

# Applying for Public Assistance

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- ❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.
  - ❖ You can find all the fact sheets we link to here at [WashingtonLawHelp.org](http://WashingtonLawHelp.org).
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## What does “applying for public assistance” mean?

It means you are asking for help. You ask the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to look at your situation and see if you are eligible to get help from them. The date DSHS gets your request is the **date of the application**.

## How do I apply?

- by mail
- online at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/community-services-office>
- by calling the Customer Service Contact Center at 877-501-2233

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

Yes. Read [DSHS Help for People with Disabilities: Necessary Supplemental Accommodations](#).

## I need help getting health insurance.

Apply at <http://www.wahbexchange.org/> or call Healthplanfinder’s customer support center at 1-855-923-4633. Interpreters, translation, and extra help for anyone having trouble with an application are available.

## English is not my first language.

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

## Can someone apply for me?

Yes. Anyone on your behalf can do it for you.

## **What is “verification”?**

DSHS will ask for paperwork **verifying** (proving) some of the things in your application. **Example:** a copy of a car title, to prove you own it.

## **I do not have the proof DSHS asked for.**

You can use other proof, such as statements by other people.

## **I have to pay to get the proof DSHS wants.**

You should not have to give them anything you have to pay for (**example:** certified birth certificate). Ask DSHS to pay for it.

## **Will DSHS get back to me?**

Yes. They must approve (say yes) or deny you (turn you down) in writing.

## **I changed my mind about applying. Can I withdraw my application?**

Yes. Do it in writing. This can mean electronically (online). DSHS should send you a letter confirming that you withdrew your application.

## **How long will DSHS take to look at my application?**

It depends on what you applied for.

**Expedited (Emergency) Food Assistance:** They must let you apply immediately. If they approve you, you must get food assistance within seven days.

**All Others:** 30 days.

## **DSHS turned me down. Now what?**

If they deny your application or do not timely act on it, you can ask for a hearing. An administrative law judge then decides if you should get benefits after all.

## How do I ask for a hearing?

- Write the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at P.O. Box 42489, Olympia, WA 98504.
- Call or write your local DSHS office.

## When will the hearing take place?

If it is an emergency, call OAH at (360) 664-8717 or 1-800-583-8271. Ask to them to have the hearing as soon as possible. This is an **expedited** hearing. Otherwise, it 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 you apply, if you believe you will become eligible in the next 45 days. **Examples:** 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, call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

## Get Legal Help

- Outside King County, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- In King County, call 2-1-1 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- Seniors age 60 and over can call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, statewide.
- You can also apply online with CLEAR\*Online: [nwjustice.org/get-legal-help](http://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help)

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