

Applying for Public Assistance

What is an application?

An application is a written request, on a DSHS form. The date DSHS gets the form from you is the “date of the application.” You can apply in-person at your local DSHS Community Service Office (CSO) or by mail, or by fax, or by internet at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/onlinecso/findservice.shtml>. If you are disabled, you can get special help from DSHS in applying for benefits under DSHS’ Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA) services. See our publication [*DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations*](#).

An application can be made by:

- the person in his/her own behalf;
- a legal guardian or power of attorney;
- any other person acting on behalf of the applicant.

Verification

DSHS will ask for documents verifying or supporting the statements made on the application. Example: a copy of a car title to verify ownership. If you do not have a certain requested type of verification, you can use other verification such as statements by other parties. You should not have to provide verifying documents for which a fee is charged (example: certified birth certificate) unless DSHS authorizes payment for such fee.

Action on Application

DSHS must act on applications in one of the following ways in writing:

- approval;
- denial; or
- withdrawal.

A denial must be in writing and dated. It must:

- state the reason for denial;
- cite the applicable rule or law; and
- include a statement of the right to a fair hearing.

A withdrawal may be made only in writing (but can be done electronically, by internet) by the applicant.

What are the time limits for disposition of applications?

- Medical Assistance: 45 days (unless “disability” is an issue, then it is 60 days)
- Expedited Food Stamps: Must be allowed to apply immediately and, if approved, stamps must be “in hand” within 5 days
- Pregnancy Related Medical Assistance (“First Steps”): 15 days
- All Others: 30 days

◆ **NOTE:** DSHS must provide applications and notices in the primary language of the person seeking or getting benefits. Also, DSHS must help any applicant who needs special help because of physical or mental health, communication problems, or if the applicant has problems with reading, writing or understanding the forms.

If your application is denied or not timely acted upon, you have a right to ask for a fair hearing. Then an impartial administrative law judge will decide whether the denial was legally correct. Ask for a fair hearing by writing (including by email) or calling the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at P.O. Box 42489, Olympia, WA 98504, or going to www.oah.wa.gov/ and clicking on “Contact” for the phone number of the regional OAH office nearest you. You can also call or write your local DSHS office, or fill out and hand

or send in a Request for Fair Hearing form at your local DSHS office.

If it is an emergency, ask to have your hearing held as soon as possible by calling the OAH. This is called an “expedited” hearing. Otherwise, your hearing will probably be 20 days or more after you ask for it.

◆ You can apply for public assistance even if you are not eligible at the time of application, if you know or believe you will become eligible in the next 45 days. Example: your job is ending in the next 45 days, or you will get out of jail in the next 45 days.

If you are representing yourself, get our publication called Representing Yourself at a Fair Hearing. For free legal advice about your case, call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

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This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of the date of its printing, February 2012.

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