



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 29th, 2020**; be sure to check back in for up-to-date changes.

Update to All Programs (TANF, ABD, HEN, SNAP):

- As of April 24th, 2020, any individual or family that has a certification period for their benefits ending in April or May will automatically have their benefits extended an additional six months to October or November 2020.
- Also, DSHS will waive the mid-certification review requirements for the remainder of April and May and participants will continue to receive benefits through the end of their certification period **as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria**.

****New Benefit** Disaster Cash Assistance Program:**

As of April 17th, 2020, the **Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP)** will become available to some **individuals and families** in Washington State. The program provides for a **one-time cash assistance benefit for one month** to those not eligible for other cash assistance programs and meet income and resource eligibility requirements. This is available to those who do not have a social security number and individuals who are undocumented and will not impact the public charge rule if an individual or family later pursues citizenship. To apply for this benefit contact DSHS customer service at 877-501-2233 or apply online at WashingtonConnection.org

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 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.** In addition, if an ABAWD was previously terminated from food benefits after using their three months, that person is now eligible for food benefits under this temporary rule and should reapply for food benefits immediately. This means that participants will not be **penalized if they are unable to meet the work requirement and all participants will be able to continue receiving food benefits.**

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

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