

# **WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS? DEALING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

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## **What services are offered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)?**

- Financial Assistance
- Medical Coverage
- Child Care
- In-Home Care, Personal Care, Nursing Home, and other Long-Term Care Services
- Food Stamps
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment
- Emergency Financial Help for Families
- Child Support Enforcement Services

## **What important rights do I have when dealing with DSHS:**

- The Right to apply and get a written decision on your application.
- The Right to promptly see and get copies of anything in your file.
- The Right to talk to the supervisor of any DSHS employee.
- The Right to ask for a fair hearing whenever DSHS denies, reduces, or terminates benefits. In the case of a reduction or termination of benefits, you may also have a right to receive continued assistance pending the hearing if you ask for the hearing within ten days of the notice.
- The Right not to be retaliated against for exercising these rights.

## **What if I can't speak English?**

You have a right to an interpreter, and to receive DSHS's notices and letters in your own language if you don't speak English, or have limited ability to speak English. The Department of Social and Health Services must provide you with an interpreter without delay to assist you at interviews and in filling out forms in English and answering Department letters.

## **What if I need help in dealing with DSHS?**

If you feel you need help in filling out forms or in understanding what DSHS wants you to do to qualify for benefits, you should tell your worker. You can get special help called "necessary supplemental accommodations" (NSA) in obtaining and maintaining benefits if you have a physical or mental health problem, or for other reasons, such as difficulties with reading or communicating.

If you need more information about your public assistance rights or DSHS's programs, you should call the number below to find out if Northwest Justice Project has informational materials on the subject you are interested in.

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**This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of the date of its printing, March 2005.**

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