



## Washington State Public Benefits COVID-19 Updates

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, our state has made temporary changes to public benefits systems that may impact your ability to get or keep state benefits. Please see below for updated information. These changes are temporary and will be in place until the state indicates otherwise. These updates are **current as of April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020**; be sure to check back in for up-to-date changes.

### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):

- **Extending Program Benefit Time Limits:** Effective April 1, 2020, all TANF applicants and current recipients will be granted a Time Limit Extensions (TLE) when they reach the 60-month time limit for program participation. This extension will remain in place for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. If applicants have been previously denied TANF due to exceeding the 60-month time limit, they are encouraged to apply again.
- **Suspending WorkFirst Sanction Process:** All WorkFirst sanctions and terminations are suspended as of March 16, 2020.
- **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. Participants should contact their WorkFirst case manager or apply at [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org) to restart benefits.
- **Suspending WorkFirst Participation:** TANF participants are not required to participate in WorkFirst activities. While WorkFirst activities are still available, a participant's benefits will not be impacted for failure to participate.
- **WorkFirst Orientation:** Orientations will be conducted at home, either on the computer or via telephone, and in-person orientations have been suspended.

### Basic Food Assistance:

**ABAWD:** Prior to COVID-19, Able Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWDs) received Basic Food Assistance for three months and then were terminated unless participants met certain work requirements or other criteria, including

- An inability to work due to a physical or mental limitation;
- Caring for a minor child;
- Pregnancy.

However, **participants in all counties will be temporarily able to continue receiving those benefits and will not be terminated after three months.** This means that participants will not be penalized if they are unable to meet the work requirement.

**Additional Supplemental Food Benefits Available:** Many recipients who receive Basic Food benefits will have additional funds available for March and April 2020. Most recipients will receive the maximum amount of food benefit for their household size for the months of March and April, regardless of income level. If a participant has an overpayment in place that family is not eligible for the additional benefits. Supplements for March should be deposited in early April and April supplements will be deposited at the time of the regular April benefit deposit date.

**Aged, Blind, and Disabled:** The state will not be enforcing sanctions due to the participant's inability to follow required treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and/or SSI requirements.

**Healthcare:** A special open enrollment period is currently available to enroll in health benefits. People can enroll in healthcare through May 8, 2020 by visiting <https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org/>. People can still apply for Medicaid/Apple Health at any time.

**If you are having an issue obtaining or maintaining your state public benefits, please contact the Benefits Legal Assistance Program at Solid Ground. We can be reached by phone at 206.694.6742 or [benefitslegalhelp@solid-ground.org](mailto:benefitslegalhelp@solid-ground.org)**