

Applying for Public Assistance

What is an application?

An application is a written request, on a DSHS form. The date DSHS receives the form is the “date of the application.” You can apply in-person at your local DSHS Community Service Office (CSO) or by mail, or by fax, or by internet at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/f2esaapps/esaos/a/>. If you’re disabled, you can get special help from DSHS in applying for benefits under DSHS’ Necessary Supplemental Accommodations (NSA) services. See our publication Necessary Supplemental Accommodations.

An application can be made by:

- the person in his/her own behalf;
- a legal guardian or power of attorney;
- any other person acting on behalf of the applicant.

Verification

DSHS will ask for documents verifying or supporting the statements made on the application. Example: a copy of a car title to verify ownership. If you don’t have a certain requested type of verification, you can use other verification such as statements by other parties. You shouldn’t have to provide verifying documents for which a fee is charged (example: certified birth certificate) unless DSHS authorizes payment for such fee.

Action on Application

DSHS must act on applications in one of the following ways in writing: approval; denial; or withdrawal. A denial must be in writing

and dated. It must state the reason for denial, cite the applicable rule or law, and must include a statement of the right to a fair hearing. A withdrawal may be made only in writing (but can be done electronically, by internet) by the applicant.

What are the time limits for disposition of applications?

- Medical Assistance: 45 days (unless “disability” is an issue, then it is 60 days)
- GA-U: 45 days
- Expedited Food Stamps: Must be allowed to apply immediately and, if approved, stamps must be “in hand” within 5 days
- Pregnancy Related Medical Assistance (“First Steps”): 15 days
- All Others: 30 days

◆ **NOTE:** Applications and notices must be provided in the primary language of the person seeking or receiving benefits. Also, DSHS must help any applicant who needs special help because of physical or mental health, communication problems, or if the applicant has problems with reading, writing or understanding the forms.

If your application is denied or not timely acted upon, you have a right to request a fair hearing. Then an impartial administrative law judge will decide whether the denial

was legally correct. Ask for a fair hearing by writing (including by email) or calling the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at P.O. Box 42489, Olympia, WA 98504, phone: 1-800-583-8261. You can also call or write your local DSHS office, or fill out and hand or send in a Request for Fair Hearing form at your local DSHS office.

If it's an emergency, ask to have your hearing held as soon as possible by calling the OAH. This is called an "expedited" hearing. Otherwise, your hearing will probably be 20 days or more after you ask for it.

◆ New effective November 2009: You can now apply for public assistance even if you're not eligible at the time of application, if you know or believe you'll become eligible in the next 45 days. Example: your job is coming to an end in the next 45 days, or you're being released from jail in the next 45 days.

If you're representing yourself, get our publication titled *Representing Yourself at a Fair Hearing*. For free legal advice about your case, call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

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This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It's not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of the date of its printing, May 2009.

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