

## ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION – COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION COVID-19 Response Overview – Current as of April 17, 2020

In response to the ongoing outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in Washington state, the DSHS Community Services Division (CSD) has been rapidly identifying and implementing waivers from federal and state requirements and making policy and service delivery changes to help meet the needs of our clients and staff.

### **BASIC FOOD:**

The Community Services Division, the Home and Community Services Division and the Developmental Disabilities Administration of DSHS issued emergency food supplements for March and April benefits, starting April 4, 2020. Congress approved [supplemental funding](#) for recipients of food assistance in March and April 2020 due to the impacts of COVID-19. Recipients will get the difference between their regular monthly benefit and the maximum amount for their household size. For example, a two-person household that typically gets \$200 per month in food benefits will receive an additional \$155 in emergency benefits for March and April, bringing the monthly total to \$355. For more information, please see the [FAQs](#), which have been translated in eight supported languages.

**Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET)** - All BFET programs and services continue to be available to clients and efforts continue to offer support remotely.

**Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD)** - An injunction to the new ABAWD waiver rules has been approved in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clients in all counties, including King County, will be temporarily granted good cause based on current partner and employer closures.

We continue to offer referrals to any ABAWD client who is not participating in work or work like activities. Most State Board Community and Technical College ABAWD navigators are continuing to work virtually with clients.

### **DISASTER CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DCAP):**

On April 17, 2020, DSHS will begin administering the Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP). The Governor's declaration of a statewide emergency enables DSHS to offer the DCAP program to people who are not eligible for other cash programs. The assistance is available to all Washington families and people without children who meet the income and resource limits of the program.

To be eligible for DCAP, a one person household must have less than \$363.00 in income after deductions are applied in the month of application. If an individual has no income and is resource eligible, they may qualify for the maximum payment amount of \$363.00 in DCAP. The attached FAQ will be translated into supported languages and posted at [Changes in response to COVID-19](#).

### **TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)/WORKFIRST:**

**Time Limit Extensions** – Effective April 1, 2020, DSHS expanded the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families 60-month Time Limit Extension to support families experiencing hardships due to the COVID-19 emergency. Families who exhausted 60 months on TANF cash assistance and are experiencing hardships due to COVID-19 will not be denied benefits.

**Suspending the WorkFirst Sanction Process, Including Home Visits** – Effective March 16, 2020, DSHS temporarily suspended WorkFirst sanction reduction or termination penalties. WorkFirst services will be offered each month; however, if a participant does not continue to engage in their activity, no adverse action will be taken as a result of non-participation. Participants have good cause for non-participation since it is due to an event outside of their control. This also suspends the need for a home visit by our staff as part of the sanction process. Clients who closed in sanction will not have to cure sanction before being eligible for the cash grant.

**Exempting WorkFirst Participation for Good Cause** – Effective March 16, 2020, all WorkFirst participants are temporarily exempt from required participation. Clients can choose to continue participation, and to the extent possible, we will continue case management, but participation will not be required.

**Suspending Home Visits for the Teen Living Assessment** – In compliance with federal law, DSHS conducts a Teen Living Assessment, which may include a home visit for all unmarried, minor parents applying for TANF cash assistance, to determine eligibility and offer support to the household. Effective March 16, 2020, the home visits are suspended until further notice. WorkFirst Social Service Specialists are responsible to make their best effort to determine a safe living environment and situation, for the teen and their child, by completing all required assessment screening tools in the office or over the phone.

**Telephone WorkFirst Orientations** - All WorkFirst Orientations are being conducted via the telephone. This expands a process to conduct the orientations desk-side, which was recently piloted in a number of Community Services Offices.

**Continuing Payment for WorkFirst Work-Study and Community Jobs Participants** - Community Jobs and WorkFirst work-study participants will continue to be employed and receive payment even if they are temporarily unable to participate due to emergency operations changes or closures as a result of COVID-19. This aligns with directions for the federal/state work-study participants.

### **AGED BLIND OR DISABLED (ABD)/HOUSING ESSENTIAL NEEDS (HEN) REFERRAL PROGRAMS:**

Effective March 18, 2020, DSHS suspended treatment monitoring and good cause for participation in medical treatment for ABD, participation in substance use assessment and treatment and participation in vocational rehabilitation.

Effective March 26, 2020, DSHS postponed ABD disability reviews, modified HEN referral incapacity reviews and expanded medical evidence rules for eligibility purposes.

Mental Incapacity Evaluation contracts have been amended to allow for telephonic psychological evaluations.

**CLASSIC MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY:**

Apple Health renewals that have not been completed for March and April are being extended for three months. Benefits will also not close for recipients of Apple Health unless the individual requests their benefits be terminated, the individual is no longer a Washington state resident or the individual is deceased.

Additional changes regarding Classic Medicaid eligibility to support clients include:

- Reinstating Medically Needy coverage if closed for no renewal within the last 30 days.
- Allowing a 30-day extension to provide verification of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation of income and resources at application, renewal and change of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation for medical expenses incurred needed to meet spenddown amounts for purposes of medically needy eligibility.

**CSD SERVICE DELIVERY:**

Effective March 26, 2020, full services are available by phone through the Customer Service Contact Center at 877-501-2233. The Customer Service Contact Center can assist people with:

- Applying for benefits or completing an eligibility review without filling out a paper or online form.
- Completing an interview for benefits.
- Getting case information or reporting changes.
- Completing a mid-certification review.
- Requesting replacement of an EBT card.
- Reaching a WorkFirst case manager or social worker.

A few in-person services are available by appointment in CSO lobbies for a limited number of clients to pick up:

- An EBT card, when the individual has general delivery mail services only and for certain expedited food recipients. All other EBT cards will be mailed from the vendor or through a local office mail process. Clients may contact EBT Customer Service at 888-328-9271 for EBT card replacements.
- Emergency support services, when mailing those services is not an option.

People may continue to drop off paperwork via drop boxes, where available. Paperwork will be picked up daily and routed for processing.



**Washington Connection** - Clients can submit applications, reviews and mid-certifications online for program assistance at [WashingtonConnection.org](http://WashingtonConnection.org). They can also report changes and find other local services.