

DSHS Support Services for WorkFirst Participants

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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.

 - ❖ **Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, you do not have to meet your participation requirements.** DSHS says this will last until the “public health condition” returns to normal. WorkFirst staff will let you know when that happens.
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What are DSHS support services?

DSHS buys these goods and services for WorkFirst participants to help you look for, get ready for, or keep work.

DSHS only pays for a support service if it decides you need it to help you take part in a WorkFirst job activity on your Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP).

Who can get these services?

- WorkFirst participants

- Sanctioned participants during the two weeks after you start participating again

- Unmarried or pregnant minors eligible for TANF living in a DSHS-approved living situation **and** meeting school requirements or actively working with a social worker to meet them

- TANF applicants who need help to go to the WorkFirst orientation

- American Indians who get a TANF or SFA cash grant and have needs due to location or work

What support services does DSHS pay for?

See the chart on the next page. Remember:

- You might not get a supportive service. DSHS must believe it directly relates to your success in WorkFirst activities.
- Amounts for services are subject to approval. DSHS may not fully pay you back.
- DSHS often experiences a lack of funds for these services. Case managers and social workers might limit approval based on funds. Each DSHS office decides how to handle this. Some stop giving vouchers for diapers and personal hygiene. Others cut back on clothing vouchers. They probably will not approve expensive items like car repairs. This is especially true if public transportation is available.
- If DSHS denies a support service you believe you need, ask to speak with a supervisor. You can ask for an administrative hearing also, or instead.

SUPPORT SERVICE	DETAILS
Accommodation	Specialized equipment for persons with disabilities needed to work. You cannot get it from another source. Examples: special chair, large letter computer screen, ramps. Must have documentation from a medical professional.
Car Repair	Repair of vehicle <u>registered to you</u> needed to make it operable. Examples: brakes, water pump, timing belt, batteries, chains, lights, tires. Must have no access to transit, or use of transit must cause hardship. Get two written cost estimates (except when not possible, such as a vehicle not working). Licensed business must perform work, except battery change. May include fees for computer diagnostics. Towing included for car repair only.
Child care	Read Working Connections Child Care
Clothing for employment	Uniform, protective devices, undergarments, special shoes, or other apparel needed to look for, get, or keep a job or take part in an IRP activity.
Counseling	Professional counseling and classes such as anger management and self-esteem. Does not count toward yearly limit.

SUPPORT SERVICE	DETAILS
Diapers	Diapers, wipes, diaper cream, and ointments for child to go to day care, letting the parent look for, get, or keep a job or take part in an IRP activity.
Education expenses	Expenses related to training or education in your IRP. Examples: tuition, books, GED tests, uniforms and specialized clothing, tutoring, tool or /kits. Must try for other sources of payment first (examples: grants, work-based tuition assistance). Class must <u>not</u> be free in community or technical colleges. Must try no-cost tutoring first (examples: high schools, community colleges, community-based organizations).
Employment License and Fees (Professional, Trade Association, Union Dues, Bonds, Certification Costs)	Union dues paid for the first month of employment. Testing needed to get a license or certification, but not included in a license fee. Examples: food handler’s card, nursing licenses or renewals.
Gasoline	Payment for gas for any privately owned vehicle.
Haircut/Styling	Haircut or to return hair to natural color needed to get or keep a job.
Lunch/Short-term Lodging and Meals	Buying your lunch at all-day DSHS-, ESD-, SBCTC-, or OTED- sponsored events such as a job fair. Must be a working lunch for all participants. State employee rate. OR You must travel to site for job interview or test, beyond normal commuting distance or you are moving to a new place to take a job. For interviews, requires confirmation of interview, test, or job. Expenses covered generally for four days’ duration or less. State employee rate. Examples: referral to interview in another part of the state where job may be accepted; state board or other exam required for employment.
Medical Exams/Services	Exams/services needed to accept job or take part in an IRP activity AND not paid for by Apple Health or offered at free clinics. Includes but is not limited to diagnostics for Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, medical exam for commercial driver’s license.

SUPPORT SERVICE	DETAILS
Mileage Reimbursement	Reimbursement for your gas cost for use of your own vehicle. Must complete mileage reimbursement form. State employee rate.
Personal Hygiene	Items needed to take care of personal appearance to take part in or accept a job. Examples: soap, shampoo, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, laundry supplies, shaving supplies, hair color, makeup, cleaning supplies, feminine hygiene supplies.
Public Transportation Costs	Transportation for non-privately owned vehicles. Examples: bus, van pool, train, ferry.
Relocation	Expenses needed to let you accept or keep full-time unsubsidized work or part-time work, if the pay gets you off TANF. Examples: cost of rent and deposit associated with relocation; cost of commercial carrier (need two written estimates); common carriers (need receipts); cost of moving equipment; cost of moving truck/van; hand trucks/dollies; fuel; mileage reimbursement for use of privately owned vehicle. May <u>not</u> be used for pet or utility deposits. Must have actual offer of work and written confirmation of start date and wages from employer.
Testing Diagnostic	Testing must <u>not</u> be provided by WorkFirst or available from free or low-cost sources. May include, not limited to literacy level, aptitude, skills proficiency.
Tools for Employment	Tools or equipment required by employer. Must have employer statement regarding tool requirement. Must need tools to accept an actual offer of work or keep job. All other employees must have same requirement for tools. The tools or equipment cannot be weapons.
Transportation-Related Licenses Fees	<p>Expenses needed to take part in or accept employment. Includes, but not limited to driver's license. Adults or teen heads of household only. Examples: vehicle license plates/tabs, license fees, title transfers emissions testing.</p> <p>Liability insurance is limited to vehicles registered to you only. Must be authorized by written Exception to Rule (ETR).</p> <p>Must be authorized by written ETR for these traffic-related expenses <u>only</u>: outstanding warrants, traffic tickets, fines, penalties, collection agencies. If a current payment arrangement is already in place, you are not eligible.</p>

How do I get the support services I need?

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- ❖ The case manager may forget to tell you that you can get these services. You must ask the case manager for what you think you need.
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- Tell your case manager the problem or need that will help you get or keep a job. Ask to discuss the support services you believe are right for you. Ask your case manager to include important support services on your Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP). The back of the IRP lists some support services.
- The case manager may ask you for proof of your need. **Example:** You need a car repair. You might need two car repair estimates in writing. **Do not get the car repaired and then ask DSHS to pay the bill!** Get approval first.
- When the case manager gets the proof they need from you, DSHS will decide whether to approve the support service.
- If DSHS approves support services, it may pay the provider directly **or** give you a payment voucher. Some support services require your case manager to ask for an exception to policy. This may take longer. Read [Exception to Rule \(ETR\): DSHS Programs](#).
- If DSHS does not tell you within a reasonable time if it approves the support service, ask your case manager about it.
- If there is still no response from your case manager, ask for an administrative hearing on the failure to provide needed support services. You can also ask to speak to your case manager's **lead worker** or **supervisor**. See below on how to ask for a hearing.

How much will DSHS pay in total support services for me?

The limit is \$3,000 per person per year for support services. The year starts on July 1 and ends on June 30.

What do support services funds not cover?

- Employment placement fees
- Services normally provided by state employees
- Weapons
- Buying a vehicle

- Court-imposed fines (non-traffic related)
- Installment payments, such as loan payments

What if DSHS will not pay for services I believe I need?

Contact your case manager's lead worker or supervisor.

If that does not fix things, ask for an administrative hearing. Write to Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 42488, Olympia, WA 98504. You can also call your case manager or the Hearing Coordinator in the local DSHS office to say that you want an administrative hearing.

Read [Representing Yourself at an Administrative Hearing](#).

Get Legal Help

- Outside King County, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- In King County call 211 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- Seniors (age 60 and over) can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, statewide.
- You can also apply online with CLEAR*Online: nwjustice.org/get-legal-help.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

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