



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**  
*COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION*  
*Economic Services Administration*  
Post Office Box 45440 Olympia WA 98504-5440

March 17, 2020

Dear Partners and Friends:

At the Community Services Division, we rely on our community-based partners to provide critically needed services to help people move out of poverty. You are trusted messengers and leaders in the community. We know that it is in the best interest of service providers and the community that we serve to follow public health guidelines to limit social interactions. Many of you may be making difficult decisions to limit and reduce service hours or even close your offices. At CSD, our priority is the health and safety of your organization's staff, clients and community members. We hope to clarify any concerns in this email and welcome any other questions you may have.

In response to the February 2020 and ongoing outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in Washington State, Governor Inslee and DSHS leadership have called for limits to public gatherings and in response many public services offices, private businesses and school districts have closed, reduced or suspended in-person services. Our communities have been asked to stay home if they're sick, and this extends to our workforce. CSD has made the following changes that may impact the individuals and families we serve, and we hope that you will join us – as trusted messengers – in getting the information out to the community.

All of CSD's programs and services continue to be available to clients and efforts are underway to make it easier to access services remotely. For example, on March 10 CSD rolled out telephonic signature for people to apply and finalize their applications for benefits completely over the phone at 1-877-501-2233. They can also complete their reviews, report changes, make case inquiries and request EBT card replacements. Clients can access online services to submit applications for program assistance, complete reviews, mid-certifications, report changes and find other services in their area at [WashingtonConnection.org](http://WashingtonConnection.org)

Please encourage clients to take advantage of these options to access services from the safety and convenience of their own homes and help us to maintain social distancing requirements.

- For providers that offer co-located services in our Community Services Offices, we are requesting that you conduct services remotely using available and appropriate technology, effective as soon as practicable.
- Due to Governor Inslee's executive order to close schools statewide, beginning March 16, 2020, CSD will be waiving TANF Work First participation requirements. Participants may continue to voluntarily participate. All TANF sanctions will cease during the COVID-19 emergency situation.

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- Please remind participants to follow standard procedures for communicating with CSD if they cannot participate in the services you offer due to their own illness, illness in the family, quarantine, school or child care closures or other COVID-19 issues. If participants are unable to attend, please ensure documentation exists within eJAS.
- An injunction to the new ABAWD Waiver rules has been approved in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clients in all counties, including King County, will be temporarily granted good cause based on current partner and employer closures. We will continue to offer a referral to any ABAWD client who is not participating in work or work like activities. Most State Board Community and Technical College ABAWD Navigators are continuing to work virtually with clients.
- Please maintain close communication with CSD to let us know when you must shut down a site or activity. We will do the same regarding any service restrictions, office closures, or changes to our policies and practices.
- If you are a contracted services provider with CSD, your program area will be reaching out with further guidance and technical assistance during that time. In the case that your organization has any concerns about meeting your contractual deliverables due to disruption in services caused by COVID-19, please promptly contact your Program Manager directly to discuss a plan of action. CSD is committed to making sure that no organization is negatively impacted by the inability to provide services during this time.

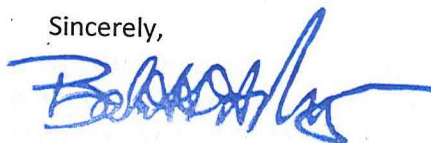
We recognize that the stigma and fear of COVID-19 may decrease client engagement and attendance. This may be especially true for high risk communities, such as older adults. As trusted messengers in the communities we serve, it is important for you to stay updated and informed on COVID-19 to avoid miscommunication or inaccurate information. Updated statewide information and resources are available at:

- <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>.
- DOH has COVID-19 Fact Sheet translated in multiple languages here: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/FactSheet>.

CSD will continue to monitor information coming from all DSHS levels and from DOH about COVID-19 to keep you updated as the situation continually changes. Updates about resuming CSO operations, (should we have any office closures) and/or any other developments will be posted at DSHS.wa.gov and the DSHS Twitter and Facebook.

Thank you for your on-going work to help support people in our communities.

Sincerely,



Babs Roberts, Director  
Community Services Division