

**Emergency Changes to Cash & Food Assistance in Washington State:**  
**Synopsis created for Statewide COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call**  
**April 15, 2020**

*\*Please note that it's likely that changes to cash and food assistance will continue as the economic crisis continues to unfold. This document may not be comprehensive or reflect the most recent updates.*

Washington state agencies have responded quickly to the novel coronavirus pandemic, enacting many emergency rules to support individuals and families with low incomes to connect with public benefits and maintain those benefits during the crisis. These steps are critical, but more support will be needed to ensure that every person in our state can meet their basic needs. Relevant policy changes are listed below, organized by program. Note that agencies have stated that these policy changes are temporary.

- In **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/WorkFirst**, the Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) has:
  - Exempted all TANF/WorkFirst recipients from **work requirements** for good cause.
  - **Suspended sanctions** (benefit reductions and terminations) for noncompliance and **time limits** for families reaching 60 months on the program.
  - **Eliminated the waiting period** before former recipients whose cases were closed due to sanctions can re-apply for benefits.
  - Moved **mandatory orientations** from in-person to over the phone.
  - **Suspended home visits** for the Teen Living Assessment and home visits as part of the sanction process.
  - **Continued payment** for WorkFirst Work-study and Community Jobs Participants.
  - For more information, visit the [“Changes to WorkFirst and ABAWD requirements”](#) page on the DSHS website.
- In **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Basic Food**, DSHS has:
  - Issued additional food benefits up to the maximum allowed (based on household size) for March and April 2020. See this [FAQ](#) for more.
  - Exempted ABAWDS (able-bodied adults without dependents) from work requirements in all counties, including King County, in March, April, and May 2020.
- The **Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP)**, administered by DSHS, has also been made available. This provides one-time cash assistance for applicants who are ineligible for other benefits, like SNAP, TANF, or ABD. *There is no requirement around citizenship status to receive this benefit.*
- In **Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)** the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) has waived family co-pays for April, May, and June 2020.
  - Other emergency policy changes to support child care providers have also been enacted. See the [DCYF COVID-19 response website](#) for more.

**An important note about access:** Applications for cash and food assistance in Washington state have increased dramatically in the wake of COVID-19. DSHS services are being provided out of call centers, but we know that phone lines are being inundated with the huge level of need. Many people are experiencing very lengthy hold times and disconnections when the queue gets too large. ***For individuals and families who have access to the internet, it's recommended that they submit applications for assistance online at <https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/>.*** Paper forms and drop boxes are also available outside of some Community Services Offices, and applications submitted that way are being collected each day.

**For more on expansions to cash assistance through the federal legislation, see:**

- [CLASP on Recovery Rebates](#)
- [NELP on expansions to Unemployment Insurance](#)

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