

COVID-19
Response

SFY

2020

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our programs and services.

ESA Briefing
Book

Overview

With the first COVID-19 case in the United States confirmed in late January 2020, Washington State became a focal point of the health crisis impacting communities around the globe. Governor Inslee declared a state of emergency on February 29, 2020, followed by a national state of emergency declared by President Trump on March 13, 2020. Restrictions put in place to protect the health and safety of individuals and communities across the state required many businesses to temporarily close and both the public and private sectors to redesign how they delivered essential services.

Those changes, along with the greater economic impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, resulted in an unprecedented and sudden increase in the unemployment rate. Complicating matters even more, an increase of identity fraud nationwide required the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) to put thousands of weekly claims on hold while they investigated and coordinated their response with state and federal entities. This hold included flagging and freezing accounts linked to potential fraud, which delayed timely access to unemployment benefits for a significant number of eligible individuals. Many impacted households turned to the Economic Services Administration (ESA) for assistance to meet their basic needs as they waited for their unemployment claims to be processed.

This section describes ESA's response to the pandemic through June 30, 2020 and includes select highlights provided by the Community Services Division (CSD), the Division of Child Support (DCS), and the Division of Program Integrity (DPI), illustrating the challenges ESA faced and how the administration navigated through those unprecedented challenges to support both customers and staff.

Community Services Division

Operational Impacts

Limited in-person services at local offices

The Community Services Division experienced significant challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact to the economy resulted in an unprecedented number of citizens contacting CSD to apply for services. At the Governor's direction, CSD redeployed staff stationed in local Community Service Offices and Customer Contact Center locations to telework.

CSD maintained a skeleton crew in local offices to provide very limited in-person services to the public by appointment only, including:

- Issuing Electronic Benefit cards for homeless customers and alternate cardholders.
- Issuing support services to assist with WorkFirst participation, when these could not be mailed.
- Assisting with the Consent form for the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) Cash Assistance Program application process, when the individual has general delivery mail services or participates in the Address Confidentiality Program.

To promote a safe environment for staff and the community while providing limited in-person services, CSD modified local office lobbies including:

- Removing lobby phones to reduce risk of infection.
- Removing, rearranging, or blocking off lobby furniture to allow for social distancing.
- Marking off floor spacing to show clients where to stand and remain at least six feet apart.
- Opening the lobby only for clients attending pre-scheduled EBT or support service appointments to ensure social distancing.
- Increasing the number of security guards in some locations to assist with escalated client issues.

Virtual service-delivery model

- CSD redirected most services to their statewide contact center for delivery over the telephone, online through Washington Connection, or by mail including:
 - Applications for benefits
 - Eligibility interviews
 - Change reporting and questions
 - TANF eligibility determination and WorkFirst orientation
 - Requesting phone appointments for WorkFirst case management
 - Requesting phone appointments for Social services assessments and ABD disability determinations.
 - Requests for EBT card issuance and replacements

- Expanded use of telephonic signature for CSD administered programs to support a virtual service delivery model.

Increased workload and mitigation

The economic impact of the pandemic substantially increased demand for CSD programs and services:

- Increased applications – Late March and April of 2020 saw a 12% and 107% increase compared to same months in 2019.
- Pandemic EBT, or P-EBT, Program applications – CSD implemented the P-EBT program to provide food benefits for families that lost access to free and reduced school lunch programs.
- Disaster Cash Assistance Program, or DCAP¹ – CSD processed 46,727 DCAP applications between April 2020 through June 2020.
- Deferred Eligibility Reviews (ERs) – In early 2020, CSD implemented federally supported changes to defer eligibility reviews for April, May and June. This allowed customers to skip their eligibility review requirements at the times when access to CSD services was limited during the early phase of the COVID crisis.

CSD took a number of steps to build capacity and meet the increased demand:

- Deployment of job classes such as lead workers, supervisors and Mobile CSO staff to frontline services.
- Addition of phone queues for customer access to services previously offered only in the local office.
- Redeployment of several hundred local office staff to call center work following the limitation of most in-person services in local offices.
- Increase in worker productivity by nearly 10% using technology and efficiencies gained in a call center model.
- Suspension or reduction of non-critical job functions such as auditing and case management.
- Suspension of some poverty reduction efforts related to Transforming Case Management (TCM).

Call center volume and wait times:

After an initial spike in wait times as CSD transitioned to telework, telephone queue wait times have remained at reasonably low levels due to CSD deploying all eligibility staff to phones. The charts below show, first, the call volume² and, second, the average speed of answer (ASA) for the past 12 months in the four main telephone queues for the CSCC.

¹ DCAP was activated on April 17, 2020, expanding the CEAP program to serve individuals and families eligible for DCAP under WAC 388-436-0055.

² The call volume in this chart refers total number of calls answered and excludes forced disconnects and abandoned calls.

Chart 1 - CSCC Volume

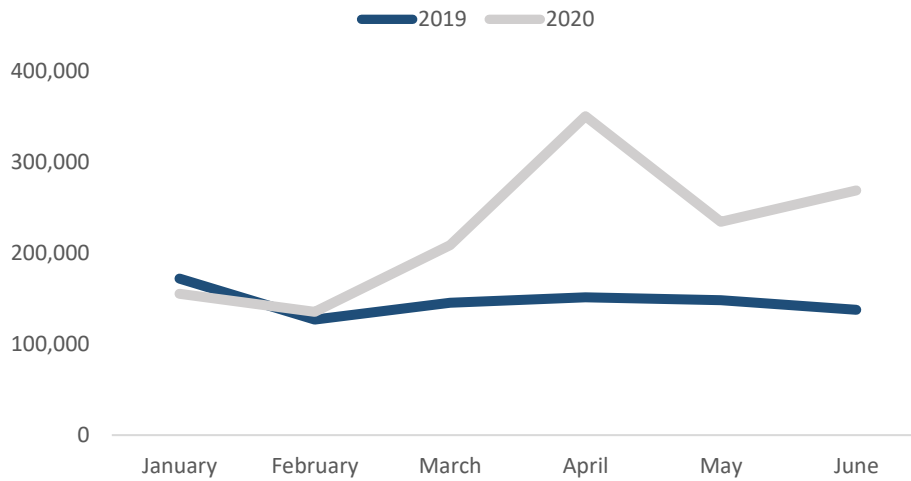
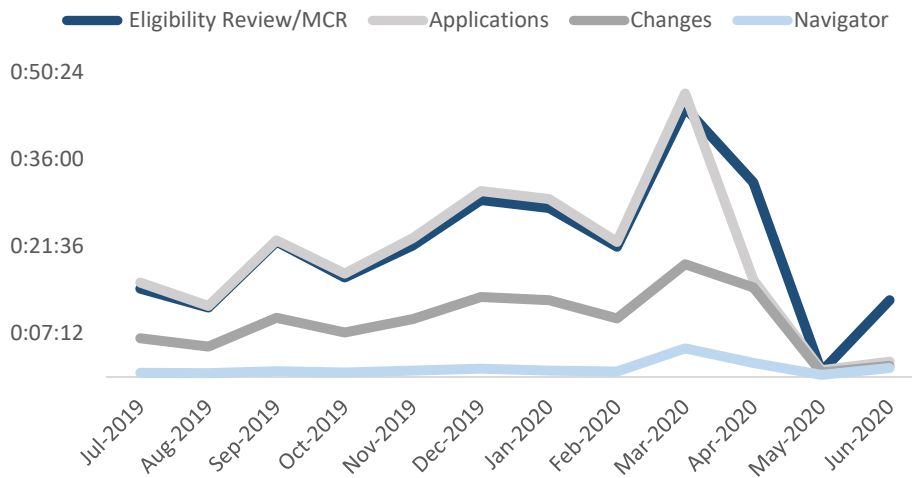


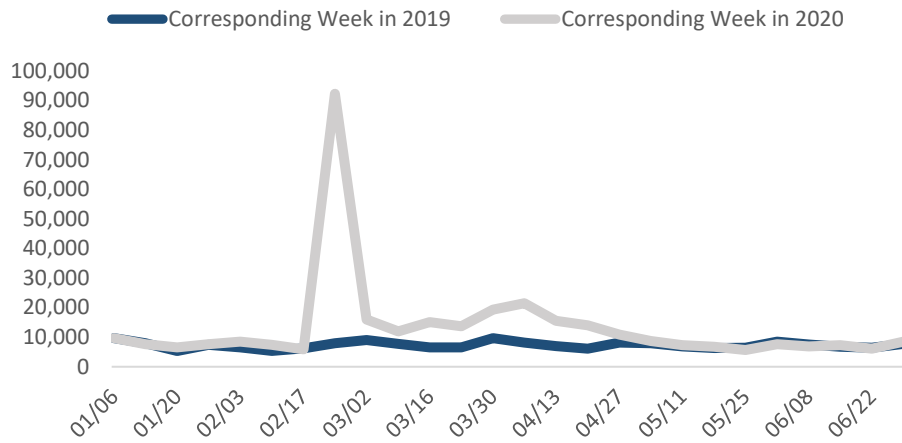
Chart 2 - Average Speed of Answer (ASA)



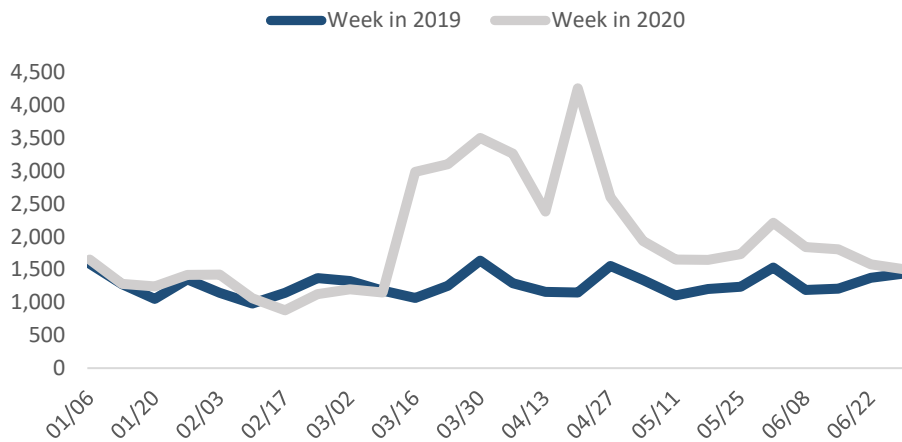
Increase in Applications

The charts below depict the number of applications received for SNAP/FAP, TANF/SFA, ABD/HEN, and CEAP/DCAP from January 2020 to June 2020 with a comparison to the prior year. Note that, due to Pandemic EBT, the number of applications spiked dramatically in early March 2020.

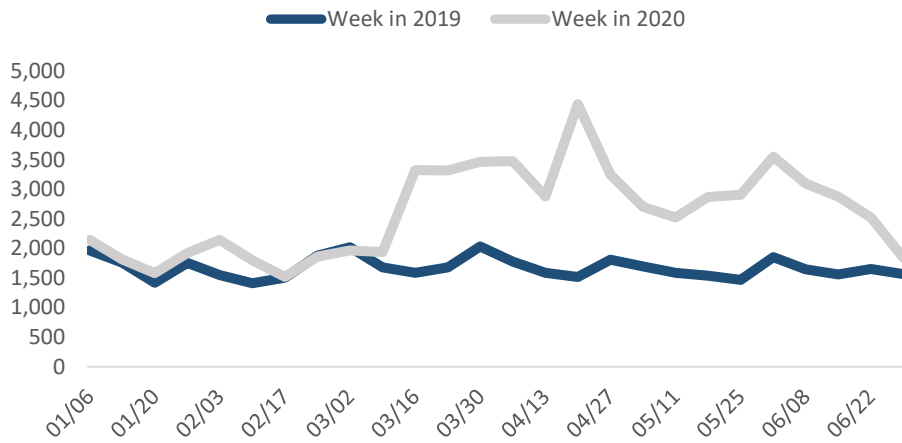
**Weekly SNAP/FAP Applications
(Based on Application Date)**



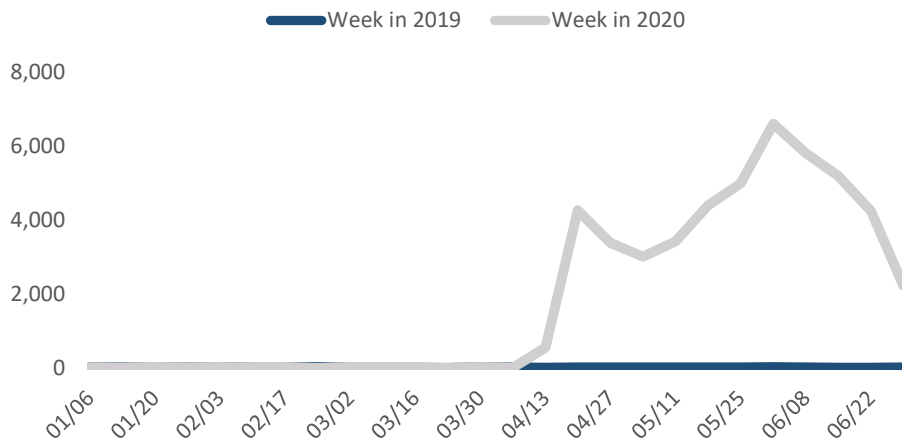
**Weekly TANF/SFA Applications
(Based on Application Date)**



**Weekly ABD/HEN Applications
(Based on Application Date)**



**Weekly CEAP/DCAP Applications
(Based on Application Date)**



Program Impacts

In response to COVID-19, ESA implemented numerous policy and program changes, through emergency rule filings and federal waivers, to ensure access to vital benefits during an ongoing national health crisis. These changes were supported through a combination of proclamations issued by the Governor, federal waiver approvals, and the passage of federal legislation and funding. Although some changes were possible due to existing flexibilities within programs, ESA could not have carried them out without adequate infusions of state and federal funding.

Basic Food

Emergency Allotment Food Supplements: DSHS issued supplemental benefits to food assistance recipients in March, April, May and June 2020. These supplements began April 4, 2020, for March and continued on a month-to-month basis with federal and state approval. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants (FAP) households received the difference between their regular monthly benefit allotment and the maximum amount for their household size. For example, a two-person household that typically received \$200 per month in food benefits, based on their household size, income, and deductions, would have received an additional \$155 in emergency benefits, bringing the monthly total to \$355, the maximum monthly benefit for the household size.

The table below shows the monthly number of cases (households) that received the EA food supplemental benefits between March 2020 and June 2020.

| | # of Cases | # of Clients | Total Emergency Allotments | Average Emergency Allotment Per Case | Average Increase in Allotment Per Case |
|----------|------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Mar-2020 | 289,676 | 540,251 | \$49,940,674.83 | \$172.40 | \$192.97 |
| Apr-2020 | 300,501 | 565,258 | \$51,898,373.33 | \$172.71 | \$228.37 |
| May-2020 | 291,498 | 551,895 | \$50,275,504.33 | \$172.47 | \$228.68 |
| Jun-2020 | 292,900 | 558,674 | \$51,692,610.49 | \$176.49 | \$207.50 |

Statutory Authority: H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to allocate funds to increase SNAP household allotments to the maximum amount based on household size.

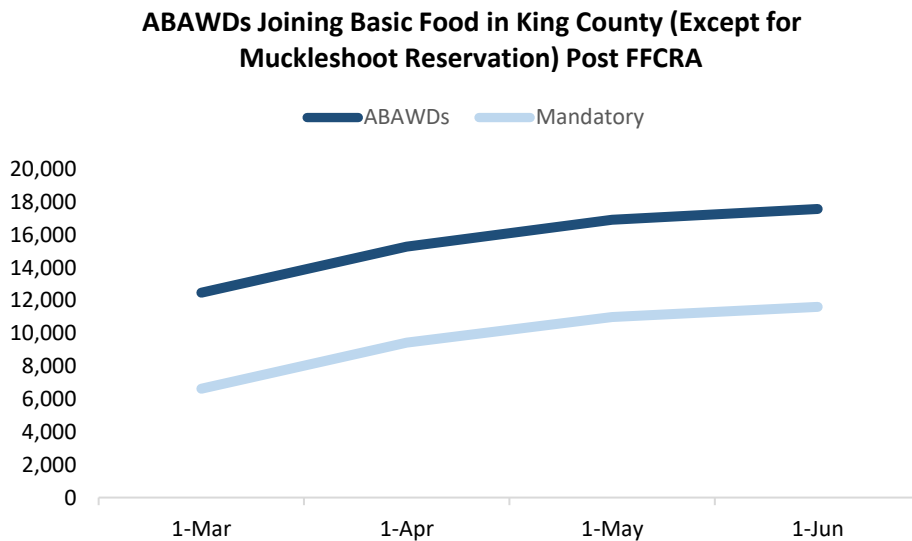
[RCW 74.08A.120](#) requires FAP to follow the exact same rules as SNAP, therefore ESA sought and received authorization from the Office of Financial Management, to issue EA supplements for FAP in alignment with those issued for SNAP.

Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET): BFET providers shifted to serving participants virtually and limited in-person services, in accordance with statewide emergency proclamations, to maintain access to support services for those continuing in BFET activities.

Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS): In March 2020, all ABAWDs became eligible to

receive good cause for non-participation due to limited access to activities. Clients who had previously lost access to Basic Food benefits due to ABAWD participation rules regained eligibility, but were required to reapply. ESA sent over 15,000 letters inviting previously terminated ABAWDs to apply for benefits. ABAWD clients continued to receive referrals to community resources, including virtual partner support, for those interested in employment and training opportunities.

King County remained the state’s only county with mandatory ABAWD work requirements in SFY 2020. The chart below shows the increase in ABAWDs following the invitation to ABAWDs to return to Basic Food without needing to meet requalification rules.



The dark blue line represents the total ABAWDs (exempt, participating and non-exempt), while the light blue line represents those who are mandatory participants and listed as not participating. Non-participating ABAWDs who received good-cause exemptions would normally have lost or been at risk of losing eligibility for Basic Food.

Statutory Authority: FFCRA suspended the requirement for ABAWDs who were terminated due to non-participation to have to participate before regaining eligibility.

Governor Proclamation [20-25](#) and subsequent extensions.

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT): P-EBT food benefits were made available to families with children who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. P-EBT was available for the time-period the Governor’s proclamations 20-08, 20-09 and 20-09.1 required all K-12 educational institutions to close, beginning with schools in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and moving statewide thereafter. DSHS implemented P-EBT and partnered with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to distribute these benefits starting with a mass issuance to SNAP households with children aged 5 -18 and 18 and above if they are still in school. The mass issuance was implemented on June 28, 2020. That same day, ESA also began accepting P-EBT applications by phone and online.

The statewide P-EBT benefit amount was calculated based on the US Department of Agriculture’s Child Nutrition National School Lunch Program daily rate multiplied by the average number of school closure

days per month.

The daily amount was \$5.70 per eligible child.

- The monthly amount for March 2020 was \$68.40 per eligible child (based on 12 days of school)
- The monthly amount for April 2020 was \$125.40 per eligible child (based on 22 days of school)
- The monthly amount for May 2020 was \$119.70 per eligible child (based on 21 days of school)
- The monthly amount for June 2020 was \$85.50 per eligible child (based on 15 days in school)
- The total for all four months was \$399 per eligible child

The application deadline for P-EBT was September 23, 2020, which aligned the end of the program with the 2020 Federal Fiscal Year - September 30, 2020. The data for July - September 2020 will be reflected in the SFY 2021 Briefing Book.

Pandemic EBT Cases (Households) and Expenditures

| | # of School-Aged Children in SNAP P-EBT Cases | # of School-Aged Children in Non-SNAP P-EBT Cases | Students Eligible for P-EBT in month | # of PEBT Cases | Total P-EBT Dollars Issued | Average Dollars Per Case |
|-----------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mar-2020 | 192,295 | 168,979 | 508,257 | 193,161 | \$24,405,061 | \$126.34 |
| Apr-2020 | 218,816 | 153,864 | 553,749 | 199,418 | \$46,218,535 | \$231.76 |
| May-2020 | 229,049 | 147,254 | 558,460 | 201,008 | \$44,478,550 | \$221.27 |
| Jun-2020 | 236,792 | 142,523 | 560,825 | 202,188 | \$31,962,699 | \$158.08 |

Statutory Authority: FFCRA authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to create a new program to issue benefits to students who were eligible for free or reduced price meals under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act if not for the school closure. State agencies were allowed to submit plans in which a school was closed for at least five consecutive days during a public health emergency designation during which the school would otherwise be in session.

Governor Proclamations [20-08](#), [20-09](#) and [20-09.1](#)

Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP)

On April 17, 2020, DSHS activated the Disaster Cash Assistance Program. DCAP was available to all Washington families and people without children who met the income and resource limits of the program and who were not eligible for other cash programs.

DCAP was created to support those affected by natural disasters. Emergency rules were filed to expand eligibility criteria to include households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be eligible for DCAP, a one-person household needed to have less than \$363 in income in the month of application, after deductions were applied. Eligible individuals with no income qualified for the maximum payment amount of \$363.

Statutory Authority: On February 29, 2020, Governor Inslee issued a [State of Emergency Proclamation \(20-05\)](#) for all Washington counties, in response to COVID-19, directing state agencies to use all resources necessary to prepare for and respond to the outbreak. In subsequent proclamations, Governor Inslee directed DSHS to expand the Family Emergency Assistance Program to individuals and families impacted by COVID-19:

- [Proclamation 20-18](#) March 18, 2020
- [Proclamation 20-52](#) April 23, 2020
- [Proclamation 20-52.1](#) May 9, 2020
- [Proclamation 20-52.2](#) May 29, 2020
- [Proclamation 20-52.3](#) June 18, 2020

DCAP Cases (Households)

| | # of CEAP/DCAP Applications | Total Cases | Persons | Grant Expenditures | Average Payment Per Case | Average Household Size |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Apr-2020 | 7,440 | 3,483 | 4,366 | \$1,163,877 | \$334.16 | 1.3 |
| May-2020 | 16,553 | 10,362 | 11,189 | \$3,321,680 | \$320.56 | 1.1 |
| Jun-2020 | 22,734 | 15,193 | 15,741 | \$4,862,722 | \$320.06 | 1.0 |

DCAP Cases (Households) by County of Residence, SFY20

| County | Cases | % of Total | Clients | % of Total | County | Cases | % of Total | Clients | % of Total |
|--------------|-------|------------|---------|------------|---------------------------------|-------|------------|---------|------------|
| Adams | 46 | 0.2% | 54 | 0.2% | Lewis | 333 | 1.1% | 361 | 1.2% |
| Asotin | 63 | 0.2% | 63 | 0.2% | Lincoln | 16 | 0.1% | 17 | 0.1% |
| Benton | 631 | 2.2% | 695 | 2.2% | Mason | 355 | 1.2% | 402 | 1.3% |
| Chelan | 194 | 0.7% | 207 | 0.7% | Okanogan | 305 | 1.1% | 316 | 1.0% |
| Clallam | 417 | 1.4% | 428 | 1.4% | Pacific | 72 | 0.2% | 74 | 0.2% |
| Clark | 1,369 | 4.7% | 1,493 | 4.8% | Pend Oreille | 57 | 0.2% | 58 | 0.2% |
| Columbia | 24 | 0.1% | 32 | 0.1% | Pierce | 4,598 | 15.8% | 4,884 | 15.7% |
| Cowlitz | 677 | 2.3% | 726 | 2.3% | San Juan | 23 | 0.1% | 29 | 0.1% |
| Douglas | 105 | 0.4% | 118 | 0.4% | Skagit | 482 | 1.7% | 510 | 1.6% |
| Ferry | 20 | 0.1% | 22 | 0.1% | Skamania | 27 | 0.1% | 27 | 0.1% |
| Franklin | 248 | 0.9% | 287 | 0.9% | Snohomish | 2,766 | 9.5% | 2,983 | 9.6% |
| Garfield | 4 | 0.0% | 7 | 0.0% | Spokane | 3,358 | 11.6% | 3,524 | 11.3% |
| Grant | 407 | 1.4% | 429 | 1.4% | Stevens | 175 | 0.6% | 192 | 0.6% |
| Grays Harbor | 693 | 2.4% | 731 | 2.3% | Thurston | 1,096 | 3.8% | 1,172 | 3.8% |
| Island | 177 | 0.6% | 187 | 0.6% | Wahkiakum | 16 | 0.1% | 18 | 0.1% |
| Jefferson | 74 | 0.3% | 77 | 0.2% | Walla Walla | 203 | 0.7% | 223 | 0.7% |
| King | 6,704 | 23.1% | 7,313 | 23.4% | Whatcom | 798 | 2.7% | 843 | 2.7% |
| Kitsap | 831 | 2.9% | 884 | 2.8% | Whitman | 68 | 0.2% | 79 | 0.3% |
| Kittitas | 77 | 0.3% | 85 | 0.3% | Yakima | 1,479 | 5.1% | 1,591 | 5.1% |
| Klickitat | 50 | 0.2% | 53 | 0.2% | Not Reported/ Unidentifiable | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |

DCAP Demographics, SFY 2020

| Characteristic | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Number | % of Total Clients | Number | % of Total Adults |
| Total Clients | 31,194 | 100.0% | 29,950 | 100.0% |

| Gender | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Female | 12,666 | 40.6% | 12,044 | 40.2% |
| Male | 18,525 | 59.4% | 17,904 | 59.8% |
| Not Reported/ Unidentifiable | 3 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.0% |

| Race | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Hispanic Origin | 3,985 | 12.8% | 3,525 | 11.8% |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | 27,209 | 87.2% | 26,425 | 88.2% |
| White | 18,672 | 59.9% | 18,305 | 61.1% |
| Black/African American | 3,657 | 11.7% | 3,470 | 11.6% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1,123 | 3.6% | 1,080 | 3.6% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 1,661 | 5.3% | 1,608 | 5.4% |
| Two or More Races | 907 | 2.9% | 876 | 2.9% |
| Race Not Reported | 1,189 | 3.8% | 1,086 | 3.6% |

| Marital Status (Adults Only) | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Separated | 1,960 | 6.5% | 1,960 | 6.5% |
| Married | 1,583 | 5.3% | 1,583 | 5.3% |
| Never Married | 17,213 | 57.5% | 17,213 | 57.5% |
| Divorced | 5,065 | 16.9% | 5,065 | 16.9% |
| Widowed | 433 | 1.4% | 433 | 1.4% |
| Not Reported/Unidentifiable | 3,696 | 12.3% | 3,696 | 12.3% |

| Citizenship Status | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| U.S. Citizen | 28,936 | 92.8% | 27,862 | 93.0% |
| Resident Noncitizen | 924 | 3.0% | 895 | 3.0% |
| U.S. National³ | 47 | 0.2% | 43 | 0.1% |
| Undocumented Noncitizen | 1,016 | 3.3% | 914 | 3.1% |
| Not Reported/Unidentifiable | 271 | 0.9% | 236 | 0.8% |

³ U.S. National: A national of the United States or a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States (e.g., persons born in American Samoa or Swains Island).

DCAP Demographics, SFY 2020 (continued)

| Characteristic | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Number | % of Total Clients | Number | % of Total Adults |

| Homeless Status | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Homeless | 15,201 | 48.7% | 15,124 | 50.5% |

| Education Status (Adults Only) | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Less than a High School Diploma | 7,577 | 25.3% | 7,577 | 25.3% |
| High School Graduate or GED | 14,930 | 49.8% | 14,930 | 49.8% |
| Some College or College Degree | 7,235 | 24.2% | 7,235 | 24.2% |
| Not Reported/Unidentifiable | 208 | 0.7% | 208 | 0.7% |

| Age | All Clients | | All Adults | |
|--|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| < 1 Year Old | 38 | 0.1% | | |
| 1 – 5 Years Old | 320 | 1.0% | | |
| 6 – 10 Years Old | 330 | 1.1% | | |
| 11 – 15 Years Old | 385 | 1.2% | | |
| 16 – 17 Years Old | 171 | 0.5% | | |
| 18 – 24 Years Old | 3,422 | 11.0% | 3,422 | 11.4% |
| 25 – 34 Years Old | 9,418 | 30.2% | 9,418 | 31.4% |
| 35 – 44 Years Old | 7,981 | 25.6% | 7,981 | 26.6% |
| 45 – 54 Years Old | 6,018 | 19.3% | 6,018 | 20.1% |
| 55 – 64 Years Old | 2,964 | 9.5% | 2,964 | 9.9% |
| 65+ Years Old | 147 | 0.5% | 147 | 0.5% |
| Average Age of Children | 9.2 Years | | | |
| Average Age of Adults | 38.2 Years | | | |
| Average Cumulative Months Adult Clients Received DCAP Since April 2020 | 1.0 Months | | | |

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/WorkFirst

Time Limit Extensions: Effective April 1, 2020, DSHS expanded the criteria for TANF 60-month time limit extension to support families experiencing hardships due to the COVID-19 emergency. Families who exhausted 60 months on TANF cash assistance and experienced hardships due to COVID-19 were not terminated from or denied benefits.

The table below shows the change in the number of TANF households with an adult recipient that were granted a time-limit extension.

Adult Recipient Cases with a Time-Limit Extension

| | 2019 | 2020 | % Change |
|--------------|-------|-------|----------|
| April | 1,320 | 2,010 | 52.3% |
| May | 1,406 | 2,446 | 74.0% |
| June | 1,391 | 2,813 | 102.2% |

The table below shows the monthly number of TANF households with an adult recipient that were granted a time-limit extension due to Caring for a Disabled Adult/COVID-19

Adult Recipient Cases (Households) Granted a Time-Limit Extension for a Disabled Adult/COVID-19

| | # of Cases |
|-----------------|------------|
| Jan-2020 | 23 |
| Feb-2020 | 25 |
| Mar-2020 | 61 |
| Apr-2020 | 444 |
| May-2020 | 852 |
| Jun-2020 | 1,208 |

The ESA IT systems could not be updated quickly to track the number of families in a time limit extension due to the pandemic. In order to monitor and document this population, the infrequently used Caring for a Disabled Adult extension category was temporarily repurposed.

WorkFirst participation good cause exemptions: On March 16, 2020, all WorkFirst participants were temporarily exempt from required participation due to the pandemic. ESA continued to provide clients the option of participation and support services and limited case management to assist them in doing so; however, they were not required to engage in program activities.

WorkFirst sanction process and home visit suspension: Effective March 16, 2020, DSHS also temporarily suspended WorkFirst sanction reduction and termination penalties. As described above, WorkFirst services were offered each month; however, no adverse action was taken as a result of non-participation. Sanction suspension eliminated the need for a home visit by staff as part of the sanction process. Clients who closed in sanction prior to March 16 and reapplied did not have to cure their sanction before regaining cash grant eligibility.

Cases with a Recipient Open in a COVID-19 Related Component Code

| | # of Cases |
|-----------------|------------|
| Apr-2020 | 9,726 |
| May-2020 | 11,947 |
| Jun-2020 | 13,008 |

Teen Living Assessment Home Visits Suspension: March 16, 2020, Teen Living Assessment home visits were suspended. Teen Living Assessments, which may include a home visit, are required for all unmarried, minor parents applying for TANF cash assistance, to determine suitability of living arrangements and offer support to the household. ESA continued to conduct Teen Living Assessments completing all required assessment screening tools in the office or over the phone.

Telephone WorkFirst Orientations: All WorkFirst Orientations were conducted via the telephone.

WorkFirst Work-Study and Community Jobs Participant Payment Continuation: Community Jobs and WorkFirst work-study participants continued to be employed and receive payment even if they were temporarily unable to participate due to emergency operations changes or closures as a result of COVID-19.

TANF/WorkFirst Statutory Authority: All TANF and WorkFirst changes were made in accordance with federal law and within existing statutory authority. As required, the state’s TANF Plan was updated to reflect temporary policy changes, and the revised plan submitted to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) Cash Assistance/Housing Essential Needs (HEN) Referral Programs

Treatment monitoring suspension: Effective March 18, 2020, ESA temporarily extended good cause to clients who did not provide verification of their participation in medical and mental health treatment, substance use assessment and treatment, and participation in vocational rehabilitation.

Disability and Incapacity Reviews and Evaluations: Effective March 26, 2020, ESA temporarily postponed ABD disability reviews, modified HEN Referral incapacity reviews and expanded medical evidence rules for eligibility purposes.

Mental Incapacity Evaluation contracts were amended to allow for telephonic psychological evaluations.

Statutory Authority: All ABD and HEN Referral changes were made within existing statutory authority.

Classic Medicaid⁴ Eligibility

Certification periods for renewals that were not completed for March, April, May and June 2020 were extended for three months. Benefits were maintained for recipients of Medicaid unless the individual requested their benefits be terminated, the individual was no longer a Washington State resident, or the individual was deceased.

Additional changes regarding Medicaid eligibility to support clients include:

- Reinstating Medicaid coverage if closed on or after March 18, 2020.
- Allowing a 30-day extension to provide verification of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation of income and resources at application, renewal and change of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation for medical expenses incurred needed to meet spenddown amounts for purposes of medically needy eligibility.

Statutory Authority: All Medicaid changes were made as directed by the Health Care Authority (HCA) and in accordance with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

| | Classic Medicaid Eligibility Review Extensions |
|-----------------|--|
| Apr-2020 | 3,363 |
| May-2020 | 3,047 |
| Jun-2020 | 2,848 |

⁴ Classic Medicaid includes Alien Emergency Medicaid (AEM), Healthcare for Workers with Disabilities, Long Term Care, Medicare Savings Program, Refugee Medical, SSI Medicaid, SSI Related Medicaid, and Medical Care Services.

Certification waiver for TANF, SFA, ABD, HEN Referral, WFS, and Basic Food Assistance

ESA extended certification periods for households with Eligibility Reviews due in the months of April, May and June 2020 for six additional months, extending these certifications through October, November and December 2020, respectively. Mid-Certification Review requirements for April, May and June were also waived, and benefits continued through the end of certification periods while households met all other eligibility requirements. To ensure customers continue to receive critical benefits and services, and to streamline program administration, ESA also waived the certification periods for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; State Family Assistance; Aged, Blind or Disabled Cash Assistance; Housing Essential Needs Referral; Working Family Support; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and State Food Assistance Program.

Statutory Authority:

FFCRA authorized USDA’s Secretary of Agriculture to waive core interview and certification requirements for SNAP processing. USDA allowed state agencies to extend certification periods and temporarily waive periodic report form submissions for households whose certification periods expired in March, April or May. The corresponding cash assistance changes were made within existing statutory authority.

| | SNAP/FAP Eligibility Review Extensions | SNAP/FAP Mid-Certification Reviews Waived | TANF/SFA Referral Eligibility Review Extensions | TANF/SFA Mid-Certification Reviews Waived |
|-----------------|--|---|---|---|
| Apr-2020 | 15,621 | 39,971 | 536 | 2,100 |
| May-2020 | 26,390 | 38,492 | 1,197 | 2,036 |
| Jun-2020 | 27,661 | 42,153 | 1,271 | 2,263 |

| | ABD Eligibility Review Extensions | HEN Referral Eligibility Review Extensions | ABD Mid-Certification Reviews Waived | HEN Referral Mid-Certification Reviews Waived |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Apr-2020 | 387 | 130 | 1,744 | 273 |
| May-2020 | 967 | 217 | 1,774 | 309 |
| Jun-2020 | 1,077 | 235 | 1,983 | 366 |

Social Security Number Good Cause Waiver

On March 17, 2020, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) suspended all face-to-face services to the public at field offices nationwide effective March 17, 2020 until further notice. Only limited, critical services were provided via phone, mail, and online. Applications for a non-work Social Security Number (SSN), or regular SSN due to immigration status, were not considered a critical service by SSA, and were,

therefore, suspended.

Federal regulations require each person who applies for or receives cash or food assistance benefits to provide an SSN or the proof of the SSN application to the department.

On April 10, 2020, USDA FNS approved a waiver to allow a household member to participate in SNAP, after having established good cause for failure to provide a SSN, for up to an additional three months. This waiver allowed the department to grant good cause for a total of five months.

The state-administered programs TANF/SFA and ABD were able to establish this good cause waiver without seeking federal approval.

Statutory Authority: FFCRA authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to waive core interview and certification requirements for SNAP processing. USDA FNS approved waiver COVID-067 based on the determination that the adjustment was consistent with what is practicable under actual conditions in areas affected by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

Select Cash, Food and Medical Program Clients⁵ and Cases⁶ with a Social Security Number Good Cause Waiver, July 2019 - June 2020

| | All Selected Programs | | ABD | | Basic Food ⁷ | | DCA | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases |
| Jul-2019 | 18,371 | 19,917 | 12 | 12 | 3,266 | 1,700 | 0 | 0 |
| Aug-2019 | 18,350 | 19,616 | 10 | 10 | 2,663 | 1,429 | 1 | 1 |
| Sep-2019 | 18,358 | 19,407 | 9 | 9 | 2,350 | 1,290 | 1 | 1 |
| Oct-2019 | 18,374 | 19,309 | 9 | 9 | 2,013 | 1,152 | 0 | 0 |
| Nov-2019 | 18,238 | 19,024 | 7 | 7 | 1,796 | 1,066 | 0 | 0 |
| Dec-2019 | 18,304 | 19,003 | 7 | 7 | 1,621 | 968 | 0 | 0 |
| Jan-2020 | 18,349 | 18,961 | 7 | 7 | 1,527 | 917 | 0 | 0 |
| Feb-2020 | 18,362 | 18,953 | 6 | 6 | 1,464 | 881 | 0 | 0 |
| Mar-2020 | 17,930 | 18,489 | 7 | 7 | 1,399 | 851 | 0 | 0 |
| Apr-2020 | 17,552 | 18,192 | 5 | 5 | 1,451 | 930 | 2 | 1 |
| May-2020 | 17,573 | 18,455 | 6 | 6 | 1,677 | 1,133 | 0 | 0 |
| Jun-2020 | 17,804 | 18,985 | 9 | 9 | 1,956 | 1,366 | 0 | 0 |

⁵Clients are unduplicated within each program. The total number of clients across “All Selected Programs” is also unduplicated and does not equal the sum of clients across all programs because some clients are participants in multiple programs.

⁶ Cases are unduplicated within each program and are those Assistance Units (AUs) with at least one recipient whose Social Security Number is coded as Good Cause.

⁷ Excludes Pandemic EBT cases during March - June 2020.

| | HEN Referral | | Medical ⁸ | | PWA | | RCA | |
|----------|--------------|---------|----------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases |
| Jul-2019 | 0 | 0 | 17,906 | 17,935 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 15 |
| Aug-2019 | 0 | 0 | 17,925 | 17,959 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 18 |
| Sep-2019 | 0 | 0 | 17,894 | 17,920 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 |
| Oct-2019 | 1 | 1 | 17,926 | 17,965 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 6 |
| Nov-2019 | 1 | 1 | 17,743 | 17,784 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 |
| Dec-2019 | 1 | 1 | 17,835 | 17,872 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 |
| Jan-2020 | 1 | 1 | 17,858 | 17,883 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 13 |
| Feb-2020 | 2 | 2 | 17,881 | 17,903 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 11 |
| Mar-2020 | 2 | 2 | 17,434 | 17,460 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Apr-2020 | 1 | 1 | 17,027 | 17,040 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 12 |
| May-2020 | 1 | 1 | 16,979 | 17,010 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 16 |
| Jun-2020 | 2 | 2 | 17,140 | 17,167 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 22 |

| | SSP | | TANF/SFA | | WFS | |
|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases | # Clients | # Cases |
| Jul-2019 | 25 | 25 | 381 | 205 | 25 | 25 |
| Aug-2019 | 18 | 18 | 290 | 163 | 18 | 18 |
| Sep-2019 | 15 | 15 | 270 | 150 | 15 | 15 |
| Oct-2019 | 14 | 14 | 263 | 148 | 14 | 14 |
| Nov-2019 | 14 | 14 | 245 | 131 | 14 | 14 |
| Dec-2019 | 12 | 12 | 233 | 124 | 12 | 12 |
| Jan-2020 | 12 | 12 | 224 | 116 | 12 | 12 |
| Feb-2020 | 12 | 12 | 240 | 126 | 12 | 12 |
| Mar-2020 | 11 | 11 | 244 | 140 | 11 | 11 |
| Apr-2020 | 9 | 9 | 295 | 185 | 9 | 9 |
| May-2020 | 8 | 8 | 405 | 273 | 8 | 8 |
| Jun-2020 | 8 | 8 | 568 | 403 | 8 | 8 |

⁸ Medical includes both classic and MAGI medical programs served by ESA, ALISA, and Health Care Authority. Some clients have multiple Assistance Units in the same month due to participation in multiple medical coverage groups.

Domestic Violence (DV) Victim Services

Family Violence Prevention Services Act: The DV Victim Services program awarded supplemental FVPSA CARES Act funding to 43 ESA contracted domestic violence programs. Supplemental funds were to address domestic violence victim service needs related to COVID-19, including but not limited to:

- Providing temporary housing and assistance (e.g., hotel stays or other emergency sheltering services).
- Responding to immediate needs of victims.
- Equipping victim service staff to provide advocacy services from home (e.g., cell phones, meeting software, and laptops, etc.).
- Purchase cleaning services and personal protective supplies to protect staff and clients at the shelter and during provision of in-person services.

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)

COVID-19 Response Services

In response to COVID-19, contracted service providers are offering a menu of different service options to meet the current and changing needs of immigrants and refugees in our communities. These services include the following:

- Conduct a Needs Assessment that addresses overall financial stability, housing, employment, social and emotional well-being, child and youth, and elders and health and medical needs.
- Information and referrals on resources for COVID-19, 2020 Census, public benefits and new stimulus programs and updates on available services and resources.
- Providing and/or connecting with new services, including helping people apply for Unemployment Insurance Benefits, addressing food insecurity, addressing gaps in child care and employer outreach and engagement.
- Education and Client Engagement offering opportunities to address social isolation through remote options, engaging volunteers to support new community members remotely and providing distance learning options for civics and ESL classes.

COVID-19 Emergency Support Services for Refugees Fund

The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) established a fund to provide resources for refugees and other eligible immigrant individuals and families to receive short-term assistance to cover immediate needs, including rent, utilities, internet and other approved costs. Eligible participants can access these resources by applying at one of ORIA’s contracted services providers.

Extension of Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance

Washington extended Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for single or married refugee or humanitarian immigrant without children and Refugee Medical Assistance for those ineligible for Washington Apple Health to receive benefits beyond eight months. People can apply by calling the DSHS Customer Service Contact Center (CSCC) at 877-501-2233 or online at WashingtonConnection.org. For more information, please refer to the [program announcement](#).

LEP Pathway Clients Who Received COVID-19 Related Services, SFY 2020

| SFY 2020 | LEP Pathway Clients |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| March | 77 |
| April | 461 |
| May | 649 |
| June | 396 |
| Mo. Avg. | 396 |
| Annual Unduplicated | 922 |

Naturalization Service Clients Who Received COVID-19 Related Services, SFY 2020

| SFY 2020 | # of Clients |
|---------------------|--------------|
| March | 28 |
| April | 192 |
| May | 473 |
| June | 521 |
| Mo. Avg. | 304 |
| Annual Unduplicated | 1,163 |

PRIME Clients Who Received COVID-19 Related Services, SFY 2020

| SFY 2020 | # of Clients |
|---------------------|--------------|
| March | 74 |
| April | 125 |
| May | 93 |
| June | 56 |
| Mo. Avg. | 87 |
| Annual Unduplicated | 312 |

Division of Child Support (DCS)

Operational Impacts

Office Lobby Closures

On March 19, 2020, each of our nine field offices located across the state and our headquarters location closed access to our customers. Each field office stopped providing over the counter services to our customers. The offices posted a variety of signage with information regarding:

- Phone numbers to access our services
- Alternate payment methods
- PPE guidelines

Payments Received Over the Counter

The closure of office lobbies also impacted payments that DCS would typically receive over the counter by our customers. Signage posted at each office provide information for alternate means of making payments.

In the 12 months preceding COVID-19, the average volume of payments received from Alternate Payment Vendors was 1,397 per month. This included a relatively stable upward trend of about 10% over that year period. With the office lobby closures in March, there was an initial increase in April 2020.

Mail, Payment Handling, and Other Office Functions

While our lobbies were closed to the public since March 19, 2020, staff remained in each office to maintain functions that could not be completed in a telework environment. These functions included, but were not limited to:

- Receiving and processing mail
- Processing payments received through the mail
- Receiving deliveries

Effective June 19, 2020, a process was established for field offices to begin routing non-cash payments to the centralized payment address so they could be processed in our Central Services Department located in our headquarters building. Prior to COVID, payments mailed to local office mailing addresses were received and processed, and then an informational letter was sent to the sender with the correct payment mailing address of PO Box 45868, Olympia, WA.

Non-Assistance Applications

When office lobbies are open, our customers have the option to request and drop off non-assistance applications over the counter. Effective March 19, 2020, these options were suspended due to office lobby closures.

- In the 12 months preceding COVID-19, our division was receiving an average of 1,095 non-assistance applications per month.

- Starting with March 2020 and the months following, this monthly average has decreased to 696.

Prior to the COVID Pandemic the primary methods customers had available to receive documents needed to apply for DCS services included:

- Printing applicable forms from the DCS website
- Calling the 800 number to request an application be mailed
- Visiting a DCS field office to request an application over the counter

Applications could then be mailed, faxed, or dropped off at a field office. We have added an additional link on our DCS website for customers to complete a request form for a non-assistance application to be mailed to them. They can now enter their name and address and request the application. As a result, we are now seeing an increase in average monthly non-assistance applications received.

Emergency Rule for Service of Process

On March 20, 2020, the United States Postal Service made temporary changes to its certified mail signature gathering procedures. In response, DCS adopted an emergency rule to address the impact of these changes on our efforts to establish and enforce child support obligations.

The emergency rule states that DCS considers service by certified mail, return receipt requested (CMRR) valid ten (10) days after the notice is sent to the non-custodial or custodial parent with restricted deliver, and the USPS employee signed the receipt on behalf of the individual taking delivery. The emergency rule requires restricted delivery when serving by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Internal Revenue Offsets

DCS regularly reports to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for a federal offset against any possible income tax return for which a non-custodial parent may be entitled. We received a tremendous increase of IRS offsets due to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES act provided cash economic impact payments, also known as stimulus payments, to US citizens. The CARES Act provided for child support debts to be offset from these payments.

The chart below shows the volume and dollar amounts received mid-January 2019 through October 2019 compared to the same time period in 2020.

| | 1/1/2019 – 6/28/2019 | 1/1/2020 – 6/30/2020 | Percentage Increase 2019 to 2020 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Volume of intercepts received (by trace numbers) ⁹ | 26,393 | 90,112 | 241.42% |
| Intercept amounts | \$37,280,066 | \$114,629,185 | 207.48% |

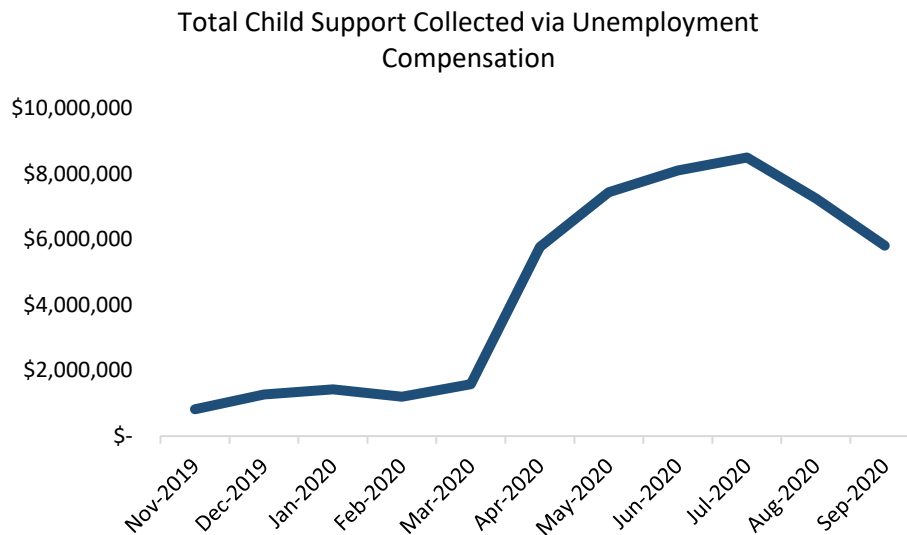
⁹ Note: DCS certifies arrears debt to the IRS as DSHS and CP arrears. The IRS sends intercepts back, each having a unique identifier known as a trace number. An NCP can have 2 or more trace numbers for one offset. Our system combines the separate trace number amounts into one payment before it is posted to cases.

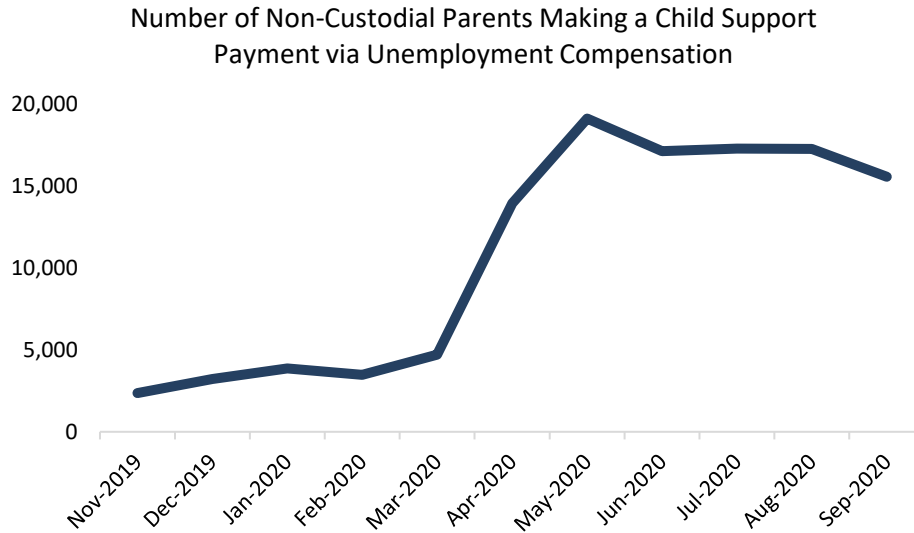
DCS Policy Clarification Memo 20-003 – How DCS Works with Individuals Impacted by COVID-19

COVID-19 is having an economic impact on people with child support orders leading to both short-term and long-term financial uncertainty. Loss of income due to COVID-19 can lead to even greater economic disparities for families already struggling financially or in poverty. In response, new guidance is necessary to respond to situations where COVID-19 has impacted a family’s financial circumstances. DCS created a Policy Clarification Memo to help outline ways for DCS staff to incorporate additional considerations when evaluating enforcement actions.

Unemployment Compensation Payments

The Federal CARES Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. This Act provided enhanced Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The federal Cares Act provided additional benefits for individuals. One considerable benefit was a possible additional \$600 per week on top of any regular UC benefit. The additional non-custodial parents eligible for UC benefits and then the additional \$600 benefit made a significant impact on UC payments received as a result of, and wage withhold sent to the Employment Security Department. These wage withholds were for payment of current and back support owed by non-custodial parents.





Grants

Several DCS grant programs were directly impacted by COVID-19.

- Families Forward Washington was paused from March 25, 2020 through May 15, 2020 while training providers were closed and remote enrollment procedures were developed and approved.
- Access and Visitation providers were unable to serve customers while offices were closed and virtual delivery methods were developed.
- Digital Marketing streaming radio ads were postponed within the Digital Marketing grant to reconsider messaging and timing.

Parentage Program

- COVID-19 has directly affected administrative parentage establishment by Acknowledgment of Parentage (AOP). Many hospitals have limited patient contact, reducing their ability to assist families with the completion of the AOP. DCS is working with hospitals to ensure AOPs are completed and filed with the Department of Health (DOH), Center for Health Statistics (CHS). DCS staff are unable to assist parents with the completion of AOPs in the office and are only able to work with parents by phone, regular mail and email to ensure the AOP will be accepted and successfully filed by DOH. Without in person assistance, time is added to the AOP filing process. Our partners at DOH/CHS have been severely impacted by COVID-19. Several DOH/CHS staff have been deployed to support the surveillance system for COVID-19 since late February. DCS Parentage Program staff continue to work with our DOH/CHS partners to ensure AOPs are filed.

Support Change Orders

- The Division of Child Support experienced a record number of support change orders instigated by the mass lay-offs experienced by thousands of parents across the state and was further

inundated with delays and processing revisions to account for new ESD fraud identification and prevention procedures