

# Department of Social and Health Services



## Programs Overview

## Introduction

This handbook contains information about several public assistance programs that are available through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). DSHS administers these programs from places called Community Service Offices (CSOs). You might know these offices as Welfare offices or Food stamp offices. In the area of Pierce and Kitsap counties, there are five CSO's. Each of the five offices helps people who live in a certain area. If you apply for or receive benefits from DSHS, you will get your benefits from the office that serves the area where you live. You can look at the chart on the next page to find out what office serves the area where you live.

If after reading the handbook, you think you might be eligible for or want to apply for any of these programs, there are several ways you can do so, from applying on line to going into the local community service office and applying in person.

To apply for any of the programs offered by DSHS, you must fill out an application form. DSHS staff cannot tell whether or not you are eligible for any of the programs that are available without an application. For most of the programs offered, you must have an interview with DSHS staff so they can determine if you are eligible. These interviews usually are in person but can sometimes be done over the phone. An interview can take anywhere from one to two hours, depending on what programs you are applying for.

If you wish to apply on line, you can do so by going to the following site:  
<https://www2.wa.gov/dshs/onlinecso/applying.asp>

If you prefer, you can call and ask that an application for benefits be mailed to you. Once you complete and return the application, an interview can be scheduled.

You can also go to your local community service office and apply in person. When you apply for benefits at the CSO, if you need help filling out your application, you can tell the receptionist and they can have someone help you. If you need more information, you can call any of the community service offices and talk to someone there.

## Verification Needed for Assistance Interview

Type of Verification	TANF	BASIC FOOD	GAU	CHILDRENS MEDICAL
<b>Proof of Identification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ID Card</li> <li>● Drivers License</li> <li>● Birth Cert.</li> <li>● Passport</li> </ul>	<b>X</b> For all Household members	<b>X</b> For applicant		
<b>Proof of Citizenship</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Birth Cert.</li> <li>● Naturalization</li> <li>● Passport</li> </ul>	<b>X</b> For all Household Members	<b>X</b> Only if questionable	<b>X</b> For all HH Members	<b>X</b> For all HH Members
<b>SSN Verification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Card</li> <li>● Number (verbally given)</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Income</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pay Stubs</li> <li>● Employer Statement</li> <li>● SEMS Data</li> <li>● Collateral Contact</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Household Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statement from Landlord</li> <li>● Rental Agreement</li> <li>● Collateral Contact</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Pregnancy</b> (including estimated due date) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statement from Licensed Practitioner</li> <li>● Medical Records</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b> Client statement acceptable if they had positive test
<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bank Statements</li> </ul>	<b>X</b>			
<b>Residency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rental or Lease Agreement</li> <li>● Mortgage Papers</li> <li>● Statement from Landlord</li> <li>● Utility Statements</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Shelter Costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See above list, same apply.</li> </ul>	<b>X</b> Obligation only	<b>X</b> Including utilities		

# Washington Basic Food Program

## **Purpose**

The Washington Basic Food Program (Basic Food) helps low-income individuals and families obtain a more nutritious diet by supplementing their income with Basic Food benefits.

## **General Information**

Anyone can apply for food benefits. Food benefits are available to single persons as well as families. The benefit amount is based on the household income and certain deductions such as shelter costs, childcare costs, and child support paid for a child out of the home.

Clients access their benefits by using their Quest/EBT card at the merchant where they are making their purchases. A Quest/EBT card works like a debit card or gift card.

Food benefits can be accessed anywhere in the United States with a Quest card.

When you apply for basic food, DSHS is required to make a decision within 30 days of the date of application. In some circumstances, a decision must be made within five days of the date of application.

## **General Eligibility**

To be eligible for basic food benefits, each household member must:

- a. Be a resident of the State of Washington
- b. Meet the citizen or alien status requirements
- c. Provide their Social Security number
- d. Provide proof of identity (head of household only)
- e. Participate in the food stamp employment and training program if required
- f. Meet the eligibility criteria for strikers if they are on strike from their job

If a household lives on or near an Indian reservation and participates in a tribal food distribution program approved by Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), that household is not eligible for basic food benefits.

## **Resources**

Resources are not considered for the food benefit program unless a household member is disqualified for an intentional program violation or for failure to participate in a mandatory work program.

## **Income**

To be eligible for food benefits, households must have countable income at or below the gross and net income standards. Households that contain an elderly or disabled person only have to meet net income standards and are allowed a deduction for their medical costs.

## **How to Apply**

To apply for Basic Food, contact the Community Service Office (CSO) that serves the area where you live. You must complete an application and turn it in to the local CSO so that an interview can be completed to determine if you are eligible. You can pick up an application in person or have one mailed to you. You can also apply on line at <https://wvs2.wa.gov/dshs/onlinecso/applying.asp>

**Basic Food Standards effective 10/1/2006  
(Changes Every October)**

Column A Number of eligible AU members	Column B Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Column D Maximum Allotment	Column E 165% of the Poverty Level
1	\$1,062	\$155	\$1,348
2	1,430	284	1,815
3	1,799	408	2,283
4	2,167	518	2,750
5	2,535	615	3,218
6	2,904	738	3,685
7	3,272	816	4,153
8	3,640	932	4,620
9	4,009	1,049	5,088
10	4,378	1,166	5,556
Each Additional Member	+369	+117	+468

# Family Medicaid Programs

## PURPOSE

There are various Medicaid programs available to children and their caretakers in the State of Washington. Medicaid is the federal name for the state and federal funded medical benefit program.

## General Eligibility

The family medical programs are available to families who have an eligible child in their home and who meet income and resource guidelines. For medical programs, an “eligible child” is a child under the age of 19. Depending on a family’s income, they may or may not have to pay a premium for their medical coverage. In addition, depending on the income, the adult members of the family may or may not be eligible for coverage even though their children are covered. In some cases, families must “spend down” their excess income in order to be eligible for medical benefits. This means the family must incur medical expenses equal to their excess income amount before they can be eligible to receive any Medicaid benefits. The spend down process is similar to an insurance deductible.

**In addition to the general eligibility requirements listed above, as part of the federal deficit reduction act, effective July 1, 2006, all persons who receive benefits from a federal medical program, must provide proof of citizenship and identification as part of the eligibility criteria.**



Below are descriptions of various family Medicaid programs that are available in the State of Washington. Families will always be assigned to the program that has the broadest scope of care for their income level.

<b>Program Definition</b>	<b>Aces Coverage Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>TANF Cash</b>	<b>F01</b>	Families who are on TANF receive this type of medical. Includes medical and dental
<b>TANF Transitional Medical</b>	<b>F02</b>	Families who received TANF/SFA in 3 of the last 6 months are eligible to receive F02 for 12 months. Includes medical and dental
<b>Medical Extension</b>	<b>F03</b>	TANF terminated due to increased child support. This is a 4-month medical extension from the time TANF terminates. Includes medical and dental
<b>TANF related CN Medical</b>	<b>F04</b>	Eligible for TANF but chooses not to receive. Includes medical and dental
<b>Newborn Medical</b>	<b>F05</b>	Coverage for child born to a woman receiving Medicaid on the date of the child's birth. Covers to age 12 months
<b>Children's CN Medicaid</b>	<b>F06</b>	For Children under age 19. Has no premium or co-pay. Must review every 12 months. Includes medical and dental.
<b>Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)</b>	<b>F07</b>	This is a Federal/State funded program that covers children less than age 19 in families whose income is too high for Medicaid, but is below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. Has premiums and co-pays. Includes medical and dental.
<b>Children's Health Program</b>	<b>F08</b>	State funded program for alien children. Scope of care is the same as F06. Program may be capped if expenditures exceed appropriated budget.
<b>Alien Emergency Medical</b>	<b>F09</b>	This is for an alien child under the age of 19 or an alien adult who is the caretaker of a dependent child who has an emergent medical condition.
<b>Pregnancy Medical</b>	<b>P02</b>	Medical program providing medical care for pregnant women with family income below 185% of the federal poverty level
<b>Pregnancy Medical-Family Planning Extension</b>	<b>P05</b>	This is a medical program that provides up to 12 months of family planning services for women who were on pregnancy medical when their pregnancy ended.

# General Assistance Programs (GA-U, GA-X, GA-W)

## Purpose

The GA- programs are state funded programs that provide cash and medical assistance for persons who are unable to work due to incapacity. To meet incapacity criteria for GA, a person must be unable to work due to a mental or physical impairment. If a person is incapacitated due to chemical dependency, please see information on the ADATSA/GA-W program.

## General Information

There are three categories of General Assistance. Those categories are **1) GA-U**; for persons with short term incapacity other than drug or alcohol addiction, **2) GA-W (ADATSA)**; for drug/alcohol treatment, and **3) GA-X**, which is for clients who receive a cash, grant and appear to meet SSI criteria for Eligibility. General Assistance is available to single individuals as well as married persons without dependent children in their household. When someone applies for GA-, the department pays for a medical evaluation so that we can accurately assess whether they are medically eligible for assistance. The program includes a maximum grant amount of \$339.00 and medical benefits.

## General Eligibility

### GA-Unemployable

To be eligible for general assistance-unemployable (GA-U) benefits, a person must be incapacitated from gainful employment as a result of a physical or mental impairment that is expected to continue for at least ninety days from the date he/she applies. In addition the person must:

- a. Be at least eighteen years old, or if under eighteen, a member of a married couple
- b. Be in financial need according to GA income and resource rules
- c. Meet the general assistance citizenship/alien status requirements
- d. Provide a social security number
- e. Reside in the state of Washington
- f. Undergo a treatment and referral assessment
- g. Sign an agreement that says if they get approved for SSI for the same time period they received GA, the state gets repaid from the SSI money
- h. Not be eligible for the TANF or SFA program.

Persons residing in a public institution such as Western State Hospital may be eligible for GA-U if they meet certain age and income criteria.

## **GA-W ADATSA**

ADATSA is an acronym **for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act**. The ADATSA program provides inpatient and outpatient treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction. Clients are assessed for chemical dependency at a designated assessment center. To be eligible for this program, they must meet all of the GA-U criteria and be incapacitated by alcoholism or drug addiction. In addition, they must be currently willing to attend treatment.

## **RESOURCES**

The resource limit for the GA-U program is \$1,000. In addition, the GA-U client can have a vehicle with an equity value up to \$5000.

## **INCOME**

All available income owned or possessed by a client is considered when determining the client's eligibility and benefit level. Unearned income is counted dollar for dollar against any GA-U grant the client may be eligible for. For earned income, eighty-five dollars plus one half of the remaining gross income is disregarded when determining their benefit amount.

# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families TANF

## **PURPOSE**

TANF is a program that provides cash assistance to clients who care for children and to pregnant clients.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The TANF program is meant to assist families who are experiencing periods of unemployment or under-employment. The TANF program is also available for children who are living with certain other adults who are not their parents and are not responsible for their support. In this type of situation, the adult applying for the child(ren) is called “non-needy”. The income and resources of a non-needy adult are not considered when determining eligibility of a needy child. TANF is a grant program, which means that the funds a family receives under this program do not have to be repaid. There is a maximum 60-month lifetime limit on TANF for adult household members.

Grant standards for TANF are based on several factors including household size, whether or not a household is responsible for shelter costs, resources and any income the household may have. When considering a family’s eligibility for TANF, with a few limited exceptions, all household income is counted towards the grant amount. Unearned income is considered dollar for dollar while earned income is allowed certain limited deductions from the gross amount before it is counted.

TANF benefits are made available to clients on the first day of each month. Rather than checks being mailed to the clients, funds are now available through an electronic funds transfer system. Clients access their benefits using their Quest/EBT card. TANF benefits can usually be accessed at ATM and Point of Sale machines nationwide.

## **GENERAL ELIGIBILITY**

Whenever a family applies for TANF, they must meet certain eligibility criteria. In addition to meeting eligibility criteria, there are certain responsibilities that the adult household members must fulfill.

Eligibility criteria include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Must meet citizenship/alien status requirements
- b. Must live in the state of Washington
- c. Cannot live in a public institution
- d. Must provide the department with social security numbers for all household members
- e. Must cooperate with the Division of Child Support in obtaining child support from absent parents
- f. Must meet income limits as required by Washington Administrative Code
- g. Must meet resource requirements as required by Washington Administrative Code
- h. Must participate in the \*\*Workfirst program.
- i. Adults who do not have a child living with them must be pregnant to be considered for TANF eligibility

## RESOURCES

TANF applicants and recipients must not have resources that exceed the allowed limits. These limits are different amounts for applicants, people who are applying for benefits, than for recipients; people who are already on the TANF program. Below is a list of some of the resources that do and do not count for the TANF program. **It is not all-inclusive by any means.** It is simply to give you an idea of what the department looks at when determining eligibility.

Some of the resources that count for TANF include:

- Cash on hand
- Money in checking and savings accounts
- Money market accounts or CDs less any withdrawal penalty
- Available retirement or pension funds, less any withdrawal penalty
- Sales contracts
- Equity value in excess of \$5000 for one vehicle

Some of the resources that DO NOT count for TANF include:

- Home that the applicant/recipient lives in
- Personal effects such as furniture and clothing
- Bona fide loans, including student loans
- Basic Food benefits
- Property/equipment used for self-employment
- Equity value of a vehicle that is less than \$5000 of the fair market value

# INCOME

To be eligible for TANF, a family's countable income must be below the grant standard for their family size. When looking at eligibility for TANF, the department must consider all income owned or possessed by a family to determine a family's eligibility and benefit level. When we look at income, we first consider who owns it and whether or not it is available to the household. When a household has income that we must budget against their grant amount, it is budgeted prospectively, which means we estimate the household's income based on all available monies and then budget what we can reasonable expect the household to receive.

Some of the income types that must be counted against a TANF grant include:

- Earned income from the adult members of a household
- L and I payments
- Unemployment payments
- Disability payments
- Social Security benefits
- Child support or alimony
- Retirement benefits
- Tribal Gaming monies

Some of the income types that DO NOT count include:

- SSI payments
- Federal earned income tax credit (EITC) payments
- Certain Foster care payments
- Bona fide loans
- Energy Assistance payments
- Certain Native American benefits such as Per Capita payments

Just as the resource list is not all-inclusive, neither is the list of counted and exempt income. It is only included to make you aware that there are many types of income that clients can receive and many ways to look at it. In order to accurately determine eligibility and budget income, you must receive numerous additional hours of training so that you can have an understanding of the complex rules that govern the programs the department administers.

**\*\*Workfirst is the program Washington State established to help TANF clients achieve self-support. Under the Workfirst program, all able-bodied adults who receive a TANF grant must either be looking for work or preparing for work. The program has many components designed to assist clients with job seeking and job readiness. Clients who fail to participate are subject to reduced or grant amounts and payees who are assigned to administer their TANF funds or possible termination of benefits.**

# Working Connections Child Care

## What it is:

The Working Connections Child Care Program helps families to pay for child care.

## Who is eligible:

Households with parents who are working, or are participating in a DSHS approved work activity and whose children meet citizenship requirements.

Kinds of child care DSHS can help pay for:

- Licensed or certified child care centers
- Licensed or certified family child care homes
- Relatives who provide care in their own homes
- Adults who come to your home to provide care

## All child care providers must pass a criminal background inquiry

## To apply for WCCC:

- Call or come in to your [local Community Services Office](#). Apply for services as soon as you know you will need them. Your benefits start no sooner than the day you apply. You can also apply online using our [Online Application for Services](#).
- You will be given an application for your provider to complete.
- You will also be required to provide a copy of your in-home/relative provider's social security card and photo I.D.

Once you are approved for WCCC you will get an award letter. This letter will tell you the dates you are eligible for WCCC and the amount of your co-payment.

## Income Requirements:

Your eligibility for WCCC is determined by your household's income, and the number of people in your family. Your child care costs (or co-payment) is determined on a sliding scale.

For example, a three-person household with countable monthly income of \$1100 would have a \$15 co-pay. If the same household had countable income of \$1,675 they would have a \$50 co-pay. A three-person household with countable income of \$2,000 would have a co-pay of \$94.

WCCC INCOME TABLE	
If family size is	Eligible if countable income is under
1	\$1,634
2	\$2,200
3	\$2,766
4	\$3,334
5	\$3,900
6	\$4,466

### Need help finding childcare?

You can get help from your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. To locate the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency in your area, call 1-800-446-1114.

*As with all our programs, the only way to know for sure if you're eligible is to apply.*

