

State Benefits During COVID-19

What You Need to Know

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Benefits Legal Assistance – Solid Ground

Who we are & what we do

- Free legal assistance to individuals and families.
- State public benefits issues related to the following programs:
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Food
 - Healthcare
 - Childcare
 - Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD)



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- **Extending Program Benefit Time Limits:** Special extension for 60-month program time limit.
- **WorkFirst participation is again required on 9/1:** TANF participants will be required to restart WorkFirst participation effective 9/1
- **WorkFirst Orientation:** Orientations will be conducted at home, either on the computer or via telephone, and in-person orientations have been suspended.
- **Restarting benefits when terminated in sanctions:** Participants who were terminated from TANF in the sanctions process will no longer have to cure their sanction prior to restarting TANF benefits.

Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD)

- DSHS continues to suspend the good cause process until further notice while the public health emergency may still be in effect. This means good cause for participation in medical treatment for ABD, participation in substance use assessment and treatment and participation in vocational rehabilitation.
- 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.
- Effective May 12, 2021, DSHS resumed case planning activities for ABD recipients who entered the caseload after May 12, 2021. but as long as the Public Health Emergency is in place, DSHS will not be sanctioning clients.

Additional Basic Food Assistance Benefits

- **Maximum Food Benefits:** Most recipients have received the maximum amount of food benefit for their household size since March of last year. As of now, this temporary change is being extended on a monthly basis. Additionally, the food benefit amount has been increased by 15%.
- The 15% increase is set to expire Sept. 30, 2021. **But** Biden administration recently announced a long-term increase so benefits are expected to increase by 25% for households in October 2021.
- **Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents** – ABAWD rules are still suspended so ABAWD clients who were required to participate in certain Work Requirements are exempt. The waiver is in effect from June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)

- In June 2021 P-EBT was approved for **Summer 2021** and **children under age 6**
- **Summer Benefits:**
 - *Who is Eligible:* Students registered and enrolled in June 2021 in a Washington school that normally participates in the National School Lunch Program / School Breakfast Program and eligible for free or reduced-priced meals
 - *Summer Benefit Amount:* one-time, lump-sum Summer P-EBT benefit of **\$375**.
 - Automatically go onto existing P-EBT cards in July 2021.
 - This includes students who graduated in June 2021.

Families have until August 31, 2021 to submit Free and Reduced Price-Meal Application to receive Summer P-EBT.
- **Children Under 6:**
 - *Who is Eligible:* Under age 6, in a household with active Basic Food Assistance account between Oct. 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Do not need to participate in free or reduced-price school meals, enrolled in a school, or enrolled in a child care center
 - DSHS will automatically send a special P-EBT card to eligible families.

Public Charge rule does not apply to P-EBT benefits and will not impact immigration status.

Follow up on cash payments

Child Tax Credit

- Available to most families effective July 15th with monthly payments to follow.
- Payments will be \$250-\$300 per child depending on age of the child.
- Payments are automatic if tax returns were filed in 2019 or 2020.
- Families will need to use the [non-filer tool](#) if taxes were not filed, if the family has not yet used the tool for the Economic Impact Payments, or if child was born after most recent taxes were filed.

Economic Impact Payment

- **Remind clients to file their taxes.** Almost everyone is required to file taxes to be eligible for a check. Non-filers must enter their payment info via this [web tool](#)
- **Check for other formats.** Economic Impact Payments may also be mailed in the form of a [pre-paid debit card](#), which come in nondescript white envelopes
- **Still no check?** Help clients to troubleshoot using the ["Get my payment"](#) tool

CSO Office Update

- DSHS Community Service Offices are currently closed to the public.
- All communication with DSHS office has been pushed to the phone lines.
- There is currently a discussion of DSHS moving to a primarily telephonic service model post pandemic.
- If you have had a difficult experience with this service model, please get in contact!

Resources

- White House reference website for the Child Tax Credit
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/child-tax-credit/>
- Poverty Action's fact sheets on federal stimulus checks: <https://povertyaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Stimulus-check-FAQ.pdf> and unemployment benefits: <https://povertyaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Unemployment-FAQ.pdf>
- DSHS policy changes in response to COVID-19:
<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/policy-changes-response-covid-19>

Questions? We're here to help!

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