



Legal Aid Society of Hawai`i

www.legalaidhawaii.org

AFDC: The Application Process

Use this brochure if you want information on how to apply for AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependant Children) benefits.

AFDC is the financial assistance program for families with dependant children.

AFDC is also called:

- TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families),
- TAONF (Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families),
and
- PONO (Pursuit of New Opportunities).

DHS ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS

OAHU:

Central Honolulu Applications Unit
333 North King, Rm 202
586-8107

East Honolulu Applications
333 North King, Rm 201
586-8055

Ewa Unit
601 Kamokila Blvd., #106
692-7300

Kailua Unit
45-513 Luluku Road
235-8741

Kalihi Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd., Rm 101
832-5520

Kaneohe Unit
45-513 Luluku Rd.
235-6602

Kapalama Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd., Rm 101
832-5538

Kinau Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd., Rm 101
832-4660

Kuakini Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd., Rm 117C
832-3800

Leeward Application Unit
86-088 Farrington Hwy., Suite 106
697-7147

Makiki Unit
677 Queen St. 4th Flr, #400B
587-5276

Nanakuli Unit
601 Kamokila Blvd., #117
692-7775

Nuuanu Unit
888-3 N. King
832-5627

Palama Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd., Rm 101
832-5558

Pawaa Unit
677 Queen St. 4th Flr, #400B
587-5290

Punawai Unit
677 Queen St. 4th Flr, #400B
587-5283

Wahiawa Unit
929 Center Street
622-6476

Waianae Unit
86-088 Farrington Hwy., #101
697-7177

Waikele Unit
94-275 Mokuola, Rm 303
675-0040

Waipahu Applications Unit
601 Kamokila Blvd., #468
692-7171

Waipahu Unit
601 Kamokila Blvd., #106
692-7310

West Honolulu Applications Unit
420 Waiakamilo Rd. Suite 101
832-5500

West Oahu Unit
94-275 Mokuola, Rm 303A
675-0050

Windward Applications Unit
45-260 Waikalua Rd.
233-3621

Windward Unit
46-005 Kawa St., Rm 307
233-3655

MAUI:

East Maui
54 High St., Rm. 125
984-8300

West Maui
35 Lunalilo St., Rm. 300
243-5110

BIG ISLAND:

Hilo Applications Unit
13 Keakaulike St.
933-8857

Hamakua-Kamuela Unit
45-3380 Mamane St., Bldg 1, Rm.
110
775-8854

Kau Unit
P.O. Box 6, Naalehu, HI 96772
939-2421

Kohala Unit
P.O. Box 249, Kapaau, HI 96755
889-7141

North Kona
75-5995 Kuakini Hwy., #323
329-4980

South Kona
P.O. Box 225, Captain Cook
323-7573

KAUAI

Hanapepe Unit
1-3491 Kaunualii Hwy.
335-2110

Kapaa Unit
4-1579 Kuhio Hwy., #101
822-3475

Lihue Unit
3060 Eiwa St., #103
271-3371

What is AFDC?

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is a monthly cash grant paid to low-income families with dependent children. The grant is partially funded by the federal government and is administered by the State Department of Human Services (DHS).

AFDC may also be referred to as Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), Temporary Aid to Other Needy Families (TAONF), or Pursuit of New Opportunities (PONO).

Am I Eligible For AFDC?

You may be eligible for AFDC if you are all of the following:

- **You are a resident of Hawai'i, AND**
- **You live with and are responsible for one or more dependent children, AND**
Children must be under the age of 18, or age 18 and attending a full-time secondary or vocational school program. If you do not have dependent children but are nine months pregnant, you may also be eligible for aid.
- **You are financially needy.**
Families that earn less than the state-determined standard of need and have assets (excluding their first car, home, and belongings) of less than \$5,000 are considered needy. In 2001, a family of four with a monthly income of less than \$1,375 and assets less than \$5,000 was eligible for aid.

How do I apply for AFDC?

To apply for AFDC, you must do 3 primary things:

1. Fill out an application for benefits,
2. Turn it in to the Department of Human Services (DHS), AND
3. Go To Your Interview & Bring Verification

STEP ONE:

Pick Up and Fill Out The Application.

Things You Should Know About Completing the Application

- The application is about 11 pages long, so be prepared to spend some time filling it out. You can take it home and fill it out if you need to, but keep in mind that, if you are eligible, you will receive benefits from the day that you turned in your application. **The sooner you turn in your application, the sooner you can get your benefits.**
- You do not need to provide all of the required information on the day you file your application. DHS must accept any application that provides your name, date, and signature. You do not need to provide any additional information to file your application, but you will need to provide DHS with the other required information as soon as possible.
- **If you are in an emergency situation** (you are homeless, being evicted, surviving on very little income/assets, or living in a shelter and are about to become homeless), write a letter informing DHS of your situation. Submit this letter with your application.

If You Don't Have A Mailing Address

If possible, try to give DHS a mailing address where they can send you notices about any changes in your benefits. You can use a P.O. Box number OR many services agencies allow you to use their mailing address.

Even if you are unable to get a mailing address, DHS should still give you benefits if you are eligible.

STEP TWO:

Turn In Your Application to DHS.

Turning In Your Application

- Turn the application in as soon as possible. If DHS decides that you are eligible, you will receive benefits from the day on which you filed your application.
- You can drop off your application in person or mail, or you can ask a friend or family member to deliver it to DHS.
- Make a copy of your application and ask DHS to date-stamp it when you file your application. Keep your date-stamped copy in case DHS loses your application. That way, you will have proof that you turned your application in on that day,
- The DHS worker should tell you the date and time of your interview, and a list of documents that you must bring to the interview. If not, ask DHS for this information.

STEP THREE:

Go to your interview and provide verification of your eligibility.

What to Expect at the Interview

- The interview is usually held at the DHS Office nearest to your residence.
- Telephone interviews are allowed only if you are unable to attend an in-person interview because of a disability or you are 65 years of age or older, and you are unable to find a friend or family member to attend in your place.

What You Should Know About Providing Verification

Do not allow DHS to take your original documents. Ask for a receipt or date-stamped copy of each document they take. Keep the receipts or date-stamped copies as proof that you submitted documents in case DHS loses them.

The DHS worker will ask you to provide proof of the following things:

- **Identity and Age**
You should bring one ID for each person in your household.
This includes: Driver's licenses, State identification cards, Passports, or Birth Certificates, etc.
- **Evidence of Your Relationship to the Dependent Children**
You will need to show some kind of proof that you are legally caring for the dependent children.
This includes: Birth Certificates, Guardianship papers, Power of Attorney, Tax Returns listing the children as dependents, or letters from references that can verify your relationship to the children
- **Proof of Pregnancy (only if you are pregnant and do not have other eligible children)**
DHS will need proof that you are in your 9th month of pregnancy. Bring a letter from your doctor listing your expected due date
- **Social Security Number**
Bring the social security numbers for you, your spouse, and your children
- **Status with Immigration and Naturalization Services (only if you are not a U.S. Citizen)**
If anyone in your household is not a U.S. citizen, you must bring their green card or some other form of identification. However, immigrant household members who are not applying for benefits and are not parents or siblings of children applying do not have to list their social security numbers or submit proof their INS status. Cash assistance can hurt their chances of getting a green card.

- **Assets**
Bring any current statements from your bank accounts (savings and checking); insurance policies; deeds for any properties you own; car ownership papers *only if you own more than one car*
- **Place of Residence**
Bring rental agreement, lease agreement, or deed to your home proving your ownership
- **Utility expenses**
Bring gas, electric, telephone, and water bills
- **Other expenses**
Bring bills or receipts for any other expenses that you may be able to deduct from your income. Also, you must show proof of any money you get (e.g., pay stubs, disability checks, child support, etc.)
- **References**
Bring names and phone numbers of people DHS can contact to verify your information
- **Other relevant information**
Bring documents describing any other factors that may affect your eligibility for AFDC or the amount of aid you receive (e.g., others living in your household)

AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

How Long Will It Take to Find Out If I Qualify For Benefits?

In Emergency Situations

If DHS determines that you are in an emergency situation after reviewing your application and letter (see *Completing the Application*), a worker will interview you within **two working days**. If you qualify for aid, you will receive immediate cash assistance.

In All Other Situations

DHS must authorize benefits or a denial of your application within **45 days** of your filing date.

What Should I Do Once DHS Makes Its Decision?

YOU WERE DENIED BENEFITS

If DHS did not approve your application, you can do a couple of things:

(1) Reapply for benefits.

Read the notice to find out the reason for your denial. Try to improve your second application to avoid having the same problem. Reapply even if you plan to appeal DHS's decision.

(2) Appeal DHS's decision.

You have **90 calendar days** from the mailing date on the notice to submit a written request for an appeal hearing. At the hearing, you can present your side of the story and try to prove that DHS's decision was wrong. See the "*DHS: Appeal Process*" brochure for more information.

YOUR APPLICATION WAS APPROVED

Once your application is approved, you should begin receiving benefits. You should be given benefits from the day that you turned in your application.

Your benefits -- both your AFDC and your food stamps -- will be put on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. It is just like a debit card, and can be used at bank machines and at “point of sale” (POS) sites like the market. You will also receive medical coverage (QUEST) automatically when your AFDC application is approved.

Now that you receive AFDC, you are responsible for telling your worker about any changes in your household (e.g., changes in your income, asset, or the number of people in your household). You must also comply with the following requirements:

- **Work Requirement**
Participate in an acceptable **work activity** unless your household is exempt.
See text box on the next page for information on exempt households.
- **Reporting Requirements**
Complete and turn in your **Monthly Eligibility Report Form (MERF)** each month. DHS must receive your MERF no earlier than the first day of the month and no later than the seventh day after the end of the month.
Attend annual **redetermination interviews**.
- **Cooperating with Child Support Enforcement**
If you are not married to the other parent of your child(ren), you must cooperate in establishing paternity for the child(ren) so that DHS can collect child support from the other parent. If there is a good reason why you do not want paternity established, you can ask your worker to excuse you from cooperating. If DHS decides that paternity is not in the best interests of the child, they will not establish paternity.

If you do not follow the above rules, your benefits may be terminated.

YOU SHOULD ALSO KEEP IN MIND THAT...

1. There is a five (5) year lifetime limit to “employable” households receiving AFDC benefits. This means that your household can only receive five (5) years of benefits in your lifetime, unless your household is exempt from the work requirements.
See the text box on the next page to see if your household is exempt.
2. If your household is “employable” (not exempt), your AFDC amount will be cut by 20% after two (2) months. This means that if your household is not exempt and your benefit amount is \$712 when you first start receiving AFDC, your amount after 2 months will be reduced to \$570.

How Will Welfare Reform Affect My AFDC Benefits?

Effective July 1, 1999, if you do not meet the work requirement for AFDC, your entire household may be cut off from benefits, unless you are exempt from the work requirement.

Your household is exempt if all the adults in the household meet one or more of the following requirements:

- ill, incapacitated, or disabled, by DHS's determination;
- 60 years or older;
- caring for a child under 6 months old;
- DHS says that you are needed to care for an ill, incapacitated person in the household;
- caring for a preschool-aged child & DHS is not providing child care;
- the adults are not the parents of the child, and not included in the AFDC amount;
- OR
- head of household is under 18 years old, and living on his/her own.

If you are not exempt, you may be subject to one of two sanction programs.

1. Sanctions for Families Who Are In The First-to-Work Program, OR
2. Sanctions for Families Who Are Not In First-to-Work.

1. If you are in First-to-Work, you must comply with the program rules. If you do not comply, your entire family will lose benefits.

- 1st incident of non-compliance
Penalty: Your family will lose benefits until you comply
- 2nd incident of non-compliance
Penalty: Your family will lose benefits for 2 months or until you comply, whichever is longer.
- 3rd incident of non-compliance
Penalty: Your family will lose benefits for 3 months or until you comply, whichever is longer.

2. If you are NOT in First-to-Work OR you are on the First-to-Work waiting list, you have special work requirements. You must do one of the following "acceptable work activities" each month:

- working for at least 1 hour per month;
- volunteering in an organization for at least 4 hours per month;
- participating in an organized job training program;
- receiving unemployment benefits;
- attending high school at least half-time if you do not have a high school diploma;
- OR
- attending college at least half-time.

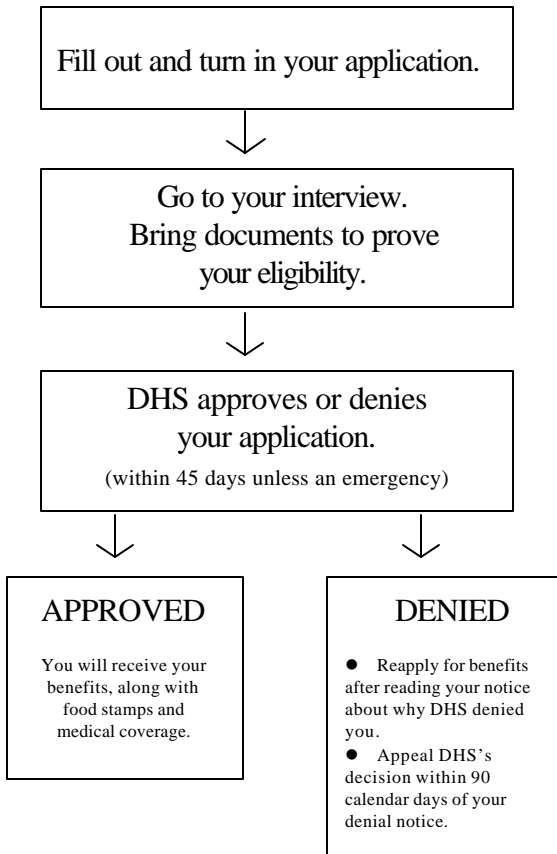
If you do not comply with one of the above "acceptable work activities," your entire family will lose benefits after 24 months of benefits. Your family will lose one month of benefits for each month that you do not comply with the work requirement rules.



Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i
 924 Bethel Street
 Honolulu, HI 96813



AFDC Application Process



LEGAL TERMS

AFDC Aid to Families With Dependant Children. This is a cash assistance program for needy families with dependant children. Also referred to as TANF, TAONF, and PONO.

DHS Department of Human Services. This is the state agency that administers the AFDC program. **exempt** if your household is exempt from the work requirement, this means that your household does not have to meet the work requirement rules.

MERF Monthly Eligibility Report Form. This is the form you must fill out each month to report any changes in your income.

paternity to establish who the legal father of a child is. If you are receiving AFDC, you must cooperate with DHS in establishing paternity for your child, unless you have "good cause" to not establish paternity.

USEFUL NAMES AND NUMBERS

Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i
<http://www.legalaidhawaii.org>

Legal Hotline
 M-F 9-11:30am & 1-3:30pm

O`ahu 536-4302	Maui 242-0724
Kona 329-8331	Kaua`i 245-7580
Hilo 934-0678	Moloka`i 553-3251
Lana`i 565-6089	

Department of Human Services (DHS)
 see page 2 for addresses & phone numbers