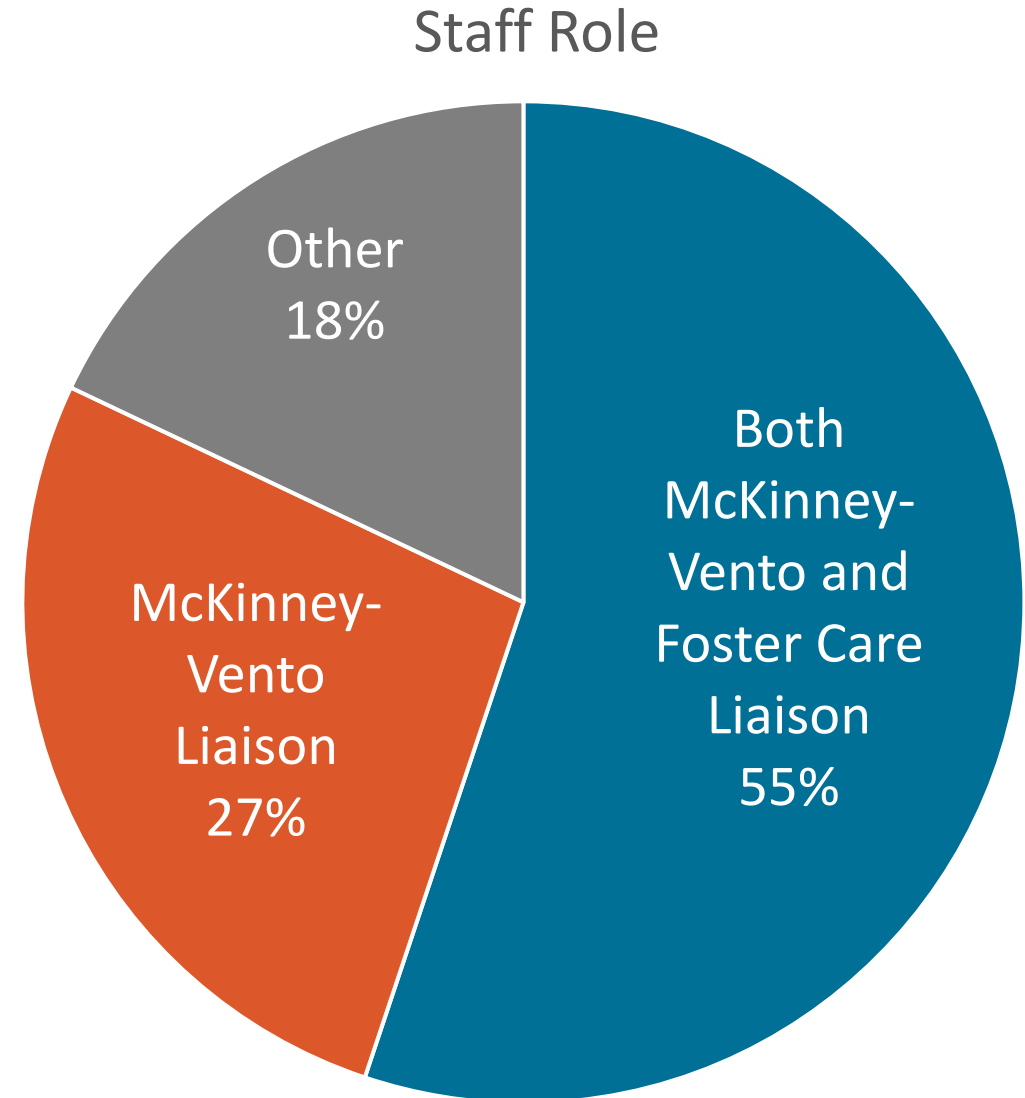
Schoolhouse Washington, a project of Building Changes, conducted a survey of McKinney-Vento liaisons to learn how students and families experiencing homelessness are being affected by the COVID-19 crisis and to help identify their needs. Responses were collected from April 6 through April 10, 2020. The survey was sent to 459 McKinney-Vento liaisons in all school districts and local education agencies in Washington State using a list downloaded from the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, every school district is required to have a homeless education liaison who coordinates services that ensures children and youth experiencing homelessness enroll in school and has opportunities to succeed academically. In Washington State, many McKinney-Vento liaisons also serve children and youth in foster care.

# Respondents

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- 78 respondents worked with students experiencing homelessness.
- Respondents collectively served approximately 16,711 students experiencing homelessness in Washington State.

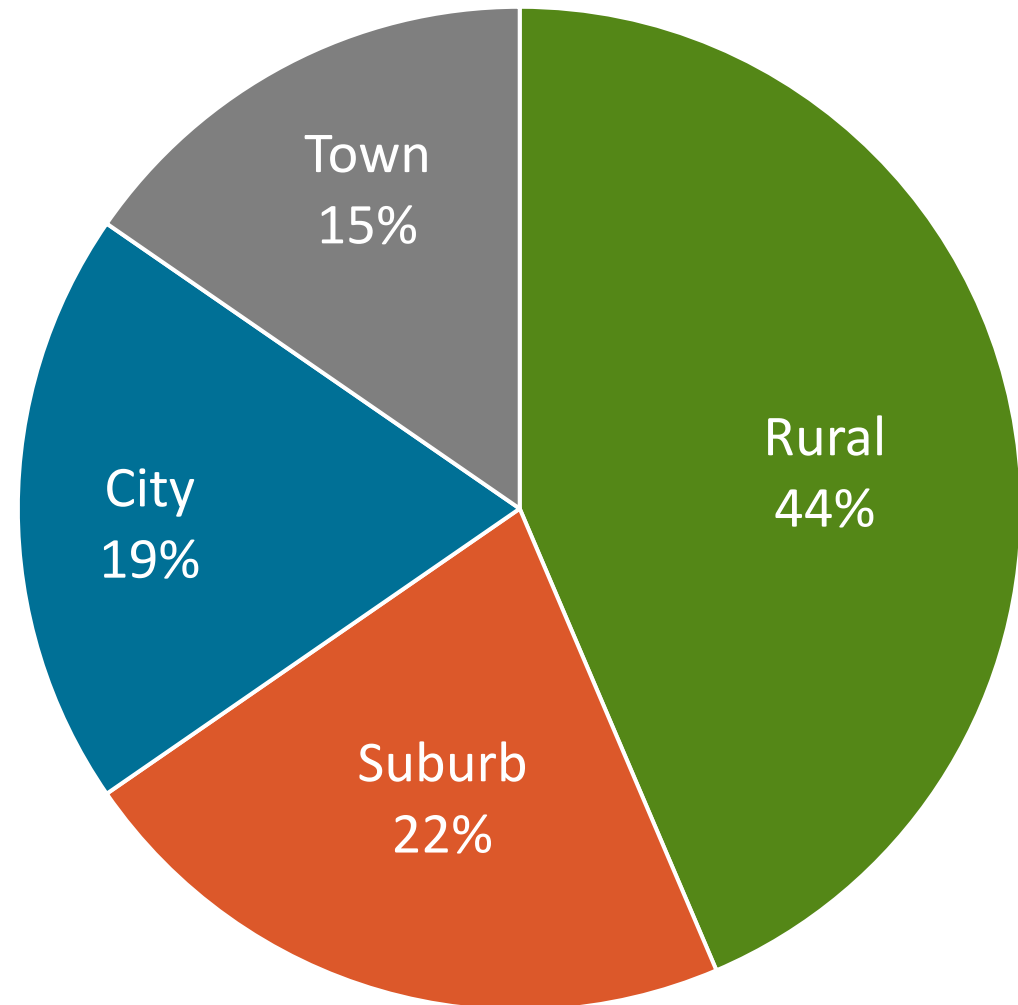


## Respondents

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- 44% of respondents were from rural districts.

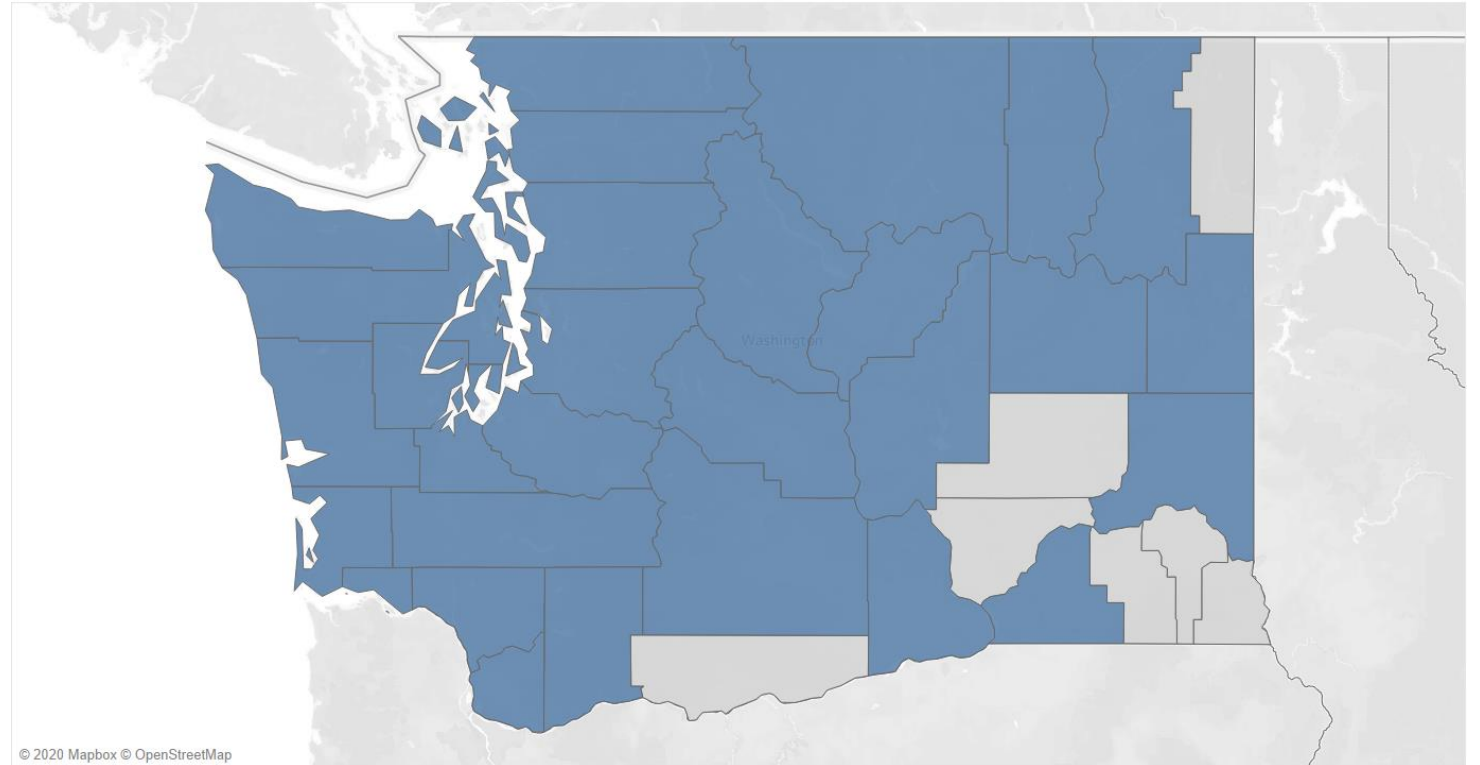
District Location Type



# Respondents

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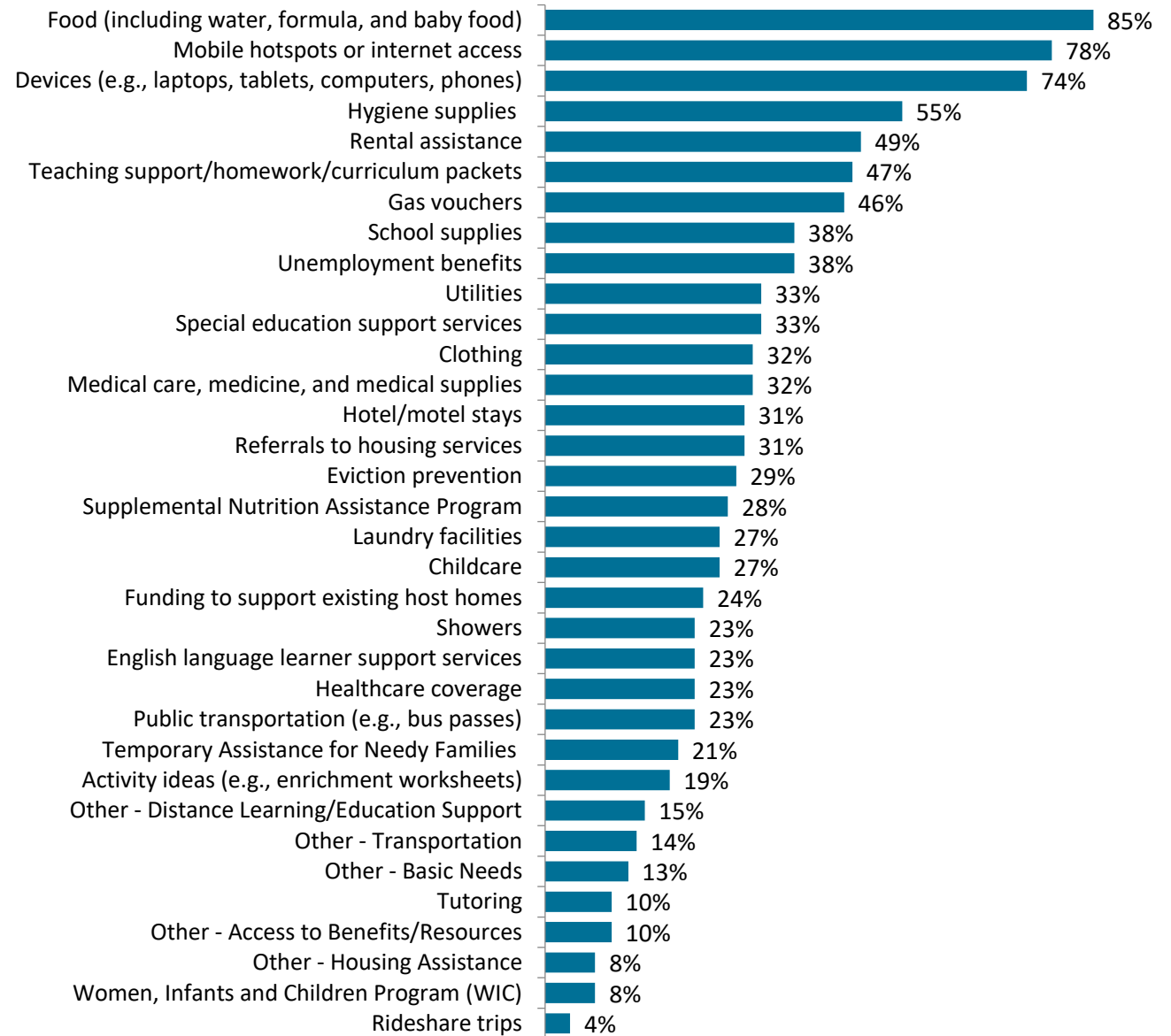
- Respondents were from 74 districts in 32 counties across Washington State.



# Top Identified Needs

- Across all categories, the top five identified needs were:
  - Food (85%)
  - Mobile hotspots/ internet access (78%)
  - Devices (74%)
  - Hygiene supplies (55%)
  - Rental assistance (49%)

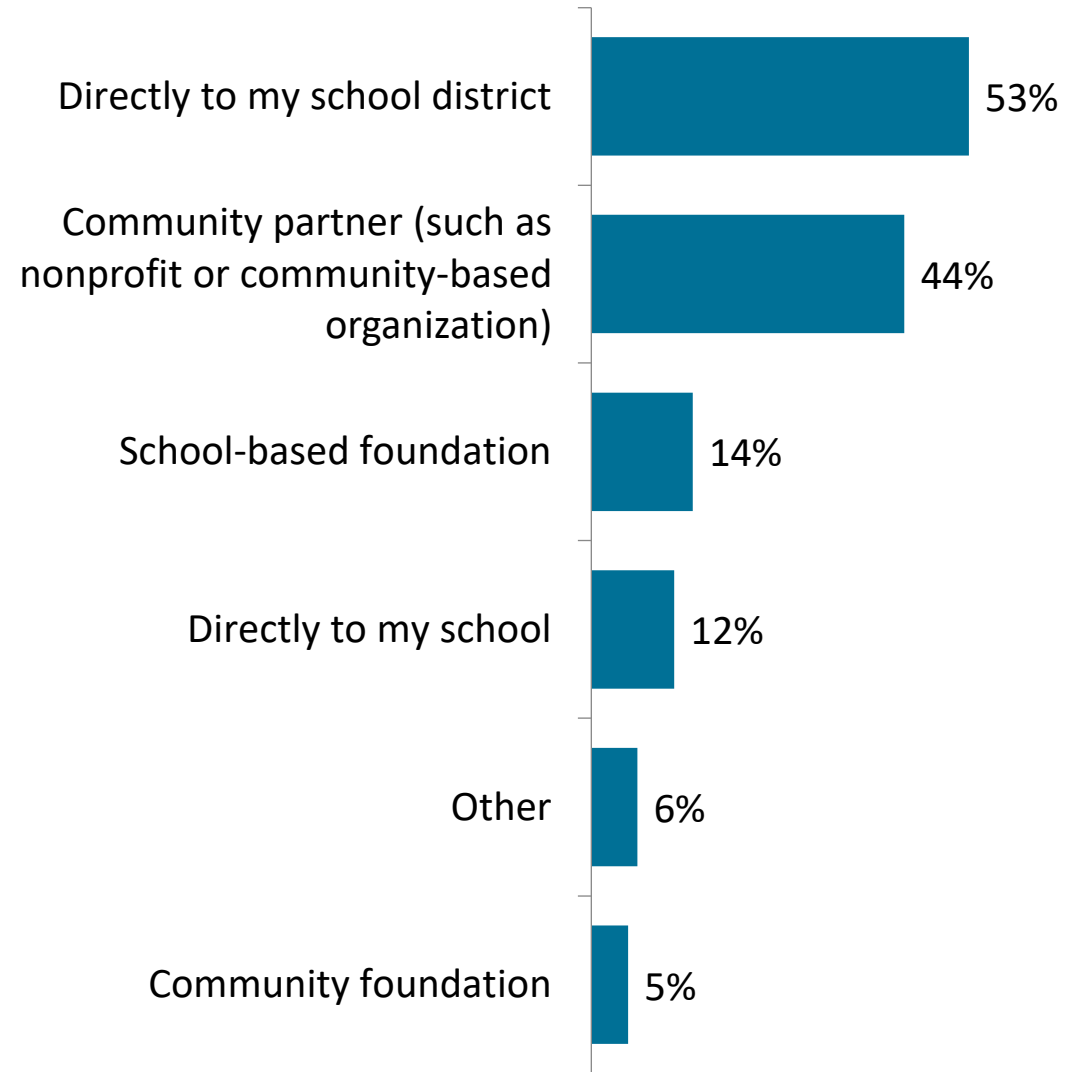
## All Identified Needs



# Receiving Funds

- School districts (53%) and community partners (44%) were identified as the best organizations to receive funds.

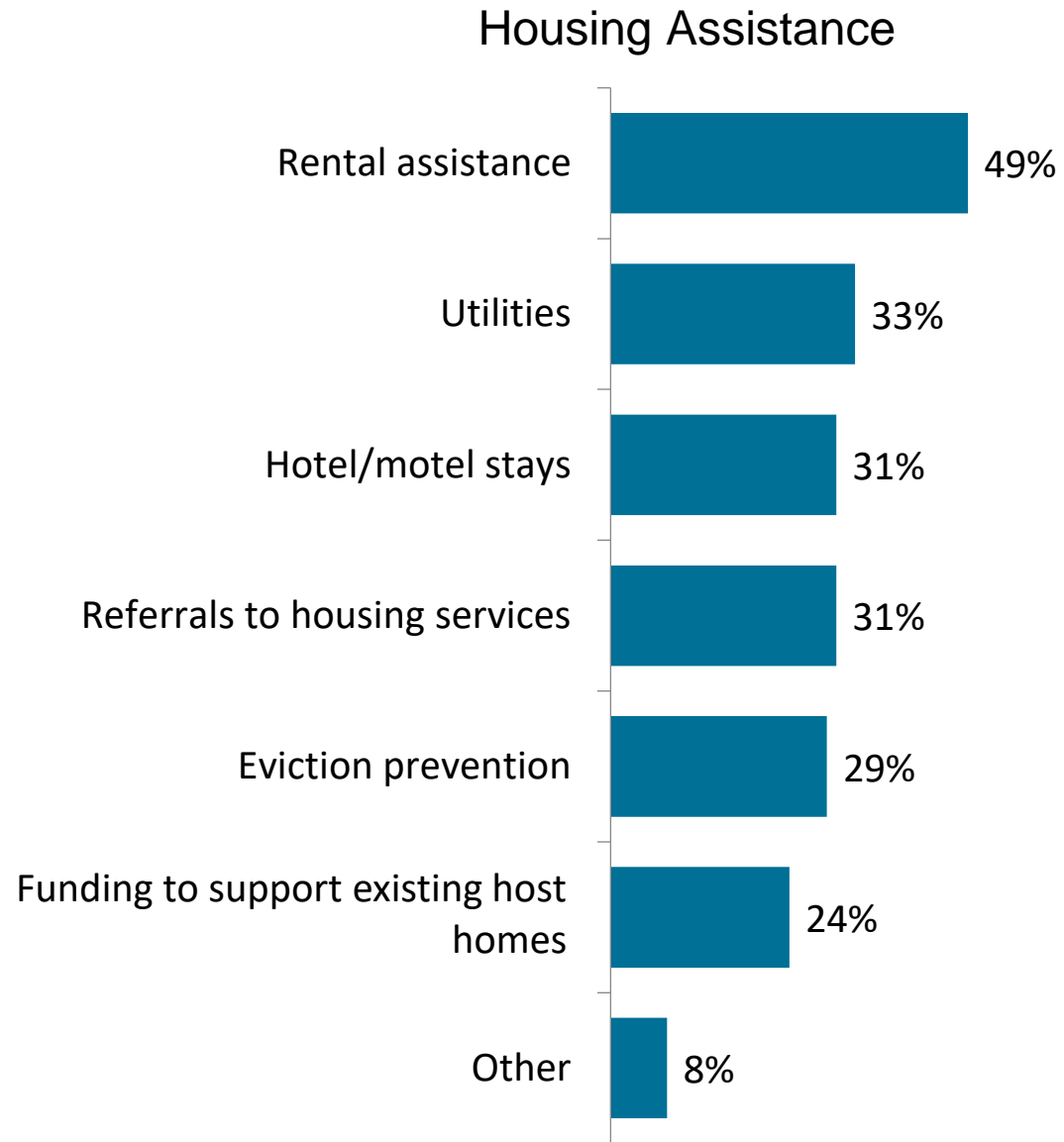
## Best Organizations to Receive Funds



# Housing Assistance

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- Rental assistance (49%) was the most cited housing need.



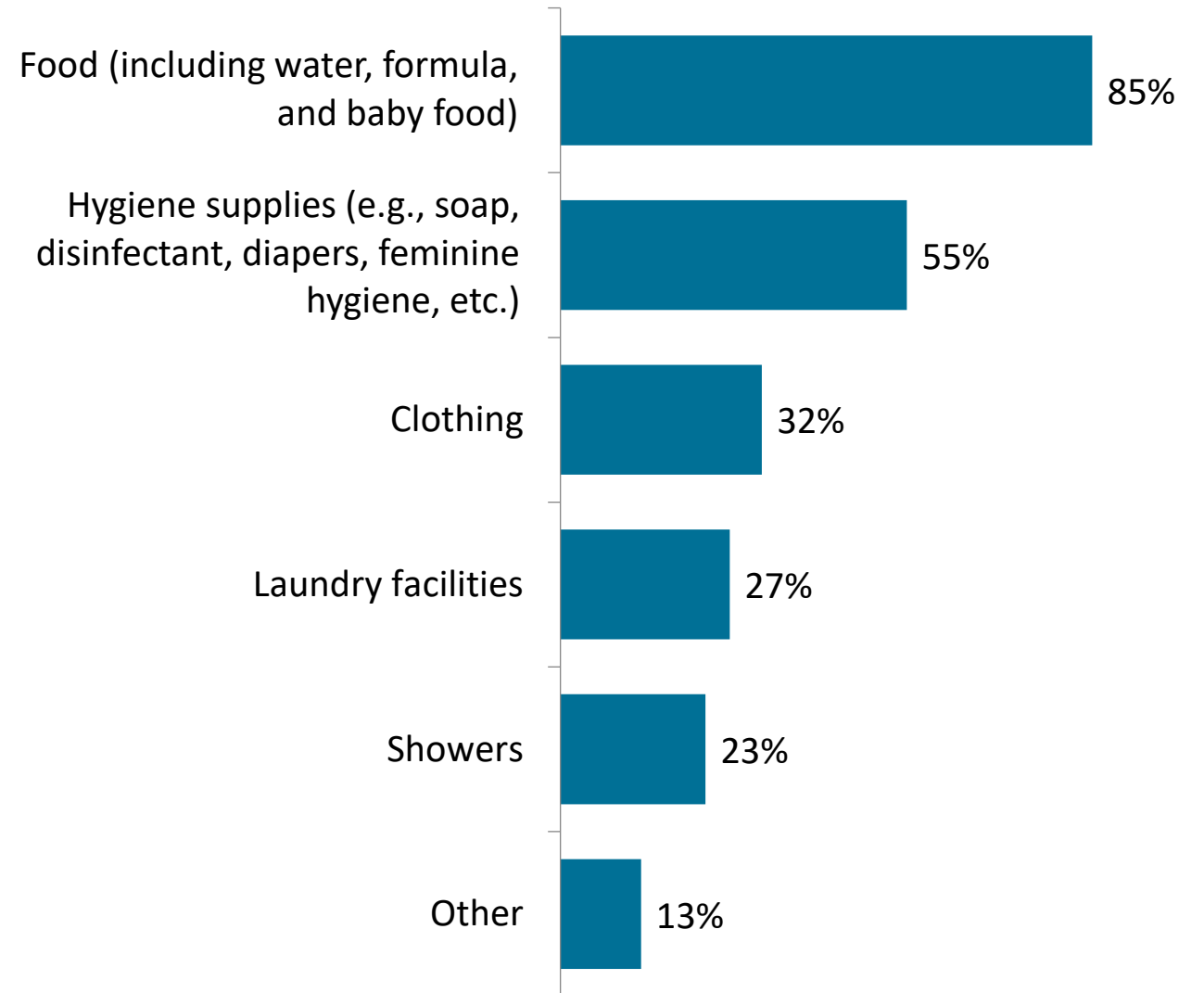


# Basic Needs

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- Food (85%) and hygiene supplies (55%) were the most cited basic needs.

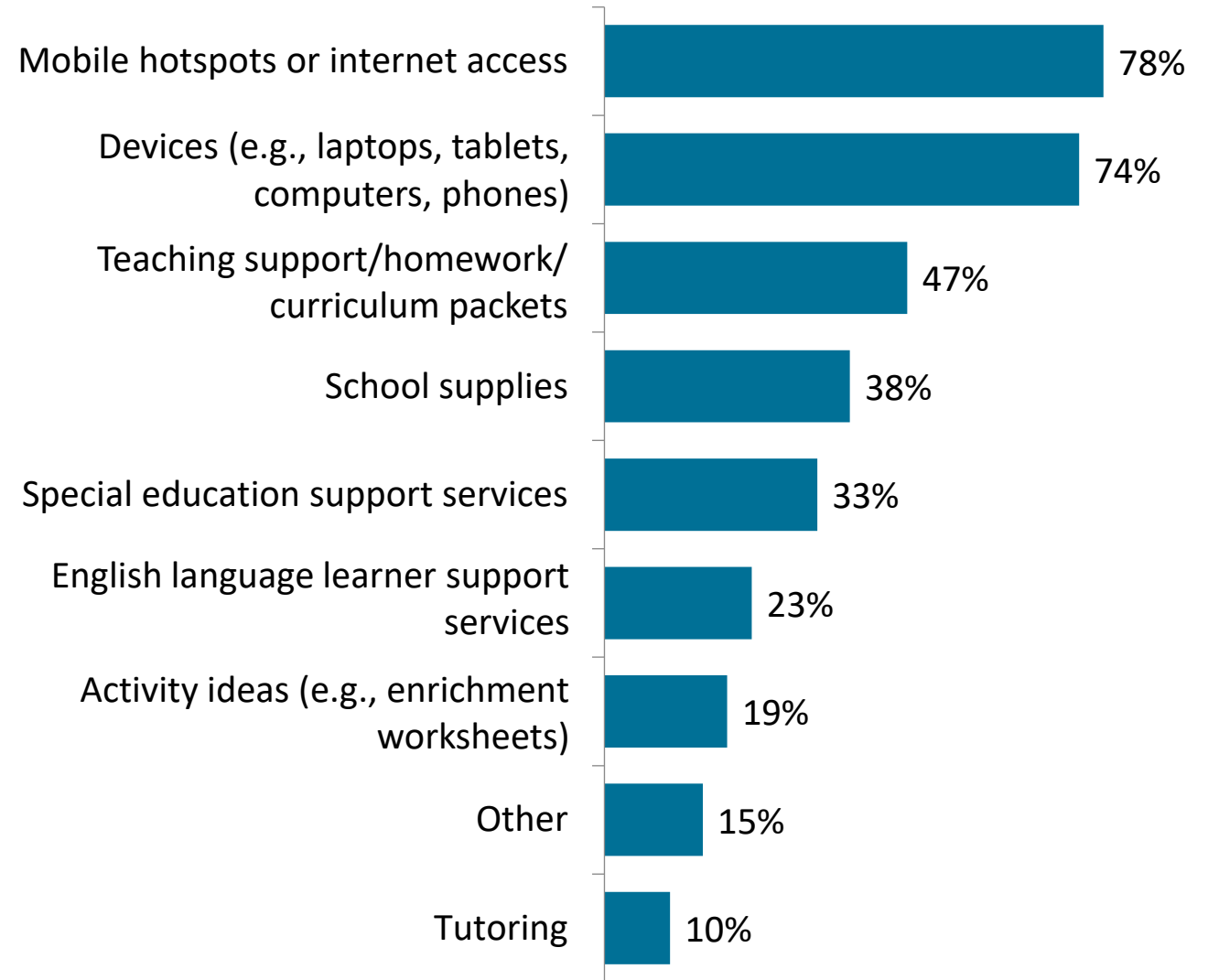
## Basic Needs



# Distance Learning Access and Education Support

- Mobile hotspots/internet (78%) and devices (74%) were the most cited learning needs.

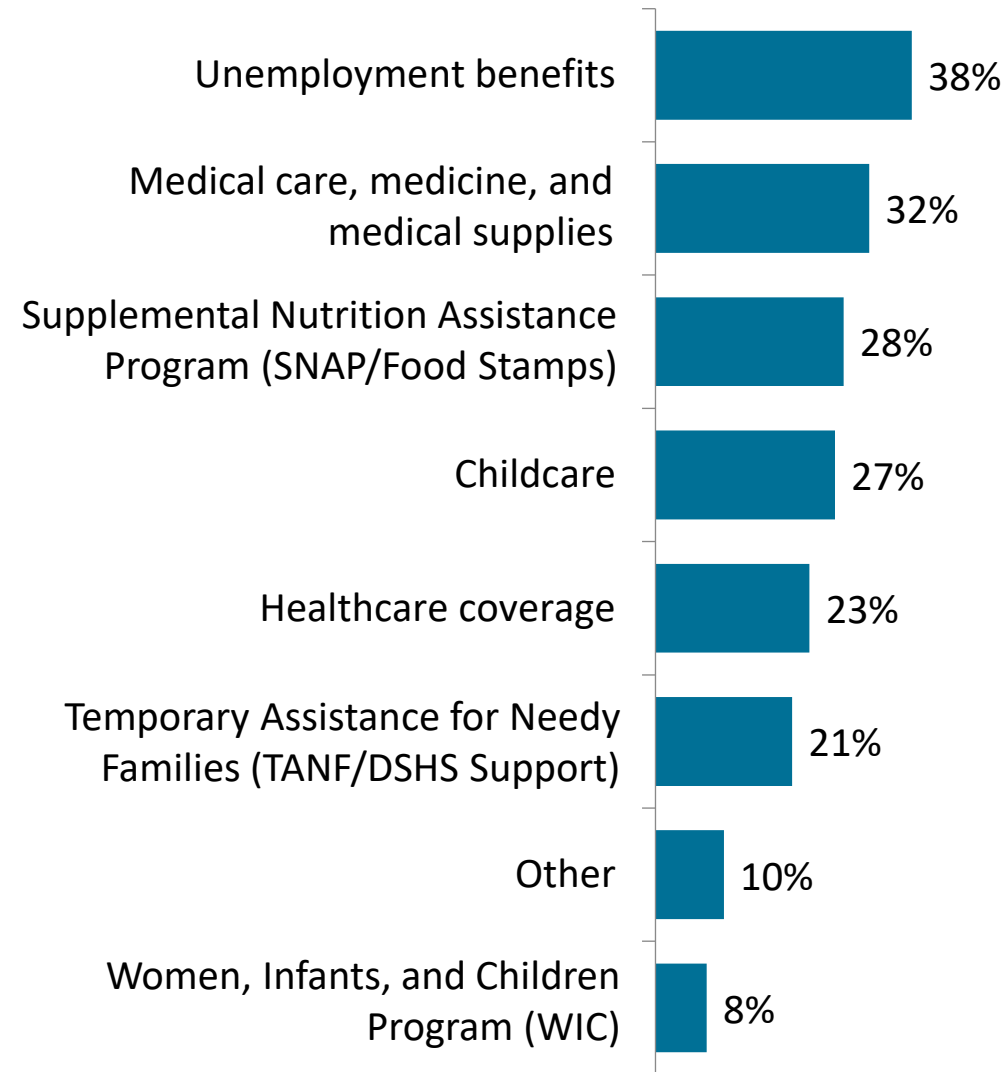
## Distance Learning Access and Education Support



# Access to Benefits and Resources

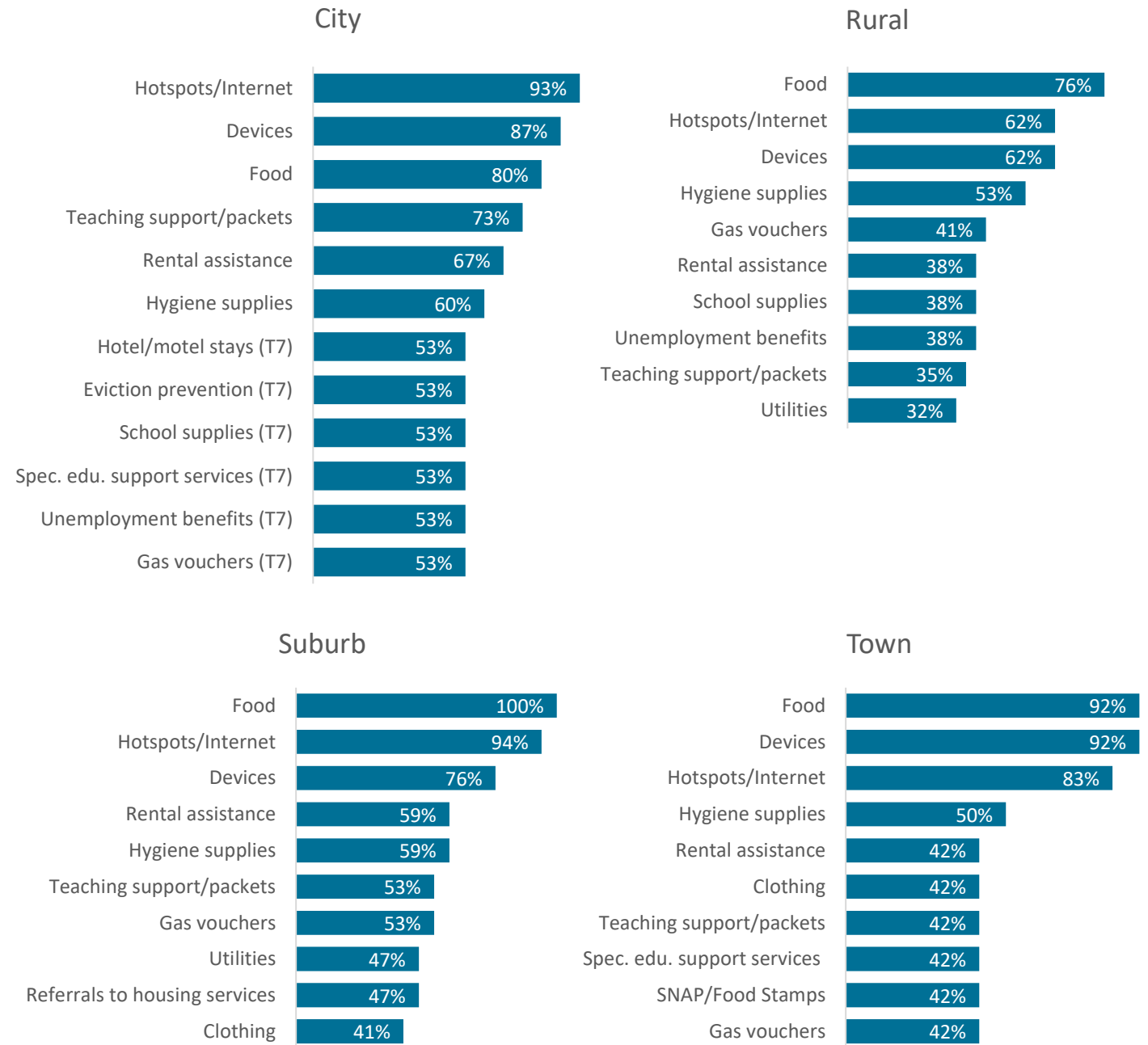
- Unemployment benefits (38%) were the most cited need in this category.

## Access to Benefits and Resources



# Location Type

- Liaisons in all geographic areas identified food, hotspots/internet access, devices, hygiene supplies, rental assistance, teaching support/ packets, and gas vouchers as their top 10 needs.
- Food, hotspots/internet access, and devices were three most cited needs in each location type.
- The number of needs identified by at least 50% of respondents was higher in cities (12) compared to suburbs (7), rural areas (4), and towns (4).



# What Districts are Doing: A Qualitative Overview

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- 63 respondents provided narrative responses.
- Narratives from respondents reflected similar trends shown in the Identified Needs chart.

**Food/Basic Needs:** Some districts are delivering meals in-person, distributing food along bus routes, filling backpacks with groceries for the weekend, and collaborating with food banks to increase resources and distribution. They have also been mapping out community centers with available food for students and their families to access.

**Educational Access/Technology:** Some districts are distributing devices, such as tablets and phones. They are also increasing internet access by creating hot spots, offering Wi-Fi in district parking lots, and mapping out Wi-Fi locations in communities. In addition to technological access, education packets are being paired with food deliveries to encourage academic engagement.

**Outreach:** Liaisons are connecting with students and their families by phone, text, email, social media, Google Voice, and Zoom. Home visits are still occurring but are very rare. Resources are shared on school and district websites, community list serves, handouts at meal sites, robocalls, and newly established COVID directories.

**Partnership:** Districts are primarily working with foodbanks while some have also been collaborating with housing partners. Other partnerships that districts have built include those with foster care advocates, health departments, faith communities, and homeless coalitions.

# Promising Practices

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- We are seeing formation of new and creative community partnerships.
  - There is an increased focus to address family needs.
  - Districts are reaching out to hear from those most impacted by COVID-19.
- Local motel staff are coordinating with districts' McKinney-Vento staff to help with outreach to families.
  - Districts are working with community partners to drop off resources to quarantined households and providing vouchers, such as Amazon credit, for food and basic needs.
  - Districts are offering free childcare through partnerships with their local Boys and Girls Clubs.
  - Districts surveyed students and families to help identify local needs.

# What's Not Showing Up

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- Equity is deeply under-represented in districts' narratives.
- We need to redefine what basic needs mean for students and families.
- In the effort to stabilize housing during this crisis, we are tasked with reimagining what partnerships with systems could look like.

Topics not mentioned include:

- English Language Learners
- Students living with disabilities
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Equity
- Clear housing connections resulting in shelter, safe quarantine spaces, and/or permanent housing

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