

About the Economic Services Administration

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022, more than one in five Washington residents turned to the Economic Services Administration (ESA) within the Department of Social and Health Services for assistance with cash, food, child support, disability determination, support for transitioning to employment, and other services. A customer base of over 1.7 million individuals receive service from over 3,650 ESA employees dedicated to connecting children, adults, and families to resources and opportunities that help them reach their full potential.

Together, the variety of services and supports that ESA provides aim to achieve a unified goal of reducing the number of people living in poverty by 50 percent from 2015 to 2025 in a way that eliminates disparity. This goal cannot be achieved by ESA alone or without significant changes in the way it operates, which is why ESA focuses on collaborating with other state agencies and community partners while continuing to transition to a human-centered service delivery model. This goal—along with specific strategic objectives, success measures, and action plans—is part of [ESA's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The goal for reducing poverty and inequity is a shared statewide priority. In January 2021, Governor Inslee's [Poverty Reduction Work Group](#) (PRWG) completed a [10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty](#), providing a blueprint to build a just and equitable future in Washington state. In December 2021, Governor Inslee issued [Executive Order 21-05](#), creating a new interagency subcabinet explicitly focused on implementing the strategies and recommendations in the 10-Year Plan. The new subcabinet will work in collaboration with PRWG, people experiencing poverty, and the [Legislative Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force](#) to achieve the shared vision for all Washingtonians to have their foundational needs met and access to the opportunities needed to reach their full potential in life.

ESA's core services focus on:

- **Poverty Reduction** – removing barriers that prevent people from achieving their full potential and providing assistance so that people can meet their foundational needs through cash grants, food, medical assistance, and employment and career training-focused services. Major programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst (Washington's welfare-to-work program); Basic Food (Washington's SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET); Aged, Blind or Disabled (ABD); Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Referral; Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA); medical assistance; and child support.
- **Child Support** – providing a pathway for parents and guardians to provide consistent financial and medical support to their children so that families have the resources to thrive.
- **Disability Determination** – determining whether individuals applying for Social Security disability benefits meet the criteria to receive benefits. 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 48 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 <https://www.washingtonconnection.org>. These services include checking benefit status information, applying for and 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 parentage, as well as establishing, enforcing, and modifying child support and medical support obligations. Through a family-centered approach, DCS has connected families to over 4,700 community resources and partnered to help remove barriers and address the needs of the family. Child Support accounts for as much as 40% of income for families living in poverty.

- To locate a local DCS office, get additional information, pay child support, and download or request an application for child support services, go to www.childsupportonline.wa.gov. Customers can also call 1-800-457-6202 or email DCSAppRequest@dshs.wa.gov to have a non-assistance application mailed to them.
- 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 Alternative Solutions Program provides connections to government and community groups which help parents remove barriers to getting and keeping jobs. For more information, contact 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 access 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 state level agreements with other agencies and regional or local contracts with community-based organizations, including agencies that offer services to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). Collaboration for this service array is supported by 26 WorkFirst Local Planning Area teams (LPAs), with CSD providing state level coordination and liaison support.
- Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) provides employment and training opportunities to Basic Food recipients through contracted community-based organizations, tribal organizations, Employment Security Department, and community and technical colleges.
- 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 invests state and federal funding into ethnic community-based organizations, refugee resettlement agencies, community-based organizations, public health departments and health centers, and other organizations to provide culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate service to refugee and immigrant communities. Services focus on health and wellness, employment and training, immigration and naturalization services, and programs to serve the whole family, including the Refugee School Impact Program, Refugee Youth Mentoring, and Refugee Elders Program.

How to Access ESA Services

- A list of services and contact information is available at www.dshs.wa.gov or 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>.