

COVID-19 Response

SFY

2022

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our programs and services.

ESA Briefing
Book

Overview

Our nation and the entire world continue to struggle with COVID-19 and its consequences. The State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020 and 2021 ESA Briefing Book described the scale of the pandemic's impact on programs administered by the Economic Services Administration (ESA), including spikes in applications and caseloads, and highlighted the policy, program and service delivery changes ESA implemented in response. This section illustrates continue impacts from the pandemic during SFY 2022.

Community Services Division

Operational Impacts

Limited in-person services at local offices and re-opening

During most of state fiscal year (SFY) 2022, the Community Services Division (CSD) continued to provide most of its key program services virtually while the vast majority of its employees continued to telework. CSD reopened field offices on February 28, 2022, restoring all key services to its customers.

During limited in-person operations, CSD maintained a skeleton crew in local offices to provide very limited in-person services to the public by appointment only, including:

- Issuing Electronic Benefit cards for homeless customers and alternate cardholders.
- Issuing support services to assist with WorkFirst participation, when mail was not a viable delivery option.
- Helping Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) applicants complete required Consent and Interim Assistance Reimbursement Authorization forms when they rely on general delivery mail services or participate in the Address Confidentiality Program.

To promote a safe environment for staff and the community while providing limited in-person services, CSD modified local office lobbies by:

- Removing lobby phones to reduce risk of infection.
- Removing, rearranging, or blocking off lobby furniture to promote social distancing.
- Marking off floor space at least six feet apart to promote social distancing.
- Limiting lobby access to clients attending pre-scheduled Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card or support service appointments.
- Increasing the number of security guards in certain locations.

Virtual service-delivery model during limited in-person operation

CSD redirected the delivery of most services to their statewide customer service contact center (telephone), Washington Connection (online), and the mail. This included:

- Applications for benefits.
- Eligibility interviews.
- Reporting changes in household circumstances such as income and household composition.
- Responses to questions.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility determinations and WorkFirst orientation.
- Requests for phone appointments for WorkFirst case management.
- Requests for phone appointments for social services assessments and ABD disability determinations.
- Requests for EBT card issuance and replacement.

CSD also expanded use of telephonic signature for CSD administered programs to support a virtual service delivery model.

CSD Virtual Case Management Center (VCMC)

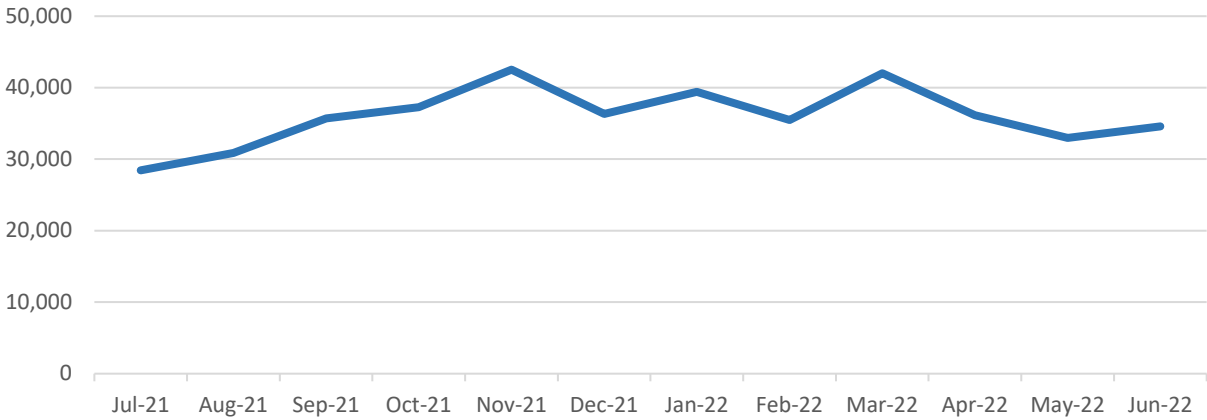
- CSD established the VCMC in June 2022 under the statewide Customer Service Contact Center structure.
- Allows customers the flexibility and freedom to access case management services throughout the state virtually.
- Creates telework opportunity to WorkFirst Program Specialist and Social Services Specialist staff, boosting staff morale, recruitment, and retention.

Program Changes and Application Volume

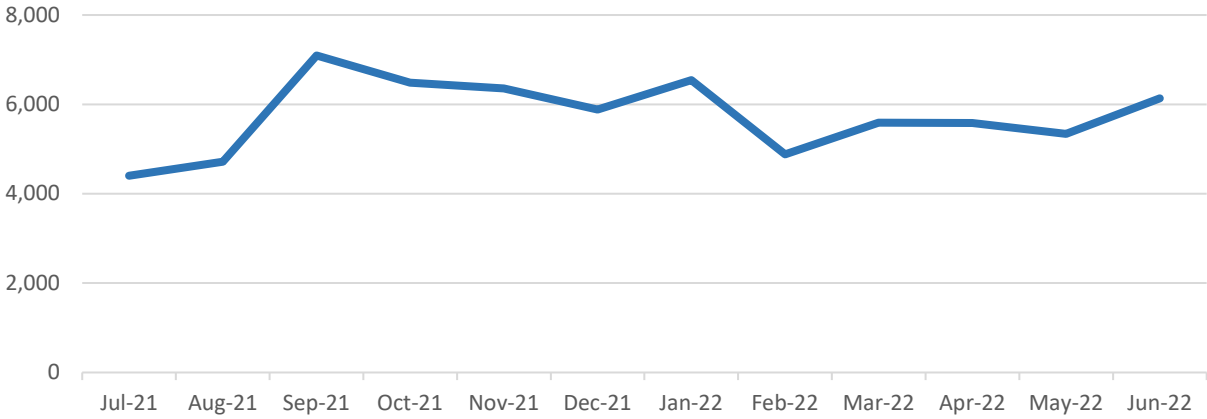
During SFY 2022, the overall volume of applications processed varied, as illustrated by the charts below. The following program changes are assumed to have impacted application volume by decreasing caseload churn (terminations, and subsequent reapplications for benefits):

- **Suspension of Mid-Certification Reviews (MCRs)** – between January 2022 and June 2022, CSD implemented a federally supported suspension of MCRs for all cash and food program participants.
- **Suspension of Medical Eligibility Review Terminations** – in accordance with the Centers for Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance and in collaboration with the Washington State Health Care Authority, CSD suspended routine Medical Eligibility Review terminations.

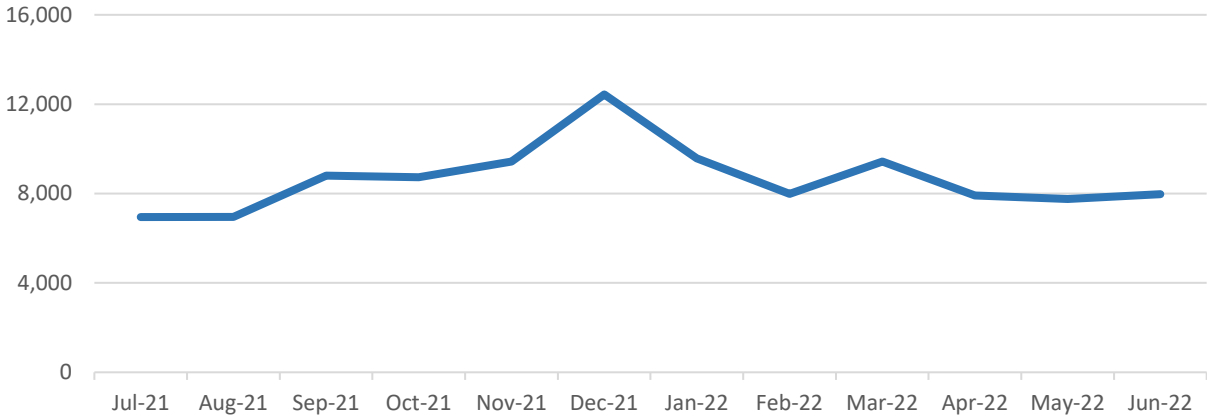
SNAP/FAP Applications by Month



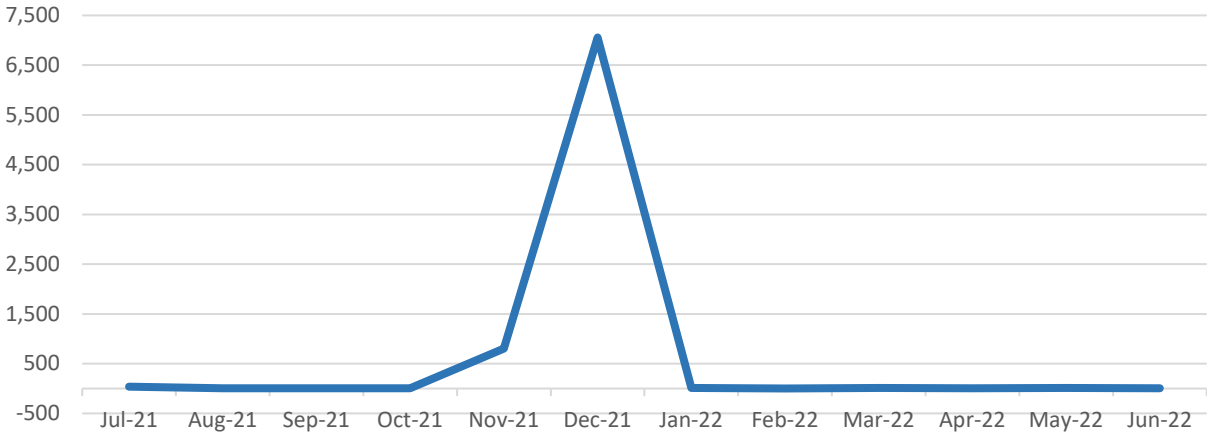
TANF/SFA Applications by Month



ABD/HEN Applications by Month



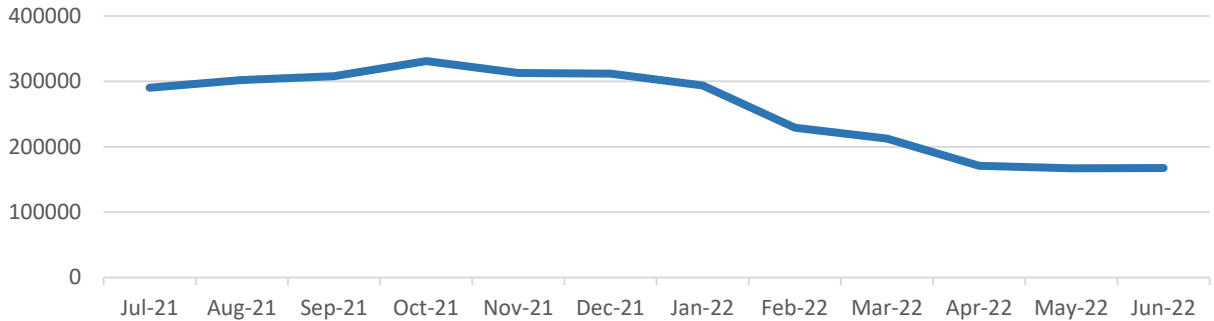
CEAP/DCAP Applications by Month



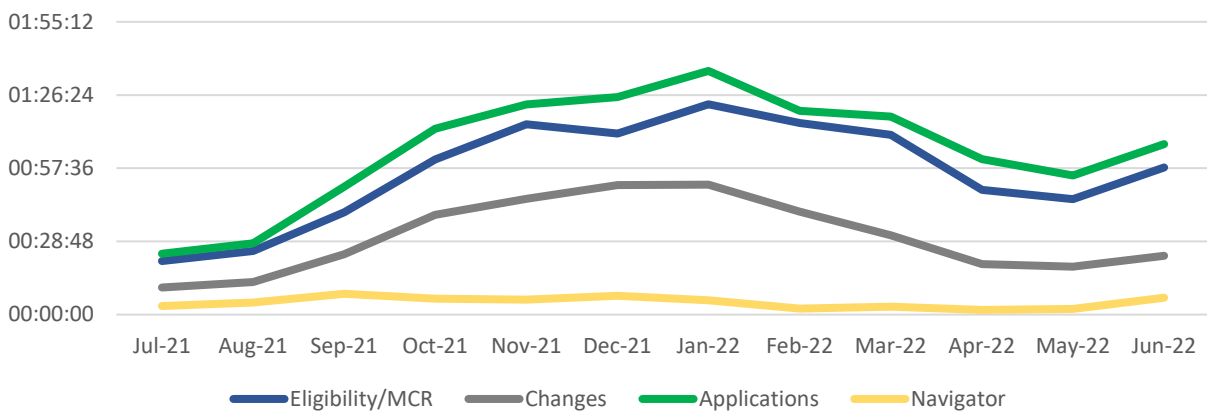
Call center volume and wait times:

During the first eight months of SFY 2022, the call volume remained high, then decreased with the re-opening of CSD Community Service Offices (CSOs) as of February 28, 2022 as clients returned to access in-person services. The average speed of answer (ASA) remained high throughout the year, with monthly fluctuations attributed to seasonal volume, CSD staffing and program changes. The charts below show the call volume¹ and the Average Speed of Answer (ASA) for the SFY 2022 in the four main telephone queues for the Customer Service Contact Center (CSCC).

Customer Service Call Center - Volume by Month



CSCC - Average Speed of Answer (ASA)



¹ The call volume in this chart refers to the total number of calls answered and excludes forced disconnects and abandoned calls.

Program Impacts

In response to COVID-19, ESA implemented numerous policy and program changes through emergency rule filings and federal waivers to ensure access to vital benefits during the ongoing national health crisis. These changes were supported through a combination of proclamations issued by the Governor, federal waiver approvals, and the passage of federal and state legislation and funding. Although some changes were possible due to existing flexibilities within programs, ESA could not have carried them out without adequate infusions of state and federal funding.

Basic Food

Emergency Allotment (EA) Food Supplements: Since March 2020, DSHS has issued monthly supplemental benefits to food assistance recipients, continuing on a month-to-month basis with federal approval while there is an active federal and state public health emergency declaration. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants (FAP) households received the difference between their regular monthly benefit allotment and the maximum amount for their household size.

The table below shows the monthly number of cases (households) that received the Emergency Allotment (EA) food supplemental benefits between July 2021 and June 2022 (between July 2021 and June 2022).

	# of Cases	# of Clients	Total Emergency Allotments	Average Emergency Allotment Per Case	Average Increase in Allotment Per Case
Jul-2021	513,337	889,317	\$85,794,421	\$167.13	\$248.95
Aug-2021	503,331	869,133	\$84,435,511	\$167.75	\$246.71
Sep-2021	496,892	857,205	\$83,858,731	\$168.77	\$245.04
Oct-2021	494,144	859,905	\$84,388,611	\$170.78	\$273.42
Nov-2021	485,173	847,085	\$82,504,663	\$170.05	\$276.97
Dec-2021	483,020	846,134	\$81,629,744	\$169.00	\$278.50
Jan-2022	483,679	851,415	\$84,157,154	\$173.99	\$272.09
Feb-2022	488,874	860,659	\$84,139,680	\$172.11	\$274.65
Mar-2022	496,588	872,789	\$85,782,894	\$172.74	\$273.84
Apr-2022	504,992	886,567	\$87,009,008	\$172.30	\$274.96
May-2022	513,551	900,977	\$88,321,779	\$171.98	\$275.20
Jun-2022	519,705	911,754	\$89,584,200	\$172.38	\$275.05

Statutory Authority: [H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\), Section 2302](#), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to allocate funds to increase SNAP household allotments to the maximum amount based on household size due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[RCW 74.08A.120](#) requires FAP to follow the same rules as SNAP, therefore, ESA sought and received authorization from the Office of Financial Management to issue EA supplements for FAP in alignment with those issued for SNAP.

Expanded Basic Food Student Eligibility: Effective January 16, 2021, CSD expanded Basic Food to students of higher education who are eligible for work study or have an expected family contribution of \$0 on their federal financial aid at application through their certification period. This expanded eligibility will end with the conclusion of the federal public health emergency declaration.

The table below shows the monthly number of higher education students² receiving SNAP/FAP due to expanded student eligibility³ for SFY 2022.

² These are SNAP/FAP recipients who are full-time and part-time higher education students ages 18-49.

³ Effective January 16, 2021, CSD expanded Basic Food to students of higher education who are eligible for work study or have an expected family contribution of \$0 on their federal financial aid at application through their certification period. This expanded eligibility will end with the conclusion of the federal public health emergency declaration.

	# of SNAP/FAP Higher Education Students With an Expected Family Contribution of \$0	# of SNAP/FAP Higher Education Students Determined Eligible for Work Study
Jul-2021	1,190	231
Aug-2021	1,424	272
Sep-2021	1,669	305
Oct-2021	1,850	341
Nov-2021	2,136	389
Dec-2021	2,348	407
Jan-2022	2,556	437
Feb-2022	2,786	484
Mar-2022	3,051	532
Apr-2022	3,223	557
May-2022	3,411	606
Jun-2022	3,568	618
SFY Unduplicated	4,779	860

Statutory Authority: [H.R. 133, Consolidated Appropriations Act \(CAA\), 2021, Section 702](#), authorized the eligibility for SNAP expand to students of higher education within 20 days of the passing of the CAA.

Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET): BFET providers continued to serve participants virtually and reintroduced in-person services throughout SFY 2022 in accordance with statewide emergency proclamations.

Abled-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS): The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approved a statewide ABAWD time limit waiver for February 2022 through January 2023 based on negative economic impacts from the pandemic. The waiver provides all ABAWDs an exemption from work requirements and helps ensure ongoing access to SNAP benefits.

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT): Pandemic EBT, or P-EBT, provides food benefits to children eligible for free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), who had limited onsite meals at their school or childcare center due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Washington coordinated with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and a third party vendor, Accenture, to validate eligibility and issue benefits. More information on P-EBT issued during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years can be found in the [2021 ESA Briefing Book](#).

Summer P-EBT 2021

In June 2021, USDA approved Washington’s plan provide P-EBT to eligible children during the summer months of July and August of 2021 when schools were deemed closed. Washington continued to partner with a third party vendor, Accenture, to provide a standard benefit of \$375 to all NSLP eligible students and children under six and on SNAP beginning in July 2021.

Below is a table that shows the breakdown of Summer P-EBT benefits:

Pandemic EBT Clients and Expenditures⁴

	Total # of P-EBT Children	# of Eligible Children in School	# of Eligible Children under Six (Federal)	# of Eligible Children under Six (State)	Total P-EBT Dollars Issued
SFY 2022	643,055	519,561	123,158	336	\$241,140,375

School Year 2021 -2022

For the 2021-2022 school year, USDA approved Washington’s plan to provide P-EBT to eligible children under six receiving SNAP benefits. Beginning July 2022, each eligible child was issued \$43 for each month they received SNAP during the 2021-2022 school year with a maximum benefit of \$430 per child. Washington did not receive approval from USDA for P-EBT in the 2021-22 school year until after July 2022, and more information will be available on these iterations in 2023 ESA Briefing Book.

Benefits varied based on the schools’ reported on-site meal services for each month of eligibility in the school year.

Statutory Authority: [H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\), Section 1101](#), amended by the [H.R. 1319, American Rescue Plan, Section 1108](#), allows the issuance of P-EBT in any school year or covered summer period following a school session while a federal public health emergency declaration affects school and childcare centers ability to provide onsite meal services. State agencies must submit P-EBT plans to USDA for approval.

Governor Proclamations [20-08](#), [20-09](#) and [20-09.1](#)

⁴ Data provided by Accenture, November 2022

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst

Time Limit Extensions: Effective April 1, 2020, DSHS expanded the criteria for TANF 60-month time limit extension to support families experiencing hardships due to the COVID-19 emergency. Families who exhausted 60 months on TANF cash assistance and experienced hardships due to COVID-19 were not terminated from or denied benefits. The Legislature has provided funding and direction to continue this policy through June 30, 2023.

The table below shows the resulting change in the number of TANF households with an adult recipient that were granted a time-limit extension.

Adult Recipient Cases with a Time-Limit Extension

	SFY 2022
July	3,476
August	3,412
September	3,453
October	3,680
November	3,744
December	3,775
January	3,847
February	3,976
March	4,018
April	4,046
May	4,054
June	4,100

The table below shows the monthly number of TANF households with an adult recipient that were granted a time limit extension under the Caring for a Disabled Adult/COVID-19 category.

Adult Recipient Cases (Households) Granted a Time-Limit Extension for a Disabled Adult/COVID-19⁵

	# of Cases
Jul-2021	2,285
Aug-2021	2,250
Sep-2021	2,244
Oct-2021	2,393
Nov-2021	2,442
Dec-2021	2,503
Jan-2022	2,556
Feb-2022	2,674
Mar-2022	2,713
Apr-2022	2,736
May-2022	2,723
Jun-2022	2,787

⁵ Due to system limitations, this population is not tracked separately. In order to monitor and document this population, the infrequently used Caring for a Disabled Adult extension category was leveraged. In the year prior to the pandemic, a monthly average of 21 households were in this extension category.

WorkFirst participation good cause exemptions and sanction process suspension: Effective March 16, 2020, all WorkFirst participants were granted a temporary exemption from WorkFirst participation requirements. Although DSHS continued to provide clients the option to participate, WorkFirst participants were not required to engage in program activities. DSHS also temporarily suspended WorkFirst sanction grant reduction and termination penalties due to non-compliance sanction (NCS). While WorkFirst services were offered each month, no adverse action was taken due to non-participation.

A COVID-19 related component code (CO) was used to track this exempt population within case management systems. The table below shows the monthly number of WorkFirst participants coded with the CO component.

Cases with a Recipient Open in a COVID-19 Related Component Code (CO)

	# of Cases
Jul-2021	12,774
Aug-2021	12,481
Sep-2021	10,843
Oct-2021	6,100
Nov-2021	2,512
Dec-2021	1,023
Jan-2022	373
Feb-2022	133
Mar-2022	38
Apr-2022	28
May-2022	16
Jun-2022	17

WorkFirst participation requirements resumed beginning September 1, 2021, with CSD working to connect families to update assessments and reengage in participation. While Substitute House Bill 2441 changed the NCS policy effective July 1, 2021, DSHS staff did not take adverse actions on WorkFirst cases until after WorkFirst mandatory participation resumed and participants were required to engage in WorkFirst activities.

Teen Living Assessment Home Visits Suspension: Effective March 16, 2020, home visits related to Teen Living Assessment are suspended. Teen Living Assessments, which may include a home visit, are required for all unmarried, minor parents applying for TANF cash assistance, to determine suitability of living arrangements and offer support to the household. DSHS continued to conduct Teen Living Assessments in the office or over the phone.

Statutory Authority: All TANF and WorkFirst changes were made in accordance with federal law and within existing statutory authority. When required, the state’s TANF Plan was updated to reflect temporary policy changes, and the revised plan was submitted to the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund (PEAF): Washington state received \$22.7 million in Pandemic Emergency Assistance Funds (PEAF) based on child population and prior TANF spending. States and tribes were required to spend PEAFF allocations by September 30, 2022 for non-recurring, short-term

benefits that met TANF purposes and did not supplant existing spending.

The Legislature provided state funding to enable the benefits to go to otherwise eligible families that do not qualify for federal programs based on citizenship status. In consultation with stakeholders, ESA chose to distribute the benefit widely among low-income families and to issue it as unrestricted cash to allow families to make decisions for themselves about how best to use.

Washington’s PEAFF benefit was a one-time cash payment of \$127 per child for families with minor children receiving TANF or State Family Assistance (SFA), Basic Food, FAP, or TFA with income at or under 75% of the Federal Poverty Level. It was issued in May 2022 to families eligible in that month. A total of \$23,675,340 was provided to 94,300 very low-income households, helping 186,420 children and their families.

PEAF⁶ Households, Recipients, and Expenditures, May 2022

Program	Total # of PEAFF Households	Total Dollars Issued	Average Dollars Issued Per Household
Total Combined	94,300	\$23,675,340	\$251.06
TANF/SFA (Federal + State)	27,870	\$6,284,341	\$225.49
SNAP/FAP (Federal + State)	66,430	\$17,390,999	\$261.79
TANF (Federal)	26,593	\$5,911,596	\$222.30
SNAP (Federal)	65,194	\$16,973,677	\$260.36
SFA (State)	1,492	\$372,745	\$249.83
FAP (State)	2,426	\$417,322	\$172.02
Program	# of PEAFF Recipients	# of PEAFF Recipients Per Household	
Total Combined	186,420	2.0	
TANF/SFA (Federal + State)	49,483	1.8	
SNAP/FAP (Federal + State)	136,937	2.1	
TANF (Federal)	46,548	1.8	
SNAP (Federal)	133,651	2.1	
SFA (State)	2,935	2.0	
FAP (State)	3,286	1.4	

⁶ The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 established the Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund (PEAF) to provide additional assistance to low-income families with children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PEAF is a one-time cash payment for certain households with minor children. To qualify, families with minor children must be active on and receiving at least one of the following benefits in the month of May 2022:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF),
- State Family Assistance (SFA),
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Food Assistance Program (FAP), or
- Transitional Food Assistance (TFA).

Additionally, the household income must be at or below 75% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

PEAF payments are designated for the benefit month of May 2022 at \$127 per qualifying child. The PEAFF benefit ended on May 31, 2022.

Statutory Authority: [H.R. 1319, American Rescue Plan, Section 9201](#), amends the Social Security Act to establish a \$1 billion Pandemic Emergency Assistance Funds (PEAF), with an allotment to be issued to each state to provide additional assistance to low-income families with eligible children during the COVID-19 crisis.

Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) Cash Assistance/Housing Essential Needs (HEN) Referral Programs

The following changes remained in place throughout SFY 2022:

Treatment monitoring suspension: Effective March 18, 2020, ESA temporarily extended good cause exemptions to clients who did not provide verification of their participation in medical and mental health treatment, substance use assessment and treatment, and participation in vocational rehabilitation.

Disability and Incapacity Reviews and Evaluations: Effective March 26, 2020, ESA temporarily postponed ABD disability reviews, modified HEN Referral incapacity reviews and expanded medical evidence rules for eligibility purposes.

Mental Incapacity Evaluation contracts were amended to allow for telephonic psychological evaluations.

Statutory Authority: All ABD and HEN Referral changes were made within existing statutory authority.

Classic Medicaid⁷ Eligibility

Certification periods scheduled to end in March 2020 have been extended through the end of the federal Public Health Emergency in three month intervals. Benefits were maintained for recipients of Medicaid unless the individual requested termination, the individual was no longer a Washington state resident, or the individual was deceased.

Additional changes regarding Medicaid eligibility to support clients include:

- Reinstating Medicaid coverage if closed on or after March 18, 2020.
- Allowing a 30-day extension to provide verification of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation of income and resources at application, renewal and change of circumstances.
- Accepting self-attestation for medical expenses incurred needed to meet spenddown amounts for purposes of medically needy eligibility.

Statutory Authority: All Medicaid changes were made as directed by the Health Care Authority (HCA) and in accordance with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

⁷ Classic Medicaid includes Alien Emergency Medicaid (AEM), Healthcare for Workers with Disabilities, Long Term Care, Medicare Savings Program, Refugee Medical, SSI Medicaid, SSI Related Medicaid, and Medical Care Services.

Mid-Certification Reviews Waived for TANF, SFA, ABD, WFS, and Basic Food Assistance

To ensure customers continued to receive critical benefits and services, and to streamline program administration, DSHS waived Mid-Certification Reviews (MCRs) from January 2022 through June 2022 for TANF, SFA, ABD Cash Assistance, Working Family Support (WFS), Basic Food and FAP.

Statutory Authority:

[H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\), Section 2302](#) and H.R. 133, Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2021 authorized USDA’s Secretary of Agriculture to waive core interview and certification requirements for SNAP processing. The corresponding cash assistance changes were made within existing statutory authority.

	ABD Mid-Certification Reviews Waived	HEN Referral Mid-Certification Reviews Waived	SNAP/FAP Mid-Certification Reviews Waived	TANF/SFA Mid-Certification Reviews Waived
Jan-2022	1,634	225	35,075	2,077
Feb-2022	1,839	210	37,592	2,605
Mar-2022	2,054	201	39,639	3,226
Apr-2022	2,069	202	47,078	2,792
May-2022	1,410	164	26,234	2,179
Jun-2022	1,296	147	25,174	1,900

Social Security Number Good Cause Waiver

On March 17, 2020, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) suspended all face-to-face services to the public at field offices nationwide until further notice. Only limited, critical services were provided via phone, mail, and online. Applications for a non-work Social Security Number (SSN) due to immigration status were not considered a critical service by SSA, and were therefore suspended. State and federal regulations require each person who applies for or receives cash or food assistance benefits to provide an SSN or the proof of the SSN application to the Department.

Under USDA FNS regulations, SNAP participants are allowed a good cause period of up to two months to provide an SSN. On April 10, 2020, USDA FNS approved a waiver to extend the good cause period for an additional three months which allowed DSHS to grant good cause for a period of up to five months. FNS has continued to approve the waiver through September 1, 2022. The state-administered programs TANF/SFA and ABD were able to establish this good cause waiver without seeking federal approval.

Statutory Authority: FFCRA authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to waive core interview and certification requirements for SNAP processing. USDA FNS approved waiver COVID-067 based on the determination that the adjustment was consistent with what is practicable under actual conditions in areas affected by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The corresponding cash assistance changes were made within existing statutory authority.

Select Cash, Food and Medical Program Clients⁸ and Cases⁹ with a Social Security Number Good Cause Waiver, July 2021 - June 2022

	All Selected Programs		ABD ¹⁰		Basic Food ¹¹		DCA ¹²	
	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases
Jul-2021	19,925	22,321	18	18	3,262	2,632	0	0
Aug-2021	20,028	22,435	16	16	3,422	2,699	0	0
Sep-2021	20,271	22,664	19	19	3,513	2,734	0	0
Oct-2021	20,639	23,185	18	18	3,820	2,905	0	0
Nov-2021	20,981	23,886	19	19	4,141	3,126	0	0
Dec-2021	21,614	25,021	21	21	4,669	3,439	0	0
Jan-2022	22,247	26,010	21	21	5,219	3,741	2	2
Feb-2022	22,494	26,608	21	21	5,664	4,056	1	1
Mar-2022	23,174	27,466	32	33	6,260	4,421	1	1
Apr-2022	25,874	30,385	86	86	8,966	5,797	3	2
May-2022	26,795	32,085	114	114	9,820	6,236	0	0
Jun-2022	28,391	35,218	147	147	11,350	7,029	0	0

⁸Clients are unduplicated within each program. The total number of clients across “All Selected Programs” is also unduplicated and does not equal the sum of clients across all programs because some clients are participants in multiple programs.

⁹ Cases are unduplicated within each program and are those Assistance Units (AUs) with at least one recipient whose Social Security Number is coded as Good Cause.

¹⁰ ABD is Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance.

¹¹ Basic Food includes Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants (FAP).

¹² DCA is Diversion Cash Assistance.

	HEN Referral ¹³		Medical ¹⁴		RCA ¹⁵	
	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases
Jul-2021	0	0	19,000	19,035	21	17
Aug-2021	0	0	19,015	19,050	25	20
Sep-2021	0	0	19,244	19,262	18	16
Oct-2021	0	0	19,530	19,558	50	47
Nov-2021	0	0	19,855	19,883	149	130
Dec-2021	0	0	20,443	20,470	215	200
Jan-2022	0	0	20,977	21,005	278	254
Feb-2022	0	0	21,115	21,139	359	309
Mar-2022	0	0	21,468	21,500	333	292
Apr-2022	1	1	22,567	22,590	315	293
May-2022	1	1	23,672	23,704	281	266
Jun-2022	4	4	25,083	25,185	936	859

	SSP ¹⁶		TANF/SFA ¹⁷		WFS ¹⁸	
	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases	# Clients	# Cases
Jul-2021	2	2	789	615	2	2
Aug-2021	3	3	868	644	3	3
Sep-2021	2	2	869	629	2	2
Oct-2021	2	2	996	653	2	2
Nov-2021	2	2	1,114	724	2	2
Dec-2021	2	2	1,420	887	2	2
Jan-2022	1	1	1,652	985	1	1
Feb-2022	1	1	1,804	1,080	1	1
Mar-2022	1	1	2,116	1,217	1	1
Apr-2022	1	1	3,573	1,614	1	1
May-2022	1	1	3,990	1,762	1	1
Jun-2022	1	1	4,781	1,992	1	1

¹³ HEN Referral is a referral to the Housing and Essential Needs Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

¹⁴ Medical includes both classic and Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) medical programs served by ESA, Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA), and Health Care Authority (HCA). Some clients are in multiple Assistance Units (AUs) in the same month due to participation in multiple medical coverage groups.

¹⁵ RCA is Refugee Cash Assistance.

¹⁶ SSP is State Supplemental Payment.

¹⁷ TANF is Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; SFA is State Family Assistance.

¹⁸ WFS is Working Family Support.

Domestic Violence (DV) Victim Services

Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA): DSHS awarded supplemental FVPSA funding made available through the American Rescue Plan Act to 53 contracted domestic violence programs. These one-time supplemental funds support continuity of domestic violence victim services throughout the public health emergency and enhance access to health care support, COVID-19 testing and vaccines, and other COVID-19 mitigation services for domestic violence survivors. Activities and services include, but are not limited to:

- Providing shelter and supportive services.
- Providing temporary housing and assistance (e.g., hotel stays or other emergency sheltering services).
- Responding to immediate needs of victims.
- Equipping victim service staff to provide advocacy services from home or other locations accessible to survivors (e.g., cell phones, meeting software, and laptops, etc.).
- Purchasing cleaning services and personal protective supplies to protect staff and clients at the shelter and during provision of in-person services.
- Facilitating access to testing, vaccines, mobile health units, and medical and behavioral health care.
- Developing partnerships to provide specialized health and behavioral health care services to domestic violence survivors to address the dual impacts of domestic violence and COVID-19.
- Supporting continuity of services through staff retention and staffing increases.

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)

COVID-19 Response Services

In response to COVID-19, Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) contracted service providers offered a menu of different service options to meet the emergent needs of immigrants and refugees in our communities. These services continued during the first quarter of SFY 22, but their utilization during that period was dramatically lower than previous periods. These services included the following:

- Needs assessments that address overall financial stability, housing, employment, health, social and emotional well-being of the entire family.
- Information and referrals on resources for COVID-19, 2020 Census, public benefits and new stimulus programs and updates on available services and resources.
- Providing and/or connecting with new services, including helping people apply for Unemployment Insurance Benefits, addressing food insecurity, addressing gaps in child care and facilitating employer outreach and engagement.
- Providing education and client engagement by offering opportunities to address social isolation through remote options, engaging volunteers to support new community members remotely and providing distance-learning options for civics and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Emergency Support Services for Refugees Fund

ORIA originally established a COVID-19 Emergency Support Services fund to provide resources for refugees and other eligible immigrants to receive short-term assistance to cover immediate needs, including rent, utilities, internet, technology devices, and other approved costs. These services are now offered through new and existing ORIA programs and have continued following their establishment during the pandemic. Eligible participants were able to access these resources by applying through one of ORIA's contracted services providers.

Division of Child Support (DCS)

Operational Impacts

After twenty months of office closure due to impacts of the COVID pandemic, Division of Child Support field offices reopened on November 15, 2021. The offices continued to post a variety of signage with information regarding:

- Alternate payment methods.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines.

Mail, Payment Handling, and Other Office Functions

Prior to the reopening of field offices to customers, a reduced staffing structure remained in each office to maintain functions that could not be completed in a telework environment. These functions included, but were not limited to:

- Receiving and processing mail.
- Processing payments received through the mail.
- Receiving deliveries.

In the 12 months preceding COVID-19, the average volume of payments received from Alternate Payment Vendors was 1,397 per month with a relatively stable upward trend of about 10% over that period. Following the office lobby closures in March 2020, payments through vendors increased by 104% through June 2022 to an average of 2,529 payments per month.

Non-Assistance Applications

During office hours, customers have the option to request and drop off non-assistance applications over-the-counter. Effective March 19, 2020, these options were suspended due to office lobby closures.

- In the 12 months preceding COVID-19, DCS was receiving an average of 1,095 non-assistance applications per month.
- The number of average monthly applications received from March 2020 through June 2021 decreased to 787.
- The average monthly applications received July 2021 through June 2023 has slightly increased to 804 and is showing signs of returning to pre-pandemic numbers.

As of our reopening to customers on October 15, customers now have the following options to receive documents needed to apply for DCS services included:

- Printing applicable forms from the DCS website.
- Calling the 800 number to request an application be mailed.
- Visiting a DCS field office to request an application over-the-counter.
- Accessing a link on the DCS website to complete a request form for a non-assistance application to be mailed to them.

Applications could then be mailed, faxed, or dropped off at a field office. As a result, incoming application volumes increased by a modest 18.7%, with a fairly stable monthly average of 804 applications for this past year.

Service of Process Procedures

On March 20, 2020, the United States Postal Service made temporary changes to its certified mail signature-gathering procedures. In response, DCS adopted an emergency rule to address the impact of these changes on the Division’s efforts to establish and enforce child support obligations. The emergency rule states that DCS considers service by certified mail, return receipt requested (CMRR) valid ten days after the notice is sent to the non-custodial or custodial parent with restricted delivery, and the USPS employee signed the receipt on behalf of the individual taking delivery. The emergency rule requires restricted delivery when serving by certified mail, return receipt requested.

DCS made this emergency rule permanent on November 22, 2021 because USPS continues to operate under these procedures. DCS continues to monitor USPS practices and will repeal or amend the permanent rule if necessary at a later date.

Internal Revenue Offsets

DCS regularly reports to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for a federal offset against any possible income tax return for which a non-custodial parent may be entitled. In 2020, DCS received a tremendous increase of IRS offsets due to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES act provided cash economic impact payments, also known as stimulus payments, to US citizens. The CARES Act provided for child support debts to be offset from these payments. Subsequent aid provided via the Consolidated Appropriations Act were not subject to offsets for child support debts.

The charts below shows the volume and dollar amounts received in early January 2022 through June 2022 compared to the same time period in 2021 and the volume and dollar amounts received for SFY 2019 through SFY 2022.

	1/5/2021 – 6/28/2021	1/4/2022- 6/27/2022
Volume of intercepts received (by trace numbers) ¹⁹	31,330	24,943
Intercept amounts	\$47,592,127	\$42,067,061

¹⁹ DCS certifies arrears debt to the IRS as DSHS and custodial parent (CP) arrears. The IRS sends intercepts back, each having a unique identifier known as a trace number. A non-custodial parent (NCP) can have 2 or more trace numbers for one offset. Our system combines the separate trace number amounts into one payment before it is posted to cases.

State Fiscal Year	Volume of intercepts received (by trace numbers) ²⁰	Total intercept amount
SFY 2019	29,504	\$41,878,860
SFY 2020	93,234	\$119,422,432
SFY 2021	50,064	\$70,665,795
SFY 2022	36,150	\$59,177,963

DCS Policy Clarification Memo 20-003 – How DCS Works with Individuals Impacted by COVID-19

COVID-19 is having an economic impact on people with child support orders leading to both short-term and long-term financial uncertainty. Loss of income due to COVID-19 can lead to even greater economic disparities for families already struggling financially or in poverty. In response, DCS issued new guidance to respond to situations where COVID-19 has impacted a family’s financial circumstances. This guidance outlines ways for DCS staff to incorporate additional considerations when evaluating enforcement actions.

Support Change Orders

The Division of Child Support experienced a record number of support modification change orders instigated by the mass lay-offs experienced by thousands of parents across the state and was further inundated with delays and processing revisions to account for new ESD fraud identification and prevention procedures.

²⁰ DCS certifies arrears debt to the IRS as DSHS and custodial parent (CP) arrears. The IRS sends intercepts back, each having a unique identifier known as a trace number. A non-custodial parent (NCP) can have 2 or more trace numbers for one offset. Our system combines the separate trace number amounts into one payment before it is posted to cases.