

This information was prepared by SKCCH (Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness) from information provided by staff at Solid Ground's Family Assistance Program and Columbia Legal Services.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Information for providers, clients, and advocates about the TANF Benefits Time Limit: February 1st, 2011</p>

DSHS will be instituting a lifetime limit for families enrolled in TANF effective February 1, 2011.

Time Limitations:

Families will lose their TANF benefits if they have been on for 60 months (5 years) in their lifetime, unless they qualify for an exemption or a hardship exception.

What are the exemptions? One of the following:

- a) You are an older adult care taker relative (over 55 years old, are caring for a child, and you are not the child's parent
- b) You are an adult with a severe and chronic disability
- c) You are required to be in the home to care for a child with special needs
- d) You are required to be in the home to care for another disabled adult

What are the hardship extensions? One of the following:

- a) You have an open child welfare case with the state and this is the first time that you have had a child that is a dependent of the state
- b) You are working in unsubsidized employment for 32 hours or more per week
- c) You can document that you are victim of family violence and you are working with domestic violence services.

What can I do to assist clients to qualify for an exemption or hardship extension?

1. Assist your client in contacting their DSHS Case Workers immediately:
 - DSHS case managers and social workers review cases and determine if a person meets one of the exemptions or hardship extensions
2. Clients have the right to appeal the termination
 - If their benefits are scheduled to end January 31, 2011, they only have until January 31st to file an appeal if they want to keep getting benefits until the hearing decision. An appeal can be filed within 90 days of the notice, but they will not be able to keep their benefits until the hearing decision.

If the appeal is denied

- Any continued benefits will stop, and clients may have to repay benefits. The maximum amount to be repaid is no more than 2 months of the continued cash benefits. (continued)

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3. How to file an appeal

- Best way: Have your clients go in person to the local DSHS office and turn in a written hearing request. Make sure they know to keep a copy of the request (as proof of the filing) and have DSHS stamp their copy with the date received by DSHS.
- Next best way: Call DSHS and be sure to speak to a person (not just a voicemail box). Get the person's name, and write down their name, the date and time and keep this as proof of the filing. Ask for a fair hearing for your benefit termination. Ask the DSHS worker to make the written request to the hearings office for you.
- Another way: Fax, and then mail the original the same day. Use the fax number and address on the hearing form. Keep a copy of the fax transmittal as your proof. This is safer if you can mail it certified mail, return receipt.
- Call Office of Administrative Hearings for King County: (206) 389-3400

IF you need to, SEEK LEGAL HELP

- In King County: Call 2-1-1 or Solid Ground: (206) 694-6742
- In all other counties: Call CLEAR: (888) 201-1014 (Monday-Friday, 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.)

Speaking up about these cuts:

These cuts are already slated to begin on February 1st, 2011. Clients and staff should still contact their legislators immediately! **The toll-free legislative hotline in Olympia is (800) 562.6000.** Callers may leave messages for their two Representatives, one Senator, and Governor Gregoire with one call. (If you do not know who your elected representatives are, the operator will look it up.) During session this phone line is staffed M-F 8.00 a.m. – 8.00 p.m. and Saturday 9.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Documenting the effects of the terminations:

Please gather information from clients as to how these cuts will affect their families. Client testimony is an incredibly valuable way to get Legislators' attention. If you know of any clients who are willing to testify in person about how important the TANF program is to them, that is even more valuable. Staff attorneys at Columbia Legal Services are helping to compile testimony.

For more detail or information, please contact Columbia Legal Services:

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