

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Questions Answered about DSHS Client Data

#### Overview

##### **Annually over 2.1 million people—one-third of the state's residents—receive services from DSHS.**

Low-income families receive medical assistance and economic support. Low-income persons with disabilities receive economic, rehabilitative, medical, long-term care, and employment support. Persons with severe mental health needs or alcohol and/or alcohol/drug problems receive assessments and treatment. Abused or neglected children receive child welfare and protection. Developmentally disabled persons receive help with life supports and living arrangements. Youth who have been convicted of serious crimes receive juvenile rehabilitation services. And parents needing help with child support collections receive assistance collecting payments.

**Data connections from across the department are aligned,** resulting in an integrated, cross-agency database. Known as the Client Services Data Base—or CSDB—it contains time spans for client services, medical cost and encounter information, demographic data (sex, race/ethnicity, citizenship and death specifics), residence history, and costs for almost all agency-provided services. The database is maintained by the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division and draws from 27 different administrative systems. This database stores client service histories and descriptions for the past ten years. Incoming data are checked for validity. Before release, the data are reviewed and approved by program experts and fiscal managers.

**What's new in 2011?** A redesigned web interface makes it easier to find the report you want. Dynamic reporting features added in 2009 make finding, printing, and downloading client data easier than ever. Quick overviews of each of the nine major program areas within DSHS have also been provided ([Program Briefing Papers](#)).

**Improved Data scope.** Over 87 percent of DSHS expenditures are now in CSDB. This includes nearly all of the department's client-level services.

**What's not included?** A few client level services such as prevention programs provided to general populations and very small programs that are not tracked in automated systems are excluded. Because CSDB captures only client-level service costs, expenditures not tied to specific clients (such as licensing, quality monitoring of providers, training of foster parents, or headquarters and regional administration) are also excluded.

**Where does the data come from?** The data contained in these reports comes from the Client Services Database (CSDB) that is maintained by Research and Data Analysis (RDA), a division of DSHS. This data combines monthly extracts from DSHS case management, payment, and fiscal data systems.

**What does Client Services Database do with the data?** CSDB links service records across DSHS, providing annual summaries of DSHS services. Services of similar types, provided by each DSHS program, are combined into Report Groups.

(Each program and report group title in the report contains a hyperlink to a glossary describing the types of services included; these definitions can also be accessed from the [Client Data Homepage](#), using the [Service Glossary](#) link. To use, select the Program Title from the drop-down list, then click "View Report".)

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**Is personal client information reported?** DSHS only reports aggregate data: the numbers of clients getting groups of services and the expenditures for those clients. ***No individual or personal client data is ever reported.***

**Why are program totals less than the sum of client counts?** Client counts by report group will not add up to program totals because many clients receive more than one kind of service, so summing those numbers would count some clients more than once. Program totals are unduplicated client totals: each client is counted only once, no matter how many different services they receive.

**What does 'Use Rate' mean?** Use Rate is the percent of total population receiving DSHS services calculated by age group and geographic area. So, for example, the use rate statewide for DSHS services by Youth, aged 0-17, is:

853,554 youth in Washington receiving DSHS services in State Fiscal Year 2008  
÷ 1,577,660 youth in Washington in 2008  
= 54% Use Rate – 54% of Washington State youth receive some kind of service from DSHS.

**What dollars are reported?** Over 87 percent of DSHS expenditures are included and attributed to individual clients and service instances. Of this amount, 84 percent comes from payment systems. The remaining expenditures are derived and attributed to specific client services using available information. For example, number of bed-days in a state institution times an average daily bed rate derived from total expenditures. Expenditure information is reconciled to the state accounting system. Expenditures for capital facilities, program management, or administration are not included.

Direct service dollars for state- and federally-funded programs. Most of the expenditures—84%—come from payment records. In addition, payroll and accounting systems are used to determine costs for institutional, case management, institution and specialized services expenditures come from the state accounting system. This detail is supplemented by program specific calculations based on tax and benefit rates.

**What does 'Per Client' mean?** Dollars Per Client are averaged by dividing the total number of service dollars by the number of clients receiving that service. For example:

\$265,041,142 in Basic Food benefits to Washington Youth  
÷ 341,303 Washington Youth served by Basic Food Program in State Fiscal Year 2008  
= \$777 per client (state dollars).

**What information is used to determine where people receive services?** Reports are available at the state, county and legislative district levels of geography. Geographic location of clients is based on their home address. ***Care is taken that clients and addresses are not identifiable in any reports.***

For clients residing in an institution such as Eastern or Western State psychiatric hospital or juvenile detention facility, in some cases, the facility may be given as their home address. For example, Mason County residents receiving mental health services in a State Institution, located in Lakewood (Pierce County) or Spokane (Spokane County) are included Mason County totals. The Pierce County client counts include Pierce County residents served at Western State Hospital and clients with the institution as their home address.

**What city boundaries are used?** City Limits from the Washington State Department of Transportation.

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**Why are some clients' residences 'not determined'?** Clients counted in the category 'Client's Residence Not Determined' include clients who are homeless and clients for whom geographic data is unclear.

**Does DSHS serve people who don't live in Washington?** Only in connection with Child Support Enforcement, Child Support Enforcement client counts may include non-custodial parents living in another state or country, whose children are Washington residents, or custodial parents and children living in another state or country when the non-custodial parents are Washington residents.

**Why don't some of the rows or pages in my report have any data?** Where rows are missing from a report, it means that no one in the selected geographic area and age group received those services. In some small areas, where population is low, there may not be anyone of a particular age group who received DSHS services. In those cases, the page for that age group will be blank. Rows are also left blank in places where the population is so small that individuals might be at risk of being identified. In these cases, data is not reported.

**Didn't find the answer to your question?** Please send us a question by [e-mail](#).