



Communities
In Schools®

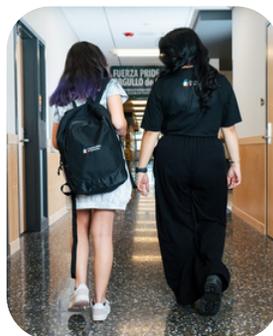
Washington

2026
Frequently
Asked
Questions



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1. About Us

1a. What is Communities In Schools (CIS)?

Communities In Schools is a national nonprofit that works inside schools to connect students and families with the resources they need to thrive. We focus on breaking down barriers, like hunger, housing insecurity, or lack of access to health care, so every student has a real opportunity to succeed in school and in life. We do this through wraparound services called Integrated Student Supports (ISS).

1b. What is CIS Washington (CISWA), and how is it different from local affiliates?

CIS Washington is the state office. We don't place staff in schools directly; instead, we provide backbone support to 12 affiliates. Our role is to strengthen, connect, and grow the network by providing training, policy and advocacy, grant management, data analysis and impact, and opportunities for peer learning. We make sure affiliates have the tools and resources they need to operate effective, sustainable programs in their communities.



1c. Where does CIS provide support across the state?

CIS is in more than 200 schools across Washington, from large urban districts to small rural communities. CISWA provides statewide leadership and coordination so all students, no matter their zip code, benefit from strong, connected local affiliates.

1d. What does CISWA do at the state level to influence policy and systems change?

We advocate for policies that expand educational equity, address basic needs, and support whole-child approaches in schools. By bringing local voices and statewide data together, we help policymakers understand what students and families need most.

1e. What does it mean when you say CISWA provides “backbone support”?

Backbone support means we take on the behind-the-scenes work that helps affiliates thrive—building statewide relationships and partnerships, developing resources, convening and training, expanding efforts, and supporting compliance, policy, and advocacy. This allows affiliates to focus on their most important job: supporting students.



1f. What challenges are students in Washington facing today?

Students are facing rising mental health needs, food and housing insecurity, and a crisis of chronic absenteeism. Families are also navigating digital access challenges, language barriers, and systemic inequities. CIS works alongside schools to address these challenges by identifying barriers early, coordinating supports quickly, and staying with students long enough to drive meaningful progress, especially when needs are complex or ongoing.

Our work focuses on reducing chronic absenteeism, strengthening youth mental health supports, expanding digital equity and family navigation services, and addressing basic needs. We prioritize solutions that improve outcomes at scale so more students, in more communities, have consistent access to the supports they need.



1g. How can individuals, businesses, or foundations support CISWA or their local affiliate?

You can make a financial gift, become a corporate partner, volunteer, or advocate alongside us. We welcome conversations about how your values and goals can align with our mission.



1h. How is CIS funded?

CIS funding comes from a mix of philanthropy, government grants, contracts, and local fundraising. Affiliates raise money for their local programs, while CISWA raises funds to support statewide coordination, advocacy, and training. This shared funding model allows local affiliates to deliver direct student supports while CISWA strengthens quality, consistency, and long-term sustainability across the network.

1i. Why do some funders support the state office instead of local affiliates?

Funding CISWA means strengthening the entire statewide network. A gift to the state office supports training, compliance, advocacy, and growth that benefit all affiliates—and ultimately, thousands of students across Washington. It also supports systems-change work: improving how schools, districts, and cross-sector partners coordinate supports so fewer students fall through the cracks. When you fund CISWA's backbone capacity, you help ensure affiliates can deliver effective tiered supports, track outcomes, meet CIS standards, and expand into communities with the greatest unmet need.

2. Program and Outcomes

2a. What do affiliates do?

Local CIS affiliates work directly in schools by hiring and supporting site coordinators who partner with students, families, and educators every day. Affiliates raise local funds, manage programs, and deliver Integrated Student Supports tailored to their communities. While CISWA focuses on building the statewide network, affiliates focus on serving students in their schools.



2b. What is the Integrated Student Supports (ISS) model?

The ISS model (often referred to as wraparound services) is our school-based approach to helping students succeed. Site coordinators work inside schools to identify needs and connect students with tailored supports—everything from tutoring and mentoring to food, mental health services, or housing assistance. It's about treating each student as a whole person, not just a test score.

2c. How does the CIS WA Network deliver Integrated Student Supports (ISS)?

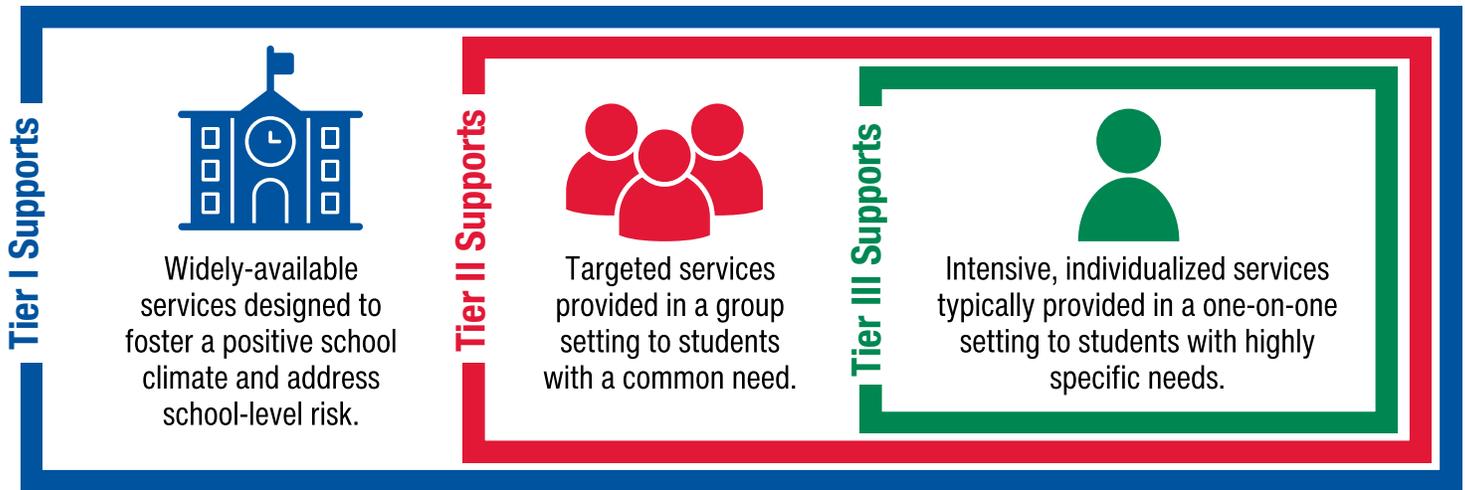
- 1. Discover Needs**
Through conversations with teachers and students, alongside robust data analysis, CIS site coordinators identify the biggest challenges facing schools and individuals.
- 2. Plan Together**
CIS site coordinators work with school administrators and educators to develop a plan that prioritizes the various academic and non-academic supports that meet students needs.
- 3. Integrate Supports**
CIS site coordinators work with school teams every day to integrate the supports identified in the planning process. That's how CIS becomes an integral part of a school community and student's lives.
- 4. Monitor, Evaluate, Adjust**
CIS site coordinators work with schools to continuously monitor student and school progress, using the data and feedback to optimize results. Continuous assessment of partners and student supports help us increase our impact.

2d. How is CIS different from other youth-serving or education organizations?

- CIS is embedded in schools every day and is the largest provider of individual student supports both in Washington and nationwide. We partner closely with teachers, counselors, and families, addressing barriers that hinder learning.
- Our long-term, relationship-based approach makes us unique—we're there for students not just once, but over time, building trust and consistency.
- We don't duplicate what already exists—CIS is designed to collaborate with community-based partners and fill critical gaps, helping schools and families access and navigate the supports that are already available.
- Because many barriers are rooted in systemic inequities, CISWA also invests in systems-change work—strengthening the conditions that help students thrive across entire schools, districts, and regions(not just one student at a time)

2e. What are your tiers of support?

CIS provides three tiers of support:



- Tier 1: Whole-school supports like family engagement nights, school supply drives, or mental health awareness campaigns.
- Tier 2: Targeted group interventions such as social-emotional learning groups, mentoring circles, girls empowerment clubs, lunch buddies or tutoring. The goal is to create a sense of belonging.
- Tier 3: Intensive, individualized case management for students facing the most significant barriers to success.

2f. Who does CIS serve?

We focus on students furthest from educational justice. In Washington, that includes low-income students, youth of color, English language learners, migrants, and students experiencing homelessness.

2g. What kinds of supports do students and families receive?

Supports range from basic needs like food and clothing to more complex services like housing referrals, mental health counseling, or digital literacy training. We also create whole-school supports, like family engagement events, resource drives or leadership programs, that strengthen the school community and culture.

Tier 2 supports help students build belonging and connection through small-group experiences (for example: mentoring groups, lunch buddies, tutoring, empowerment groups, and other student-driven clubs or circles). These groups are designed to meet needs the school day doesn't always have capacity to address and CIS helps coordinate space, structure, and access so students can connect around shared interests or shared experiences.

Our most individualized supports are tier 3 which is case management and can really be any type of service that a young person or family needs. Tier 3 supports are student-led and goal-based: students identify what they want to work toward, and CIS walks alongside them, coordinating referrals, removing barriers, and staying engaged over time. This tier includes parent consent so we can work with the entire family.

2h. How many students are impacted by CIS in Washington each year?

In the 2023–2024 school year, CIS provided individualized supports to more than 6,200 students and reached over 107,000 students through schoolwide programs—about 10% of all public school students in Washington.

In 2024-2025 school year, CIS provided individualized support to more than 6,500 students and reached over 145,000 students through schoolwide programs in over 210 schools across almost 50 districts.

2i. You describe CIS as having a data-driven, proven model. What does that mean in practice?

Communities In Schools is a data-driven organization, meaning we use information to guide decisions, strengthen our services, and demonstrate impact. Data helps us identify needs early, adjust supports in real time, and ask better questions about what's working, who needs support, what barriers are emerging, and how our interventions are helping.

2j. What outputs do students achieve with the support of CIS?

Students supported by CIS demonstrate higher attendance, improved behavior, and stronger academic performance. Most importantly, the majority of students we serve stay in school and graduate, prepared for what comes next.

- 99% of our K-11 stayed in school during the 2024-25 school year
- 87% of our seniors graduated or received a GED
- 72.5% of student met or made progress on their attendance goals
- 84% met or made progress on their academic goals
- 91% met or made progress on their behavior goals
- 92% met or made progress on their social-emotional goals

Link to data work: [Our Impact - Communities In Schools of Washington](#)

2k. Has there been any research to confirm that CIS's model drives long-term success?

A study conducted by Opportunity Insights in partnership with the EdRedesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education finds that the Communities In Schools® (CIS®) model of integrated student supports helps high-risk students in CIS schools improve standardized test scores, raise graduation rates and increase earnings in adulthood. [Learn more about the key findings here.](#)

The study demonstrates that CIS' relationship-driven approach, refined over nearly 50 years, drives outcomes that shape students' future lives, including:

- Improved standardized test scores for struggling students
- Substantial gains in high school graduation and college enrollment. Three years of CIS exposure raises high school graduation rates for students by 5.2% and two-year college enrollment by 9.1%
- Advanced economic mobility. Three years of CIS exposure increases earnings at age 27 by 4.3% (\$1,140) annually, translating to more than \$75,000 in additional lifetime earnings (\$36,000 in present-day value)
- Strong return on public investment. Three years of CIS support—approximately \$3,000 per student—generates \$7,100 in lifetime federal tax revenue, yielding a \$2.36 return for every dollar invested.

2l. What is the new CIS campaign “Being Present”?

“Being Present” is a national campaign highlighting the importance of showing up—for students, for each other, and for our communities. It also raises awareness about chronic absenteeism and the urgent need to ensure students are in school and engaged. Our goal is to reduce chronic absenteeism by 50% in 5 years. So far, we've learned that when CIS is embedded in a school for 2 years or more, chronic absenteeism is reduced by over 6%.

3. Additional Information and Resources

Mission

Our mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

Vision

Our vision is that every student in Washington, no matter their background, has the opportunity to thrive. That means strengthening what works inside schools today and improving how systems coordinate support across schools, districts, and community partners tomorrow.

Discover CISWA



Annual Report



Ways to Give

