

DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA)

What are Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA)?

If you have disabilities that make it hard for you to ask for or manage benefits, DSHS must accommodate you. DSHS must try to make their services and benefits available to you as much as they are available to people who do not have a disability. This includes physical accommodations like wheelchair ramps or larger font on letters. DSHS may also have to loosen its rules about your responsibilities.

A federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), requires DSHS to make these accommodations. DSHS also made rules to follow. DSHS calls its rules “Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA)” or “Equal Access (EA).” DSHS rules are in your local library or online at [Chapter 388-472](#) of the Washington Administrative Code.

Examples of possible accommodations

DSHS should provide if you need them include:

- Change your WorkFirst requirements
- Help fill out DSHS forms
- Send forms and letters in large print, electronic, or other format
- Read or explain to you letters or forms they send
- Help get info DSHS needs by the due date
- Send copies of letters to or contact someone who helps you

- Give you extra time to respond to DSHS or get them information
- Call instead of having you come to the office
- Call you before they will deny, stop, or reduce your benefits
- If you disagree with a DSHS decision, help you ask for a hearing and benefits until the hearing.
- Remind you of appointments
- If you miss an appointment or due date, call you before stopping your benefits
- Look at decisions to stop or lower benefits to make sure they followed your Equal Access plan

How do I get Accommodations?

DSHS must ask if you need extra help when you apply for benefits and have reviews. DSHS staff should look for signs that you need extra help and offer you accommodations. **This does not always happen.** You should ask your worker directly to give you an accommodation plan. Tell your worker what accommodations you need. Ask for a copy of your accommodation plan. Once DSHS knows you need accommodations, they should flag your file so anyone working with you knows about your plan.

If DSHS refuses to give you a plan, or does not follow your plan, ask for a hearing. See “What if I Disagree,” below.

When can I get accommodations?

DSHS must give you accommodations if any of these is true:

- You tell DSHS you need accommodations to get or keep DSHS benefits or services.
- You tell DSHS you have a mental health condition.
- You have a developmental disability.
- You have a disability resulting from drug or alcohol addiction.
- You cannot read or write in any language, or your reading or writing is very limited.
- You are under 18 and do not live with your parents.
- You have trouble communicating, understanding, remembering, processing information, making decisions.
- You have any limitation affecting your ability to get or keep DSHS benefits in the same way as people without a limitation or disability.

Can my accommodation plan change?

Yes. After you start getting accommodations, you and your worker can change your plan. You can ask for a change if the plan is not working or your needs change. You can ask for a plan at any time.

Do I have to have accommodations?

No. If you do not want DSHS to identify you as NSA, DSHS cannot do so. You can just tell your worker that you do not want them to identify you as NSA. This is true even if your disability interferes with your ability to do what DSHS says you must do. To make sure DSHS does not identify you as NSA, ask your worker.

DSHS must still accommodate your disability under the ADA, but they would not mark your file as NSA. You would not get all the accommodations or protections of NSA.

Example: DSHS would not have to take any extra steps to lower or stop your benefits.

If you are worried about DSHS identifying you as NSA, talk to your worker. Put your wishes in writing. Save a dated copy for yourself. You may later disagree about what you wanted.

DSHS identified me as needing NSA. Now what?

You and your worker create an accommodation plan. It lists what DSHS will do to help you. Every NSA client must have this plan. It should include the things you need. See examples of accommodations in the first section.

What happens if I do not follow DSHS rules?

Normally DSHS can stop or lower your benefits if you do not follow the rules. If you did not follow the rules because of your limitation or disability, DSHS must find that you had “good cause.” They cannot take any

action against you even though you did not follow the rules.

DSHS must also review your accommodation plan to make sure you have all the services you need to help you follow the rules. If DSHS cannot accommodate your condition so that you can follow the rules, DSHS must waive (not make you follow) those rules for you them.

If DSHS finds that you can follow the rules, with or without accommodations, you must follow the rules as long as DSHS gives you the accommodations you need.

What If I disagree with an NSA decision DSHS makes?

If you disagree with any decision DSHS makes, ask to speak with your worker's supervisor, and/or ask for a hearing. You might disagree with DSHS's decision that you do not need accommodations. You might disagree with the accommodation plan DSHS

gave you. A hearing decision can order DSHS to give you the accommodations you need. It can order DSHS to stop a sanction and give you benefits. You must prove at the hearing that your limitations affected your ability to do what DSHS required, or that you had some other good cause for not following the rules.

❖ **Example:** Your doctor says you cannot drive while taking a certain medication. DSHS must help you find other transportation, or not make you go places when you cannot get other transportation.

If you have a hearing, read [Representing Yourself at an Administrative Hearing](#).

What if I have questions?

If you have questions about accommodations or accommodation plans, talk to your DSHS worker. For TANF, also see [WorkFirst: Individual Responsibility Plans](#).

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