

Resources for School Districts Impacted by Wildfires & Other Natural Disasters

Background

Unfortunately, school districts across Washington have experience navigating wildfires, flooding, and other unforeseen circumstances that impact our schools. Districts that are impacted by wildfires and other unforeseen situations have multiple options for support and resources available. The list below is not exhaustive—districts are encouraged to contact OSPI or their regional educational service district with additional questions or needs.

Spokane-area Resources

The [Spokane Complex Wildfire Response Resources](#) website, compiled by Spokane Public Schools and other local partners, serves as a one-stop-shop of resources for those impacted by the August 2026 Spokane-area wildfires.

School Meals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved OSPI's summer meal program waivers to support operations during unhealthy air quality conditions caused by wildfires. In anticipation of potential impacts during the 2026–27 school year, OSPI is also requesting USDA waiver flexibility to support schools affected by unanticipated closures or operational disruptions related to wildfires and other emergency conditions. These flexibilities can help ensure students continue to have access to school meals while allowing districts to respond to local circumstances.

School Day Waivers

Washington state requires school districts to provide 180 school days and a district-wide average of at least 1,027 instructional hours each year. As communities recover from wildfires, some school buildings may not be operable before the planned start of the school year for a variety of reasons. Unforeseen emergencies causing temporary school facility closures may be covered under an [Emergency School Closure Waiver](#) (see also [Chapter 392-129 WAC](#)), so that a school closure does not result in the loss of state funding. For additional information on Emergency School Closure Waivers, please visit OSPI's [180-Day School Year Waivers webpage](#).



Federal Funding

The U.S. Department of Education manages the School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) grant, which is intended to be used for short-term, education-related services to support recovery after traumatic events that disrupt the learning environment, including wildfires. Common eligible supports include targeted mental health services; overtime for teachers, counselors, and other staff; substitute teachers and personnel as needed; emergency transportation; technical assistance to help develop an appropriate crisis response; and transportation or other costs associated with operating schools at an alternative site, such as leasing temporary space to replace damaged facilities.

If your district applies for this grant, please let the OSPI team know so we can keep our congressional delegation informed. For information on applying for a disaster-related Project SERV grant, please contact maria.rowan@ed.gov.

Services for Students who are Displaced

Students impacted by wildfires may be eligible for federal McKinney-Vento services. Students may qualify for additional support if they are:

- Temporarily displaced due to fires.
- Staying with relatives, neighbors, or friends (doubled-up).
- Relocated to hotels, motels, or emergency shelters.
- Living in inadequate housing due to fire damage (e.g., damage in need of repair).

Districts with McKinney-Vento subgrants may use their funds to support students and families displaced by wildfires through short-term, temporary emergency housing under certain conditions. Please see [the U.S. Department of Education's recent Dear Colleague Letter](#) for more information, as well as updated [federal, non-regulatory guidance](#). Visit the [Disaster Preparation and Response webpage](#) from the National Center for Homeless Education for more resources.

Other resources for students and families seeking immediate assistance include:

- [211](#): Resources for housing, transportation, food, and crisis support.
- [The Red Cross](#): Emergency shelter, supplies, and disaster relief services.
- [Washington State Department of Health](#): Resources by county for weather-related emergency services including emergency shelters, warming centers, and more.

Health Impacts from Smoke Exposure

While schools are closed for summer, many are operating summer programs and/or preparing for school to start, and these resources can help schools, staff, students, and families reduce smoke exposure and protect their health. To learn more, explore wildfire smoke [Wildfire smoke resources for schools](#); [Washington Children and Youth Activities Guide for Air Quality](#); [Improving Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality during Wildfire Smoke Events](#); [Wildfire Smoke Guidance Summary: School Closures in Washington](#); and [How to make your own clean air plan](#) for sharing

with families. The link for this and versions in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean can be found on [the Department of Ecology's Wildfire Smoke webpage](#).

Mental Health & Basic Needs

Washington state is offering a range of crisis, mental health, basic-needs, and wildfire recovery resources to those impacted by wildfires, including [mental health crisis support \(988\)](#); [help with groceries, housing, utilities and more \(Washington 2-1-1\)](#); and [health support \(Community Care Hubs\)](#). For students, families, and staff affected by wildfires, resources include [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#); Psychological First Aid, [Disaster Distress Helpline for Immediate Crisis Counseling | SAMHSA](#), and guidance for talking with children about disasters and wildfire smoke. [After the Fire WA](#) serves as a centralized recovery hub connecting wildfire survivors, landowners, businesses, and communities with practical recovery resources.

Maintaining Special Education Services

If wildfire repair and recovery impacts special education service delivery, districts should consider whether changes in the student's circumstances, access to educational services, or ability to participate in instruction affect the student's progress toward their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. Districts should review available progress-monitoring data and other information to determine whether the student is continuing to make expected progress and whether changes in services, supports, accommodations, or instructional approaches may be needed. Districts should also consider how to maintain the provision of FAPE, including special education and related services, during the disruption and document any interruptions in services that may affect student progress or require follow-up. For assistance, contact OSPI's Special Education team at speced@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6075.