

WAC 388-412-0046 What is the purpose of DSHS cash and food assistance benefits and how can I use my benefits? (1) What is the purpose of DSHS cash benefits?

(a) DSHS cash assistance benefits are provided to low-income residents who qualify for public assistance programs. These benefits are intended to help pay for basic living expenses as described under RCW 74.04.770. TANF cash grants must be used for the sole benefit of the children, and we may require proof that you are using your TANF cash assistance to benefit your children as allowed under RCW 74.12.260.

(b) Your electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card or cash assistance benefits may only be used by you, an eligible member of your household, or an authorized representative/protective payee for the purposes of your cash assistance program. You are not allowed to sell, attempt to sell, exchange, or donate your EBT card or benefits to any other person or entity.

(c) You may use your cash benefits to pay a reasonable amount of basic living expenses such as:

(i) Shelter;

(ii) Utilities such as heating, telephone, water, sewer, garbage, and recycling;

(iii) Food;

(iv) Transportation;

(v) Clothing;

(vi) Household maintenance;

(vii) Personal hygiene;

(viii) Employment or school related items; and

(ix) Other necessary incidentals and items.

(d) It is not legal to use electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards or cash obtained with EBT cards to:

(i) Gamble. Gambling includes:

(A) The purchase of lottery tickets;

(B) The purchase of pull tabs;

(C) Use of punch boards;

(D) Purchase of bingo cards;

(E) Betting on horse racing;

(F) Participating in casino games; and

(G) Participating in other games of chance as found in chapters 9.46, 67.16 and 67.70 RCW.

(ii) Participate in or purchase any activities located in a tattoo, body piercing, or body art shop licensed under chapter 18.300 RCW;

(iii) Purchase cigarettes as defined in RCW 82.24.010 or tobacco products as defined in RCW 82.26.010;

(iv) Purchase any alcoholic items regulated under Title 66 RCW;

(v) Purchase or participate in any activities in any of the following locations:

(A) Taverns licensed under RCW 66.24.330;

(B) Beer/wine specialty stores licensed under RCW 66.24.371;

(C) Nightclubs licensed under RCW 66.24.600;

(D) Contract liquor stores defined under RCW 66.04.010;

(E) Bail bond agencies regulated under chapter 18.185 RCW;

(F) Gambling establishments licensed under chapter 9.46 RCW;

(G) Adult entertainment venues with performances that contain erotic material where minors under the age of eighteen are prohibited under RCW 9.68A.150;

(H) Any establishments where persons under the age of eighteen are not permitted.

(e) If you use your electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card or cash obtained from your EBT card illegally we may:

(i) Assign a protective payee to manage your cash assistance benefits under WAC 388-460-0035;

(ii) For households receiving TANF, require proof that your benefits are being used for the benefit of the children in the household;

(iii) Terminate your cash benefits; or

(iv) Pursue legal action, including criminal prosecution.

(2) What is the purpose of DSHS food assistance benefits?

(a) DSHS food assistance benefits, including those from the basic food program, state funded basic food program for legal immigrants (FAP), Washington state combined application project (WASHCAP), and transitional food assistance (TFA), help low-income individuals and families have a more nutritious diet by providing food assistance benefits through EBT cards for eligible households to buy groceries.

(b) You, members of your household, or an authorized representative may use your food assistance benefits to buy food items for your household from a food retailer authorized to accept supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

(c) You can use your food assistance benefits to buy items such as:

(i) Breads and cereals;

(ii) Fruits and vegetables;

(iii) Cheese, milk, and other dairy products;

(iv) Meats, fish, poultry, and eggs;

(v) Most other food items that are not prepared hot foods; and

(vi) Seeds and plants that produce food.

(d) It is not legal to:

(i) Give your EBT card or benefits to anyone who is not in your food assistance household or your authorized representative.

(ii) Use food benefits for any purpose other than to buy food for eligible household members.

(iii) Exchange food benefits for anything of value (trafficking). Examples of illegal trafficking include exchanging food benefits or attempting to exchange food benefits for cash, drugs, weapons, or anything other than food from an authorized retailer.

(iv) Sell, attempt to sell, exchange, or donate an EBT card, EBT card number, personal identification numbers (PINs), or any benefits to any person or entity.

(v) Buy, attempt to buy, or steal someone's EBT card, EBT card number, or PIN.

(vi) Sell or trade any food that was purchased using food assistance benefits for cash, drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, firearms, or anything of value.

(vii) Use food benefits to buy nonfood items such as cigarettes, tobacco, beer, wine, liquor, household supplies, soaps, paper products, vitamins, medicine, or pet food.

(viii) Commit any other act in violation of the Food Nutrition Act of 2008, regulations for the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) under Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations or any Washington state administrative code relating to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt, trafficking, or possession of food assistance benefits.

(e) If you intentionally misuse food assistance benefits, you may be:

(i) Disqualified for an intentional program violation under WAC 388-446-0015 and 388-446-0020. If you are disqualified you will lose your benefits for at least one year and up to a lifetime. The disqualification continues even if you move to another state.

(ii) Subject to fines.

(iii) Subject to legal action, including criminal prosecution. DSHS will cooperate with state, local, and federal prosecuting authorities to prosecute trafficking in food assistance/SNAP benefits.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 74.04.050, 74.04.055, 74.04.057, 74.04.510, 74.08.090 and 7 C.F.R. §§ 271.2 and 273.16. WSR 19-03-054, § 388-412-0046, filed 1/10/19, effective 2/10/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.04.050, 74.04.055, 74.04.057, 74.04.510, 74.08.090, and 7 C.F.R. § 271.2. WSR 14-05-063, § 388-412-0046, filed 2/18/14, effective 3/21/14. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.04.050, 74.04.055, 74.04.057, 74.08.090, 74.04.510, 74.04.770, 74.12.260, 74.08.580, 9.91.142, 7 C.F.R. 273.16, the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 as amended and 42 U.S.C. 601a; and 2011 c 42. WSR 11-19-047, § 388-412-0046, filed 9/13/11, effective 10/14/11.]