

## About the Economic Services Administration

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2019, approximately one in four Washington residents turned to the Economic Services Administration (ESA) within the Department of Social and Health Services for assistance with cash, food, child support, child care, disability determination, support for transitioning to employment, and other services. A customer base of nearly 1.8 million individuals receives service from more than 4,300 dedicated ESA employees providing individuals and families across the state with the resources and support they need to transform their lives.

Together, the variety of services ESA provides aim to achieve a unified goal of reducing the number of individuals and families living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level by 50 percent by 2025 in a way that eliminates disparity. This goal—along with specific strategic objectives, success measures, and action plans—is part of [ESA's 2019-2021 Strategic Plan](#). Of course, it is not a goal that can be achieved by ESA alone. [Governor Inslee's Directive 17-13](#) ensures that other state agencies, legislators, and stakeholders representing those most affected by poverty are engaged in work to reduce poverty in Washington state. Under this directive, a work group co-chaired by DSHS, the Employment Security Department, and the Department of Commerce will submit a comprehensive 10-year poverty reduction strategic plan to Governor Inslee by December 31, 2019. In addition, [House Bill 1482](#) (2018 Legislative Session) established the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task requiring DSHS to develop a five-year plan by December 2019 to address intergenerational poverty, subject to oversight and approval by the task force.

ESA's core services focus on:

- **Poverty Reduction** – helping low-income people meet their foundational needs and achieve economic security through cash grants, food, and medical assistance and employment-focused services. Major programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst (Washington's welfare to work program); Basic Food; Basic Food Employment & Training, Aged, Blind or Disabled; Pregnant Women Assistance; Refugee Cash Assistance; and medical assistance.
- **Child Support** – ensuring parents fulfill their responsibility to their children through increased financial and medical support. This helps children reach their full potential and contribute to our communities by making sure they have the resources to thrive.
- **Financial Recovery** – collecting other debts owed to DSHS helps support programs that provide financial assistance, medical care and other benefits and services to the state's most vulnerable residents.
- **Disability Determination** – determining whether individuals applying for Social Security disability benefits have a medical condition that prevents them from working. Under contract with the federal Social Security Administration, ESA's Division of Disability Determination Services determines whether individuals qualify for benefits from the Social Security Administration and for medical assistance.

### Community Services Division

ESA's Community Services Division (CSD) provides direct client services to the public through a network of 52 local Community Services Offices (CSOs). Services are also provided through a variety of outstationed staff in different communities, two Mobile CSOs, and a single statewide Customer Service Contact Center.

- Most client-related services can be provided by phone at 1-877-501-2233, or online at [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org). These services include checking benefit status information, completing an interview for food or cash benefits, renewing program benefits, reporting changes, and accessing the Answer Phone system.
- Constituent-related services are available by phone at 1-800-865-7801.

### Division of Child Support

ESA's Division of Child Support (DCS) assists with establishing paternity, as well as establishing and enforcing child support and medical support obligations. DCS is one of a number of programs working together to ensure that families have the maximum amount of financial resources to ensure their economic well-being.

- To locate a local DCS office, get additional information, pay child support, and download an application for child support services, go to [www.childsupportonline.wa.gov](http://www.childsupportonline.wa.gov).
- Most client-related services are available by phone at 1-800-442-5437.
- Constituent-related services are available by phone at 1-800-457-6202.
- The DCS Mobile App is available for Android and Apple devices and can be found in the devices' respective app stores by searching for **WA State Child Support**.
- The DCS Alternative Solutions Program provides connections to government and community groups which help non-custodial parents remove barriers to - getting and keeping jobs. For more information, contact [AlternativeSolutions@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:AlternativeSolutions@dshs.wa.gov) or 360-664-5028.

### ESA Partnerships

ESA works collaboratively with other state agencies and community partners to carry out programs and initiatives that help adults, children, and families have what we all need to build a solid foundation in our lives: healthy meals, safe housing, and educational opportunities. Coordinated employment and training services are provided by staff from the Employment Security Department, colleges, community action agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

- ESA staff work with any DSHS client via the Employment Pipeline and Alternative Solutions programs by connecting community-based organizations and employers with clients to help remove employment barriers, thereby helping to increase economic security.
- To ensure eligible individuals are connected to food benefits, local Community Services Offices work with a variety of community-based organizations, such as food banks, Basic Food Outreach contractors, and other organizations that advocate for children and families.

- WorkFirst services are provided through regional contracts with community-based organizations, including agencies that offer services to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).
- ESA clients use their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to access their cash and food assistance benefits through ATMs and point of sale (POS) machines at participating retailers/businesses across the state.
- ESA staff work with Indian Tribes on a government-to-government basis consistent with the principles of tribal self-governance embodied in the Centennial Accord and DSHS Administrative Policy 7.01.
- Individuals can apply online for a variety of state and federal benefit programs through the Washington Connection website, with portal access available at more than 900 community partner sites around the state.
- ESA staff refers Basic Food recipients to contracted community-based organizations, Employment Security Department (ESD) and community and technical colleges to engage in the Washington state Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program, which provides job search, job search training, educational services, skills training, and other employment opportunities.

### How to Access ESA Services

- A list of services and contact information is available at [www.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.dshs.wa.gov) or [www.access.wa.gov](http://www.access.wa.gov). To do business in person, locate an office, or get additional contact information, individuals can go to <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/esa-find-office>.