

# Applying for Public Assistance

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## What is an application?

It is a written request, on a DSHS form. The date DSHS gets your form is the “date of the application.”

## How and where can I apply?

- In-person at your local DSHS Community Service Office (CSO)
- By mail
- By fax
- Online at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/community-services-office>

## I have a disability. Can I get help applying?

**Yes.** You can get special help from DSHS in applying for benefits under DSHS’ Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA)/Equal Access services. Read [DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations](#) available at [washingtonlawhelp.org](http://washingtonlawhelp.org)

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- ❖ **If you need medical assistance**, apply at <http://www.wahbexchange.org/> or call the Healthplanfinder customer support center number at 1-855-923-4633. Interpreters, translation, and extra help for anyone having trouble with an application are available. Also, read [Health Care Reform – General Information](#).
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## What if English is not my first language?

DSHS must give you applications and notices in your primary language.

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- ❖ DSHS must help you if you need special help because of physical or mental health, communication problems, or if you have problems with reading, writing or understanding the forms.
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## Can I apply myself? Does someone do it for me?

You can make an application yourself or anyone on your behalf can do it for you.

## What is verification?

DSHS will ask for documents **verifying** (supporting) your statements in the application. **Example:** a copy of a car title, to verify ownership.

## What if I do not have the verification DSHS asked for?

You can use other verification, such as statements by other parties.

## Will it cost me to get the verification DSHS wants?

You should not have to provide verifying documents that cost money (**example:** certified birth certificate) unless DSHS pays for them.

## How does DSHS act on the application?

DSHS must do one of these in writing:

- approve
- deny

They may also send you a letter stating that you decided to withdraw the application.

## I changed my mind about applying. How do I withdraw my application?

You make a **withdrawal** only in writing, including electronically. (That means online.)

## How do I find out if DSHS has denied my application?

DSHS must send you a **denial**. It must

- be in writing
- be dated
- state why DSHS denied your application
- cite the applicable rule or law
- state your right to an administrative hearing

## How long does DSHS have to act on my application?

It depends on the type of application.

- **Expedited Food Assistance:** You must be allowed to apply immediately. If DSHS approves you, food assistance must be “in hand” within seven days.
- **All Others:** 30 days.

## DSHS denied my application. Now what?

If they deny your application or do not timely act upon it, you have the right to ask for an administrative hearing. Then an administrative law judge will decide if the denial was legally correct.

## How do I ask for an administrative hearing?

- Write the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at P.O. Box 42489, Olympia, WA 98504.
- Go to [www.oah.wa.gov/](http://www.oah.wa.gov/). Click on “Contact” for the phone number of the regional OAH office nearest you. Call that office.
- Call or write your local DSHS office.
- Fill out and hand in or mail a Request for Administrative Hearing form at your local DSHS office.

## How soon will they schedule the hearing?

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

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- ❖ 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.
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## How do I get ready for an administrative hearing?

Read [Representing Yourself at an Administrative Hearing](#). For free legal advice about your case, call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

## What if I need legal help?

- Apply online with [CLEAR\\*Online](#) - <https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help> or
- Call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014

CLEAR is Washington's toll-free, centralized intake, advice and referral service for low-income people seeking free legal assistance with civil legal problems.

- **Outside King County:** Call 1-888-201-1014 weekdays 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

- **King County:** Call 211 for info and referral to an appropriate legal services provider weekdays 8:00 am – 6:00 pm. You may also call (206) 461-3200, or toll-free 1-877-211-WASH (9274). You can also get info on legal service providers in King County at [www.resourcehouse.com/win211/](http://www.resourcehouse.com/win211/).

- **Persons 60 and Over:** Seniors age 60 or over may call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of income. Assets limits may apply. Seniors in King County may call 2-1-1.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing callers can call 1-800-833-6384 for a free relay operator. They will then connect you with 211 or CLEAR.

CLEAR and 211 will conference in free interpreters when needed.

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