

**Economic  
Services  
Administration**

David Stillman, *Assistant Secretary*

2013-2015

# Strategic Plan

March 2014



**VISION**

Individuals, families and communities thrive

**MISSION**

We transform lives by empowering individuals and families to thrive

**VALUES**

Honesty and Integrity  
Pursuit of Excellence  
Open Communication  
Diversity and Inclusion  
Commitment to Service

## Introduction

Nearly one out of every four Washington citizens turns to the Department of Social and Health Services' Economic Services Administration (ESA) for assistance with cash grants, food, child support, child care, and disability determination, and supports for transition to employment and other services. Each day, more than 4,000 ESA employees provide families across Washington State with the resources they need to build better lives. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013, ESA served more than 1,500,000 people – representing approximately 22 percent of all Washington State residents.

ESA serves many clients who live on the margin. Although most are not receiving a cash grant, they may be relying on food assistance, work-related support services, assistance with child support, medical coverage, or child care subsidies. A family crisis or change in the economy, even a small one, can force these families into situations requiring assistance, whether it's the full support of a cash grant, help with child support, or temporary assistance to avoid losing housing. When unemployment rates rise or there are downturns in the overall economy, the demand for services increases, as does the pressure on programs, funding, staffing and other resources.

### ESA's core services focus on:

- **Poverty Reduction & Self-Sufficiency** – Helping low-income people meet their basic needs and achieve economic independence through cash grants, food, and medical assistance; employment-focused services; and subsidized child care. Major programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst (Washington's Welfare to Work program); Basic Food (formerly the Food Stamp Program); Aged, Blind, or Disabled; Pregnant Women's Assistance; Refugee Assistance; Working Connections Child Care; and medical assistance.
- **Child Support Enforcement & Financial Recovery** – Ensuring parents live up to the responsibility of supporting their children and improving the self-sufficiency of families through increased financial and medical support. In addition to child support, the administration's collection of other debts owed to the Department protects taxpayers, while helping programs meet current expenditures and provide financial assistance, medical care and



### Every day in ESA

- More than 597,000 families and 1.1 million people are able to afford nutritious food.
- More than 100,000 families and 174,000 individuals are getting cash assistance to help them meet their basic needs.
- About 75 families start working to support their families and get off welfare (TANF).
- Nearly 40,000 children are receiving quality care while their parents go to school or work, or look for work.
- More than 100,000 poor families are able to keep vital telephone service.
- More than 11,000 parents are learning how to find a job and getting help paying for the clothes, child care and transportation they will need to become a full-time worker.
- More than 6,500 parents are working to resolve serious family issues, such as homelessness, domestic violence and substance abuse.
- More than 125,000 families receive child support.
- Almost \$2.5 million in child support is distributed to custodial parents to help them achieve economic stability.
- Over \$1 million in outstanding debts/repayments is collected and either returned to source programs in several departments to fund ongoing work or the state general fund.
- Last year, 33,891 individuals were approved to receive, or continue to receive, Social Security disability benefits.



other benefits and services to those in need.

- **Disability Determination** – Determining whether individuals applying for Social Security disability benefits have a disability that prevents them from working. Under contract with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services determines whether individuals qualify for benefits from the Social Security Administration and for medical assistance.
- **Infrastructure and Support** – Providing operational support services for all aspects of the business, including: finance, information technology, quality assurance and program integrity, project management and process improvement, risk management, business support services, strategic planning, and performance management. ESA plays a mission-critical role in the technology infrastructure that supports the state’s Affordable Care Act website, HealthPlanFinder.

Strong organizational values help ESA leadership and staff transform mission and vision statements into reality on a daily basis. They shape the organizational culture and help guide decision-making on everything from hiring and training staff to setting priorities and allocating limited resources. ESA’s values focus on providing caring and excellent service to internal customers and the clients we serve; respecting co-workers, partners, clients and everyone with whom we may interact; recognizing that collaboration and partnerships are vital to accomplishing the organization’s mission; valuing open and transparent communication and integrity in all we do; pursuing innovation to improve performance and services; and holding one another accountable.

## Goals

### Governor Jay Inslee’s Results Washington Goals

ESA is a partner in Governor Jay Inslee’s **Results Washington**, a focused effort to create effective, efficient and accountable government.

**Results Washington’s** Goal Area number 4 is Healthy and Safe Communities. ESA has lead responsibility for one of the success metrics under this goal and for the related **Supported People: Stability and Self-sufficiency** success indicator. ESA’s **Results Washington** success metric is:

- Increase the percentage and number who leave public assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - TANF) due to increased income or at their request from 54 percent to 60 percent by June 30, 2015.

### Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Goals

**DSHS has the following five broad goals:** Health, Safety, Protection, Quality of Life, Public Trust

#### DSHS Goals

- **Health** – Each individual and each community will be healthy.
- **Safety** – Each individual and each community will be safe.
- **Protection** – Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected.
- **Quality of Life** – Each individual in need will be supported to attain the highest possible quality of life.
- **Public Trust** – Strong management practices will ensure quality and efficiency.



**ESA has the following success metrics in support of the DSHS Goals listed below:**

**Health:**

- People below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will have greater access to Basic Food assistance.
- The average time to process a disability determination for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will decrease.

**Quality of Life:**

- Total child support collections will increase.
- Percentage of people who leave Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) due to self-sufficiency or at their request will increase. (Note: also a Results Washington goal.)
- Percentage and number of people who leave TANF and remain off TANF for 12 consecutive months will increase.
- Percentage of TANF recipients meeting the Federal Work Participation Rate will increase.

**Public Trust:**

- The Basic Food payment accuracy rate will increase.
- Application processing timeliness will meet or exceed Federal Standards of Promptness.
- Community Services Division statewide Customer Service Contact Center forced-disconnect rate will be eliminated.

## Strategic Plan

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Below are the details of our Strategic Plan to meet our Strategic Objectives. Each Strategic Objective is discussed under its larger DSHS goal and includes a statement of its importance, a quantified success measure, a timeline, and most importantly, an Action Plan.

ESA Strategic Objectives are monitored, updated and reported quarterly online at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ppa/strategic.shtml>.

### **Strategic Objectives, Importance, Success Measures and Action Plans**

**DSHS Goal 1: Health - Each individual and each community will be healthy.**

**Strategic Objective 1.1:** People below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will have greater access to Basic Food assistance.

**Importance:** In nearly 70 percent of Washington counties (27 of 38), more than 13 percent of the population lives in poverty, and eight counties have a poverty rate of 20 percent or more (2011 US Census Bureau estimates). Providing food assistance is critical to support these low-income children and families.

**Success Measure:** The percentage of eligible people participating in



the Basic Food program (income under 125 percent FPL) increases from 92 percent in January 2013 to 96 percent by July 2015.

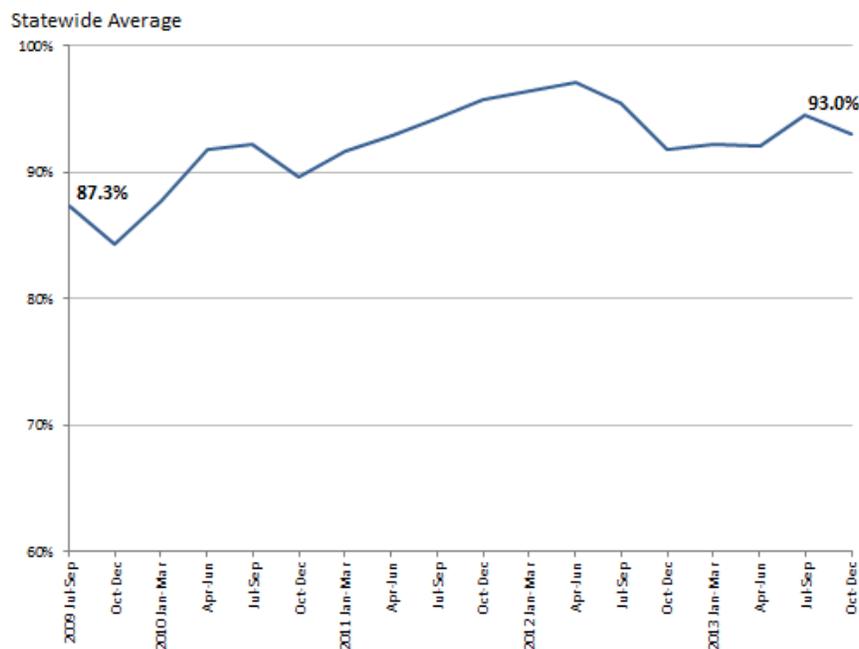
**Action Plan:**

- Pilot outreach approaches in Pierce and Yakima Counties for households that receive the Medicare Low Income Subsidy, but do not receive Basic Food. This \$1 million project, fully funded by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, continues through September 2013. Completed (September 2013).
  - Complete internal pilot analysis (March 2014)
- Take strategies used to reach Medicare Low Income Subsidy households to develop outreach strategies with a broader appeal to underserved households such as elderly persons.
- Continue to work with Basic Food outreach contractors to improve access and participation.
- Add retention incentive to all outreach contracts to help participants stay connected to Basic Food starting in Federal Fiscal Year 2014. Completed (October 2013).
- Expand use of federal waiver of interview requirements for elderly households with no earnings through targeted communication to staff, partners and the community at large.

**Food Assistance**

- In SFY 2013, ESA issued nearly \$1.7 billion in Basic Food benefits to Washington families.
  - Children under age 18 account for 40 percent of all Basic Food recipients.
  - Each \$1 of benefits generates \$1.79 in local economic activity.
- Washington’s Basic Food participation rate is 93 percent – among the highest in the nation.

**Chart 1.1 Percentage of persons at or below 125 percent of Federal Poverty Level who receive Basic Food Assistance**



**Strategic Objective 1.2:** The average time to process a disability determination for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will decrease.

**Importance:** Social Security disability benefits are critical to individuals with disabilities to meet their basic needs, and timely processing is essential.

**Success Measure:** The average time to process initial disability determinations decreases from 69.6 days in January 2013 to 66 days in July 2015 for SSDI cases and from 73.9 days in January 2013 to 70 days in July 2015 for SSI cases.

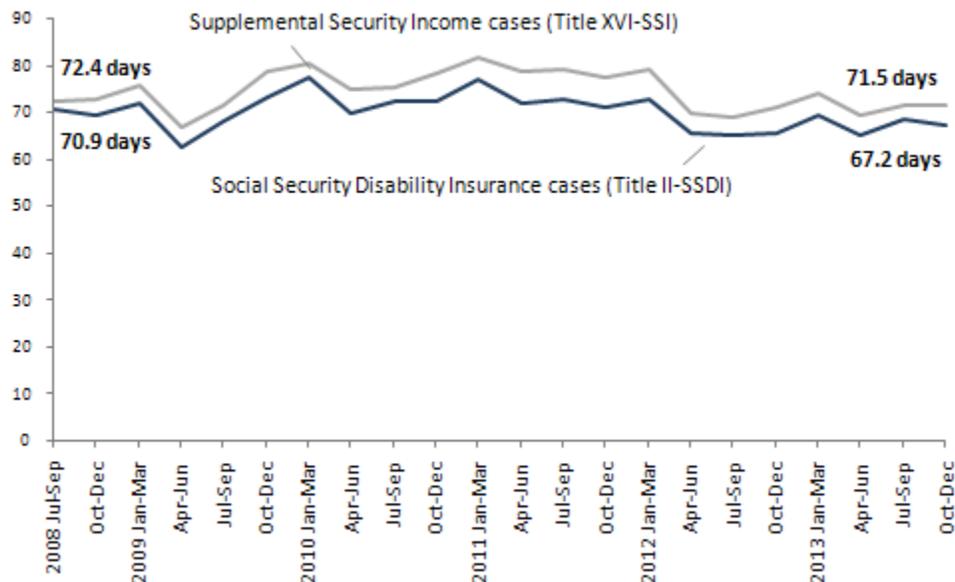
**Action Plan:** Focus on making timely disability determinations and achieve greater efficiencies in disability case processing to improve services.

- Increase IT functionality – Implemented Auto-Receipt (February 2014) and Statewide Auto-Case-Assignment (October 2013), freeing up time for our support staff to help in other areas.
- Change support staff duties to increase their engagement in disability case processing - Support staff are making follow-up phone calls to claimants, which allows adjudicators more time for case development. Implemented in Olympia (February 2013) and Seattle (January 2014).



[ESA Action Plan 1.2 – Processing Time](#)

Chart 1.2 **The average time to process initial determinations for Social Security Disability Insurance cases (Title II-SSDI), and for Supplemental Security Income cases (Title XVI-SSI)**



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**DSHS Goal 4: Quality of Life** - Each Individual in need will be supported to attain the highest possible quality of life.

**Strategic Objective 4.1:** Total child support collections will increase.

**Importance:** In Washington State, child support represents almost one-quarter of the income for poor families who receive it. Collecting child support for families avoids approximately \$122.4 million a year in public assistance costs for medical, food and cash assistance.

**Success Measure:** Total child support collections increase from \$686.9 million in SFY2013 to \$708 million in SFY2015.

**Action Plan:**

- Invest when possible in automated IT solutions to create more efficient processes and to ensure complete, accurate and timely enforcement actions.
- Develop and implement the Child Support Alternative Solutions Program that will refer non-custodial parents to community partners to assist in removing barriers to payment of child support, with newly hired Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members providing assistance.
- Continue to focus on quick and accurate child support order establishment (the legal basis for subsequent collections).
- Engage in two Lean projects, Paternity Coding and SEMS Work Request Process. Completed (September and October 2013).
- Implement a Lean training Pilot Project. Two teams will complete a nine month team-based Lean training and will each select and complete a Lean project (December 2014).
- Provide additional Lean training opportunities for all DCS staff to improve data integrity and streamline internal processes.

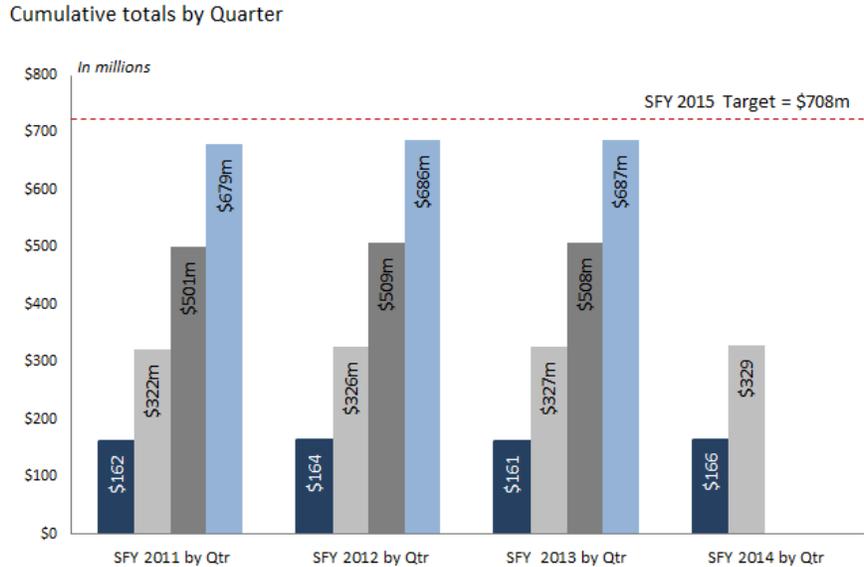
**Child Support and the Office of Financial Recovery**

- In SFY 2013, ESA collected nearly \$687 million in child support for families.
- Washington’s Child Support Program served about 1 out of every 10 state residents during SFY 2013.
- Child support collections helped avoid approximately \$122 million in Medicaid, cash and food assistance program expenditures.
- Nearly 65 percent of child support payments are received, and 85 percent disbursed, electronically.
- The Division of Child Support collected \$5.05 child support for every \$1 spent.
- The Office of Financial Recovery recovers over \$250 million annually for DSHS and partner agencies, helping them meet current expenditures and continue to provide essential services for the state’s most vulnerable citizens.



ESA Action Plan 4.1 – Child Support Collections

**Chart 4.1 Total IV-D (child support) collections to increase to \$708m annually by SFY15**



**Strategic Objective 4.2:** Percentage of people who leave Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) due to self-sufficiency or at their request will increase.

**Importance:** ESA provides help to low-income working families to lift them out of poverty and reduce their chances of needing future assistance. The state offers education, job training and job-match services as routes to advance to better jobs. Families that work always have more income than if they only receive public assistance.

**Success Measure:** The percentage of people who leave TANF due to increased income or at their request increases from 54 percent in January 2013 to 60 percent by July 2015.

Strategic Objectives 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 share a common action plan which is presented after Strategic Objective 4.4.

**Strategic Objective 4.3:** The percentage and number of people who leave TANF and remain off TANF for 12 consecutive months will increase.

**Importance:** ESA provides help to low-income working families to lift them out of poverty and reduce their chances of needing future assistance. The state offers education, job training and job-match services as routes to advance to better jobs. Families that work always have more income than if they only receive public assistance.

**Success Measure:** The percentage of people who leave TANF and remain off TANF for 12 consecutive



months increases from 71 percent in January 2013 to 75 percent by July 2015.

**Strategic Objective 4.4:** The percentage of TANF families meeting the Federal Work Participation Rate will increase.

**Importance:** ESA provides help to low-income working families to lift them out of poverty and reduce their chances of needing future assistance. The state offers education, job training and job-match services as routes to advance to better jobs. Families that work always have more income than if they only receive public assistance.

**Success Measure:** The percentage of TANF families meeting the Federal All-Family Work Participation Rate increases from 10.9 percent in January 2013 to 20 percent by July 2015. The percentage of TANF Two-Parent Families meeting the Federal Work Participation Rate increases from 8.9 percent in January 2013 to 20 percent by July 2015.

#### **Action Plan for Strategic Objectives 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4:**

The Action Plan is designed to meet or exceed federal rates.

- Improve parent engagement in strength-based, family-focused activities that move them along their pathway to self-sufficiency through:
  - Completing staff training in Motivational Interviewing
  - Implementing an improved comprehensive assessment for clients
  - Completing development and testing of the TANF Predictive Risk Intelligence System (PRISM) tool
  - Focusing deployment of WorkFirst staff on Case Management
- Increase countable hours for parents participating but not meeting the Federal Work Participation Rate.
- Move more parents to work through engagement in work preparation activities such as job search, supported/subsidized work programs, Department of Commerce work programs and education and training programs, and expanded use of unpaid Work Experience (WEX) community service.
- Engage in six Lean projects, from December 2013 to July 2014, to streamline the WorkFirst Program and eliminate areas where clients are liable to fall through gaps.
  - 1) Reduce ESD Job Search Churn. Completed (December 2013).
  - 2) Process For Preparing Federal Participation Report. Completed (January 2014).
  - 3) Verifying and Documenting Actual Hours of Participation (March 2014).
  - 4) Increasing Successful Outcomes For Educational Activities (April 2014).
  - 5) Reducing Transition Gaps (June 2014).



#### **TANF Adults**

In SFY 2013, ESA served an average of nearly 49,000 TANF families each month.

- 55 percent of TANF families are headed by a single parent.
- 45 percent of TANF adults are between 21-29 years of age.
- In June 2013, almost 13 percent of TANF cases identified themselves as homeless.
- Typical TANF family: single mom with one child receiving \$371 cash grant, medical assistance.



6) Post Comprehensive Evaluation Engagement (Barrier Removal To Work) (July 2014).

ESA Action Plan 4.2 – Percentage who Leave TANF

CHART 4.2 Percent and number of families who leave public assistance (TANF) due to increased income or at their request

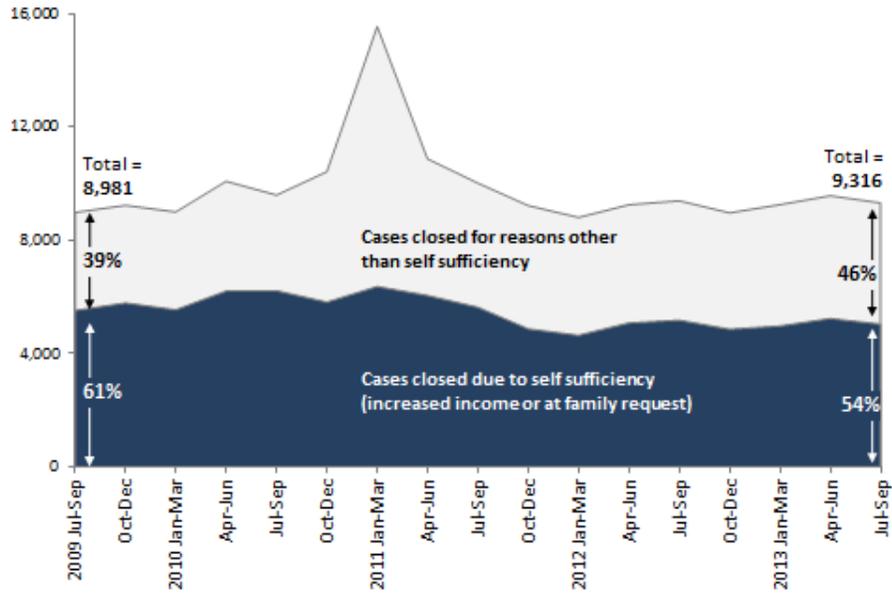


CHART 4.3 Percent and number of adults who exit TANF and remain off TANF for 12 consecutive months

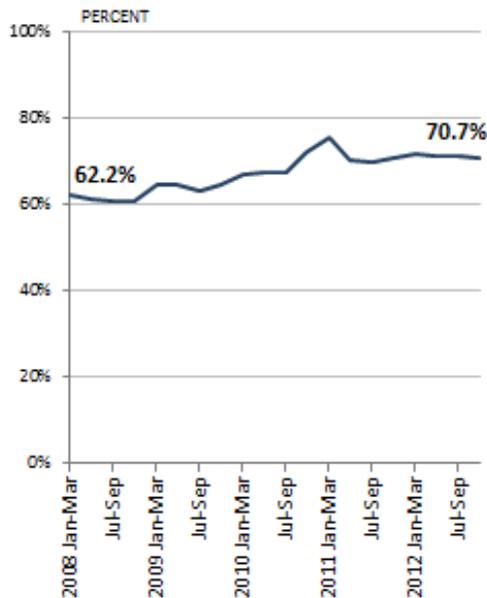
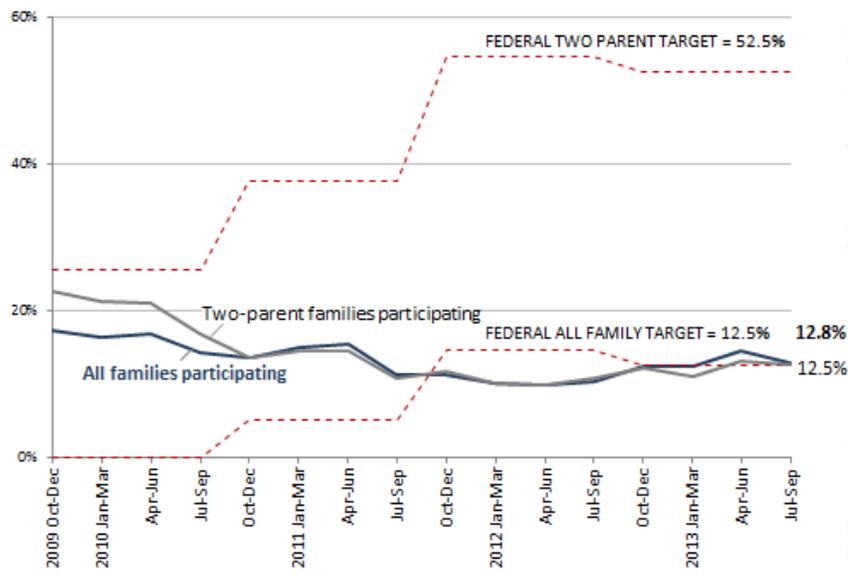


CHART 4.4 Percent of families meeting federally mandated work participation requirements



**DSHS Goal 5: Public Trust - Strong management practices will ensure quality and efficiency.**

**Strategic Objective 5.1:** The Basic Food payment accuracy rate will increase.

**Importance:** Based on 2011 US Census Bureau estimates, in nearly 70 percent of Washington counties (27 of 38) more than 13 percent of the population lives in poverty, and eight counties have a poverty rate of 20 percent or more. Providing accurate and timely food assistance is critical to support these low-income children and families.

**Success Measure:** The Basic Food payment accuracy rate increases from 95 percent in January 2013 to 98 percent by July 2015.

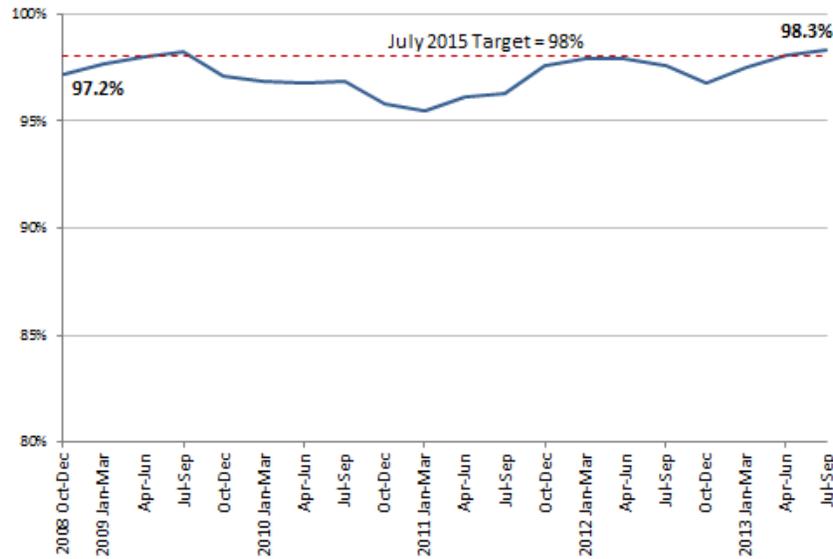


**Action Plan:**

- Review all case errors in the process review panel to discuss the root cause of the errors, potential mitigation of the errors, and strategies for improving future performance.
- When appropriate, pursue waivers to the federal SNAP policy and adopt state option rule changes to eliminate error-prone rules and simplify procedures and reduce staff workload.
- Continue use of and enhancements to Audit Plus, a new audit tool with report libraries that assists in data collection and increases accountability via direct feedback to staff.
- Improve the mid-certification review process used for most households to update case details at six months. This should reduce the risk of payment errors and the number of reviews considered as incomplete.



Chart 5.1 Food assistance payment accuracy rate



**Strategic Objective 5.2:** Application processing timeliness will meet or exceed Federal Standards of Promptness.

**Importance:** Providing accurate and timely benefits is vital to help meet the needs of low-income children and families and demonstrate good stewardship of public funds.

**Success Measure:** Application processing timeliness increases to meet or exceed Federal Standards of Promptness by July 2015.

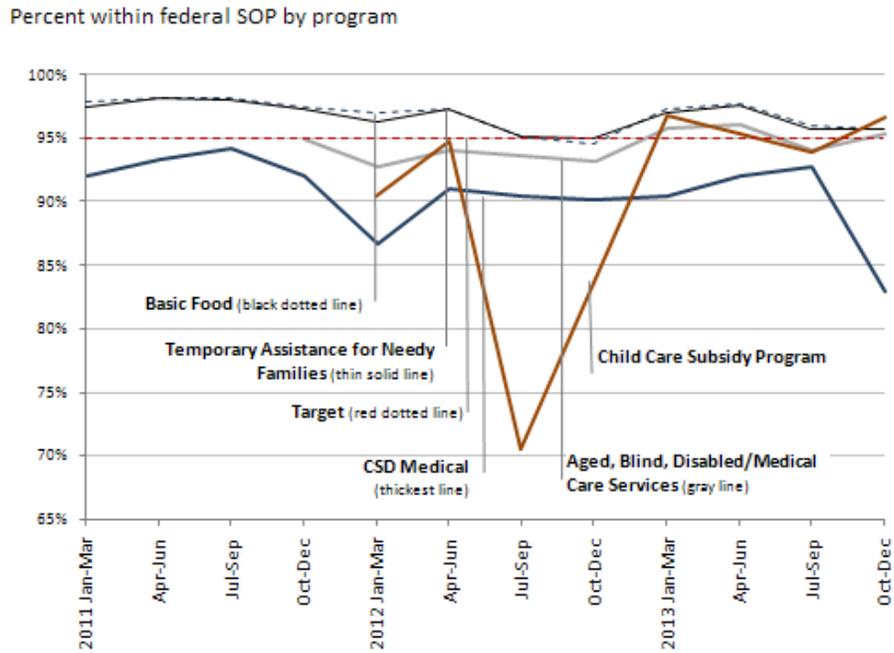
**Action Plan:**

- Assess the impacts of the Affordable Care Act changes on medical programs remaining in ESA.
- Update the evaluation of which remaining medical programs are contributing to missed Standards of Promptness utilizing refreshed data following the ACA transition.
- Identify targeted initiatives/recommendations for improvement based on the revised analysis.



ESA Action Plan 5.2 – Application Processing Timelines

Chart 5.2 **Timely economic services application processing – Percent within Federal Standards of Promptness by Program**



**Strategic Objective 5.3:** The Community Services Division statewide Customer Service Contact Center forced-disconnect rate will be eliminated.

**Importance:** Providing accurate and timely benefits is vital to help meet the needs of low-income children and families and demonstrate good stewardship of public funds.

**Success Measure:** The Community Services Division Contact Center general queue forced-disconnect rate decreases from 58 percent in January 2013 to zero percent by July 2015.

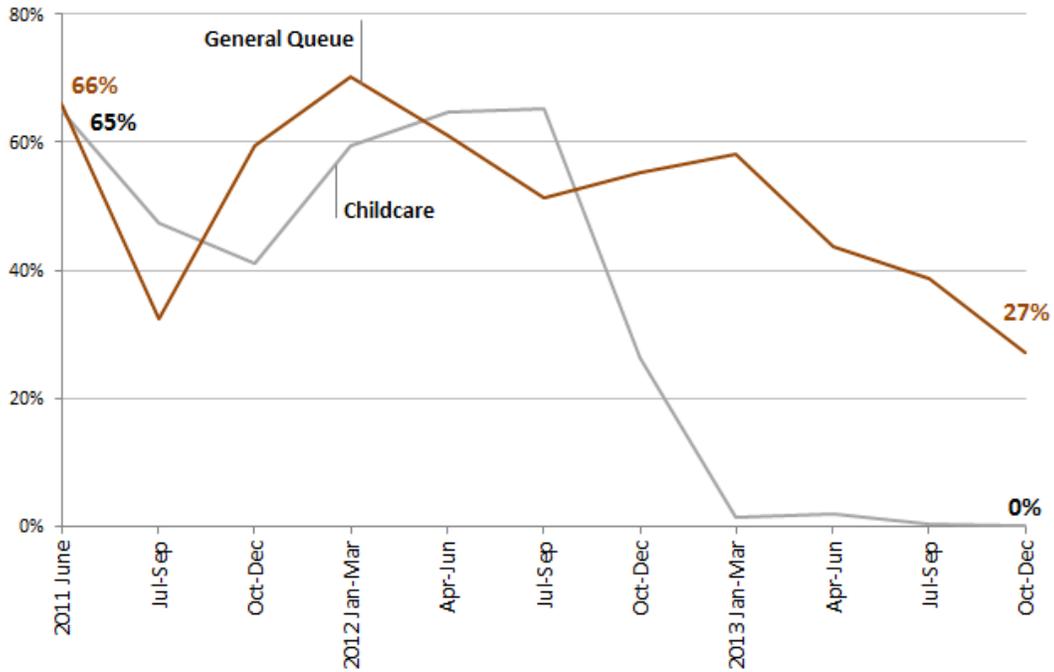
**Action Plan:**

- Prioritize Contact Center hiring.
- Develop phone triage procedures to increase call flow efficiency and shift focus on performance to front-end phone activities.
- Purchase Contact Center business technology, including:
  - Workforce optimization software to allow for sophisticated call volume and workload modeling to optimize workforce assignment.
  - Work outcome tracking tools to measure first contact resolution expectations.



- Other performance management/accountability tools to assess and monitor quality and production.

Chart 5.3 **Community Services Division Contact Center forced disconnect rate by queue**



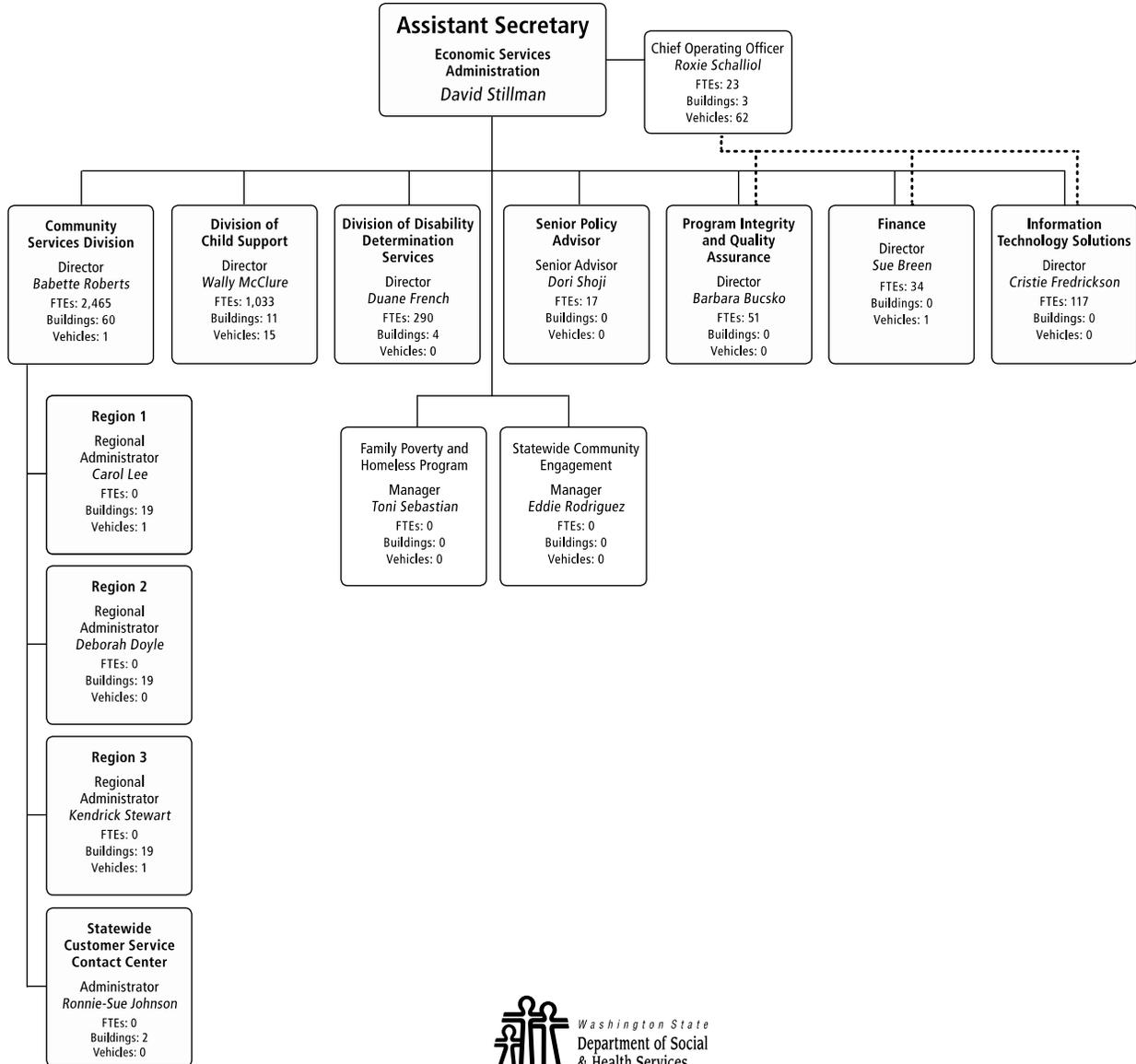
## ESA Awards, Recognition and Kudos

| DIVISION                       | DATE RECEIVED<br>Period for which award covers | AWARD  | BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF REASON FOR AWARD   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| DDDS                           | October 2012                                   | SSA Commissioner's Award                               | The Social Security Office of Inspector General Anti-Fraud Team, including the team in Western Washington, received the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Commissioner's Citation for outstanding work investigating and prosecuting government benefit fraud cases.                                       |
| ITS                            | October 2013                                   | Acknowledgement for Affordable Care Act Implementation | IT Solutions has been working with a variety of partners to successfully implement system changes necessary to support ACA. The automation impacts included significant changes to the Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES), Washington Connection, Barcode, and the creation of the Eligibility Service. |
| CSD Region 1<br>Wapato CSO     | February 2013                                  | 2012 Silver Hunger Champion Award                      | The annual award is bestowed upon organizations that help bring the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), to low-income people in creative ways. Presented by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.  |
| CSD Region 1<br>Ellensburg CSO | February 2013                                  | 2012 Bronze Hunger Champion Award                      | The annual award is bestowed upon organizations that help bring the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), to low-income people in creative ways. Presented by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.  |
| CSD Region 1<br>Sunnyside CSO  | February 2013                                  | 2012 Bronze Hunger Champion Award                      | The annual award is bestowed upon organizations that help bring the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), to low-income people in creative ways. Presented by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.  |



# Department of Social and Health Services

## Economic Services Administration



February 28, 2014

