

# Programs and partnerships

## State agency efforts



Many state agencies have programs that tackle the causes and effects of poverty. For example:

- The Oregon Department of Education, through its free and reduced price lunch program, addresses the nutritional needs of school age children.
- The Oregon Department of Corrections works to help parolees and probationers find and keep employment.
- The Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development works to increase the skills, knowledge and career opportunities of Oregonians.
- The Oregon Student Assistance Commission helps students achieve their educational goals through educational grants and loans.
- The Oregon Department of Transportation is working to build a network of community transportation services for those that cannot or do not drive.

This section describes, in more detail, some of the largest programs addressing the needs of low-income Oregonians.

### **Oregon Department of Human Services**

The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) is the state's largest agency, with a budget of \$9.3 billion in all fund sources. Federal funds flow through the department in the form of matching dollars and block grants. Most of the department's 200 programs address the causes or effects of poverty. The following provides a very brief description of some major programs.

#### **Mental Health and Addiction Services**

The DHS Office of Mental Health and Addition Services (OMHAS) and its local partners provide a number of programs that help Oregonians address their emotional, mental health, or drug and alcohol or other addiction issues. Families served by the department's other programs often face drug and/or alcohol addiction issues. Addressing addiction and improving mental health can increase clients' success in those programs.

#### **Self-sufficiency programs**

DHS self-sufficiency programs seek to help low income families become self-supporting and independent of public assistance. The department's

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self-sufficiency services continuum ends at 185 percent of poverty level.

- **Food stamps**—food subsidies for low-income Oregonians. Food Stamps benefits vary by household size and income.
- **Employment-Related Daycare (ERDC)**—subsidized childcare services for families seeking to maintain employment. Each family shares in the cost of the childcare by making a monthly co-payment. To qualify, family gross income must be less than 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The minimum co-payment is \$25.
- **Food Stamp Employment and Training Program**—resources and supports that enable families and individuals to move toward self-sufficiency. Service plans reflect the client’s strengths, skills, training, and support needs. Clients develop an attainable employment-related goal with support from DHS and community partners
- **Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS)**—services tailored to the individual needs of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families client. Services can include: family stability services; assessment for drug, alcohol, and mental-health problems; learning disability diagnosis; help for individuals experiencing domestic violence; job seeking assistance; education; and work experience programs, including JOBS Plus. JOBS clients

often receive childcare and transportation assistance.

- **Medical assistance**—Medicaid benefits for self-sufficiency clients. Health care coverage helps self-sufficiency clients and their families become independent of government aid.
- **Prevention services**—through prevention programs, the department seeks to reduce the demand for future government assistance by helping Oregonians make better choices. These programs specifically target teen pregnancy prevention, by providing training to school-aged young adults.
- **Refugee Program**—services for immigrants admitted or paroled to the United States as refugees and asylees who do not meet the eligibility standards for other DHS programs. The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) funds the Refugee Program.
- **Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS)**—supports for families fleeing or striving to stay free from domestic violence. The program supports families when safety is an issue and other resources are not available.
- **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**—a cash assistance program that helps low-income Oregon families with children meet their basic living needs while assisting them to achieve self-sufficiency. The JOBS

### DHS

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program supports the cash grant. Most TANF families also receive food stamps and medical benefits.

### **Services to seniors and people with disabilities**

Many program help the state's low-income seniors and people with disabilities. A long-term care program provides in-home, community-based, and institutional care for seniors and people with disabilities whose income and resources meet the state's eligibility standards.

DHS administers the Oregon Employment Initiative to help people with disabilities to go or return to work without losing their independent living support benefits.

### **Women, Infants and Children**

DHS administers the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program. The program guidelines allow for a higher income than many other antipoverty programs available through the department. The program covers items high in vitamins and minerals. WIC is a full-service public health program that teaches parents about nutrition, budgeting and provides access to other health services such as immunization and low- or no-cost family planning. WIC offers

breastfeeding support, even providing breast pumps for nursing mothers who are returning to work or school.

### **Oregon Employment Department**

The Oregon Employment Department supports business and promotes employment throughout the state. The department administers unemployment benefits thereby providing economic stability for unemployed Oregonians and their communities.

Department activities include:

- Recruiting and referring qualified job applicants to employers
- Supporting diverse job seekers in their employment needs
- Developing a diversified, multi-skilled workforce
- Developing and distributing quality workforce and economic information
- Providing access to safe, high-quality and affordable child care (typical clients also participate in Department of Human Services Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program)

### **Oregon Housing and Community Services**

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) is the state's housing

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finance agency and community services program administrator.

The department provides financial and program support to create and preserve opportunities for quality, affordable housing for Oregonians of lower and moderate income. OHCS helps finance single-family homes, and the new construction or rehabilitation of multifamily affordable housing developments. The agency also administers grants and tax credits to promote affordable housing and many community service programs including federal and state antipoverty, homeless, and energy assistance programs.

The following provides a brief overview of OHCS antipoverty activities.

### Homeownership programs

OHCS works with the federal government, public, and private partners to deliver a variety of programs designed to increase and preserve home ownership in Oregon.

- The **CashAdvantage Home Loan** includes cash assistance to help borrowers pay closing costs.
- **RateAdvantage Home Loan** enables qualified homebuyers to get the lowest fixed rate possible to maximize their home purchasing power. Through this

program, borrowers can acquire loans at below-market rates.

In addition to providing financial resources, OHCS also advocates for and funds homebuyer education programs to help low-income, first-time homebuyers learn about the home buying process.

### Affordable rental housing programs

Many OHCS programs and services enable low-income families to obtain affordable rental housing. Several of these programs target specific populations facing special hardship in securing housing. OHCS works with many partners to promote affordable housing statewide. Partners include housing authorities, community action agencies, and local partnership programs.

Rental Assistance Programs such as HOME Tenant Based Assistance help very-low-income tenants. Under this program, the public service agency pays the landlord directly on behalf of the tenant. Other programs such as the Low Income Rental Housing Fund provide grants to very-low-income households at risk of losing rental units due to involuntary hardship (such as medical problems, domestic violence, or layoffs).



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*OHCS collaborates with private and nonprofit agencies in the development of affordable housing*



### **Partnerships with developers and lenders**

OHCS collaborates with private and nonprofit agencies in the development of affordable housing through the administration of multifamily loan programs and housing development grants. These programs provide below-market loans to developers, guarantees to lenders for housing construction loans, and needed matching and gap financing for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing. In addition to providing direct benefits for low-income individuals and families, these programs also provide an economic stimulus to communities including increased employment, income, and tax revenue.

### **Community services programs**

OHCS administers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), a federal antipoverty grant. Oregon's CSBG network consists of more than 1,100 agencies and served 328,617 individuals and 157,585 families in 2003.

### **Homeless assistance programs**

OHCS aids several homeless relief efforts, including the Emergency Shelter Grant Program, the Emergency Housing Account Program, the

Housing Stabilization Program, and the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care. These programs help people transition from homelessness to permanent housing and economic independence. Many other state and local human service agencies work together with OHCS in referring clients and providing supportive services ranging from prevention, to emergency financial aid, to child care and case management.

### **Food assistance programs**

OHCS administers and participates with a number of food assistance programs. The Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task force coordinate state and federal food relief efforts. The Emergency Food Assistance Program provides US Department of Agriculture commodities to needy persons through emergency food box and congregate meal sites. OHCS contracts with Oregon Food Bank to deliver the services. The Oregon Food Bank coordinates the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program statewide through twenty regional food banks distributing commodities to more than 800 hunger relief agencies. The department also administers a small state General Fund Food Program.

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### Energy assistance and weatherization programs

OHCS administers various energy and weatherization programs through local community action agencies, community service programs, senior services agencies, and other community service providers.

The Oregon Energy Assistance Program and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program assist lower income Oregonians with electric, gas, or other bill payments.

Over the past three years, weatherization programs served more than 8,000 homes. Typical improvements include adding insulation to attics, walls, and floors; determining air leakage; and repairing heating systems. OHCS also uses weatherization funds to supplement affordable housing projects, increasing the number of housing projects feasible for developers and lowering the month to month living costs of low-income families and individuals.

### Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force

In 1989, the Oregon Legislature established the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force to act as a resource within

government and as a statewide advocate for Oregonians who are hungry or at risk of hunger. The Task Force:

- Documents the extent of hunger in Oregon
- Helps coordinate and publicize existing services
- Advocates for programs and policies to eliminate hunger

Task Force members include legislators, and representatives of state agencies, nonprofit and religious organizations, and clients.

Recent accomplishments include

- Helping to pass the “Parents as Scholars” bill, which, if funded, will improve parents’ ability to raise their families out of poverty.
- Publication of “Act to End Hunger: 40 Ways in 5 Years to Make a Difference,” a strategic plan for ending hunger and reducing the poverty that causes hunger.

*(See Resources and Links at the end of this section.)*

The Task Force conducts outreach to the public and providers on child nutrition programs and the food stamp program, and collaborating directly with providers. The Task Force works to increase public awareness about hunger and poverty through outreach and the media.



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### **Resources and links**

For more about Department of Human Services programs, see [www.oregon.gov/DHS](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS)

To find a local Department of Human Services Office, see [www.dhs.state.or.us/localoffices](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/localoffices)

For more about Oregon Housing and Community Services, see [www.ohcs.oregon.gov](http://www.ohcs.oregon.gov)

For more about Oregon Employment Department programs, see [www.emp.state.or.us](http://www.emp.state.or.us)

To see Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force's "Act to End Hunger: 40 Ways in 5 Years to Make a Difference," see [www.oregonhunger.org/resources](http://www.oregonhunger.org/resources)

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## Federal programs

The federal government funds, in large part, most of the antipoverty programs operated by state government.

Federal government's efforts cross many major departments. This section will describe the federal government's major antipoverty programs.

### **Social Security, Medicare, and Supplemental Security Income**

Social Security stands as the nation's broadest antipoverty program, providing an income floor for its beneficiaries. Originally established during the great Depression in 1936, the program provided pensions payable for workers who retired at age 65. Several sets of amendments to the program expanded benefits including:

- **Retirement**—provides a monthly benefit for eligible workers who reach Social Security's retirement age.
- **Disability**—provides monthly benefits for individuals with disabilities who have enough Social Security covered quarters. The disability (whether physical or mental) must prevent the beneficiary from working for a year or more. A recent amendment to the law provides incentives for beneficiaries to return to work.

- **Family benefit**—provides monthly income for spouses and minor children of contributing workers upon retirement or qualification for disability benefits.
- **Survivor benefits**—provides monthly income for widows/widowers, children under the age of 18, and for ex-spouses of Social Security contributors.
- **Medicare**—Medicare Part A provides hospital benefits funded by the Social Security taxes paid by today's workers. Premiums and general revenues fund Part B, coverage for doctor visits, outpatient hospital visits, and other medical services and supplies.
- **Supplemental Security Income**—Provides monthly benefits for individuals 65 years old and qualifying people with disabilities. Recipients have low incomes and few assets.

### **Housing**

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's mission is to increase homeownership, support community development, and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination. HUD operates many programs designed to accomplish its mission.



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## Federal programs

<b>Selected federal antipoverty activities</b>		
<b>Program area</b>	<b>Federal agency</b>	<b>Website</b>
<b>Child Support Enforcement</b>	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse">www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse</a>
<b>Community Services</b> Asset Building Community Action Agencies Community Food and Nutrition Programs Community Services Block Grants Empowerment Zones Social Services Block Grant	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/index.htm">www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ocs/csbg/index.htm</a>
<b>Head Start</b>	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.headstartinfo.org">www.headstartinfo.org</a>
<b>Housing</b> Fair Housing Rental Assistance Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS Home Ownership Assistance Public Housing Section 8 Supported Housing Veteran Resource Center	US Department of Housing and Urban Development	<a href="http://www.hud.gov">www.hud.gov</a>
<b>Low Income Energy Assistance</b>	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap">www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap</a>
<b>Medical Assistance</b> Medicaid State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid">www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid</a>
<b>Medicare</b>	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicare">www.cms.hhs.gov/medicare</a>
<b>Nutrition Assistance Programs</b> Child and Adult Care Food Program Food Stamps Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Women, Infants and Children	US Department of Agriculture	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns">www.fns.usda.gov/fns</a>
<b>Social Security</b> Retirement Disability Family Benefits Supplemental Security Income Survivors Medicare	US Social Security Administration	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov">www.ssa.gov</a>
<b>Tax Credits</b> Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Child Tax Credit: Child and Dependent Care Credit (CDCC)	Internal Revenue Service	<a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a>
<b>Temporary Assistance to Needy Families</b>	US Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov">www.hhs.gov</a>

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## Local efforts

In Oregon, as in other states, local community action agencies set policies, design programs, and evaluate services intended to reduce or eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty.

Community action agencies' roots lie in President Johnson's "War on Poverty," which saw the creation of many innovative antipoverty efforts.

Each agency conducts a community-based needs assessment to target services based on local needs.

Activities and services vary by agency, depending on the needs of the community, local resources, and opportunities for collaboration and partnership with business, private nonprofit organizations, and state and local government.

Community action agencies receive funding through the federal Department of Health and Human Services Community Services Block Grant program, administered by Oregon Housing and Community Services.

Local agencies promote self-sufficiency, linking with programs in the areas of:

- Employment
- Education
- Housing programs, including Habitat for Humanity and Self-Help Housing

- Emergency services
- Nutrition programs, including as food banks
- Human services, including those delivered by the Oregon Department of Human Services and local government partners
- Faith-based programs
- Veterans affairs
- Transportation
- Volunteer organizations
- Advocacy organizations

### **A community-wide effort**

Community action agencies are one part of local efforts to assist low-income Oregonians. Many other voluntary and faith-based organizations work to assist neighbors facing tough times.

City and county governments play a vital role in sustaining many struggling individuals and families. In the human service arena, local government delivers the majority of programs for public health, alcohol and addiction services, mental health programs, and services for seniors and people with disabilities.

### **Resources and links**

For more about community action agencies, see [www.cado-oregon.org](http://www.cado-oregon.org)

To find a local community action agency, see [www.cado-oregon.org/members.htm](http://www.cado-oregon.org/members.htm)

