

Department of Human Services

Self Sufficiency Program

The Department of Human Services Self Sufficiency program (SS) provides assistance for low-income families to promote family stability and help them become self-supporting.

The major program areas within Self Sufficiency are:

- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and TANF-related programs such as Pre-TANF, Family Support and Connections (FS&C), and Post TANF
- Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)
- Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS)
- Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS)
- Refugee Program
- Youth Services Program
- Program Delivery and Design

Self Sufficiency employees provide direct services through a network of local offices in every county across Oregon. For a list, see <http://oregon.gov/dhs/Pages/localoffices/index.aspx>

The program

Oregonians access self-sufficiency services when they are in need and have no other alternatives. We served over one million Oregonians last year through our Self-Sufficiency programs. Most Oregonians need help meeting needs such as nutritious food – over 800,000 this month (September, 2012) or basic supplies through cash assistance for families with

children living in extreme poverty such as toothpaste, bedding, and other basic hygiene needs, or assistance with quality child care so parents can remain employed and maintain a path of financial stability. Self-sufficiency programs also help low-income families impacted by domestic violence or refugees seeking a safe area to live. Some programs require involvement in employment services or job training to help individuals move as quickly as possible to supporting themselves and their families.

Seeking Self-Sufficiency

These programs are designed to help break the cycle of poverty, help Oregonians transition to jobs, support the healthy development of young children and help keep families stable, preventing children from being abused or neglected and from requiring out-of-home placement in more expensive foster care. The economic recession triggered a rapid increase in demand from Oregonians. For example, the number of Oregon families in extreme poverty seeking cash assistance is 80 percent higher than prior to the start of the current recession.

We seek to achieve the following outcomes and goals:

- Provide an array of options that are properly distributed to assure access through equitable and culturally competent services.
- Be responsive to emerging consumer demands for individualized, self-directed services and sufficient service choices.

- Assure the health and safety of individuals served.
- Promote maximum consumer independence and engagement in homes and communities.
- Leverage use of available federal funding options.
- Address improvements in business practices such as payment and information systems to achieve overall operational efficiencies.

SERVICES

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded benefit program to help low-income families, single adults, and childless couples buy the food they need to meet their nutritional needs. Benefits to clients are 100 percent federally funded; however, the administration of the program requires a 50 percent state match. Approximately one in five Oregonians or 21 percent of the population receive SNAP benefits.

Self-Sufficiency offices across the state serve approximately 87 percent of the SNAP population. The balance of the population includes elderly persons (65 and older) plus persons with disabilities who require services. They are assisted by Aging and Persons with Disabilities (APD) local offices and their contracted agencies (Area Agencies on Aging, Disability Services Offices and Councils of Government).

Money from the program spreads quickly through the State economy. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) calculates that for every \$5 of SNAP benefits, there is \$9.20 of total economic activity. SNAP is an important and constantly growing anti-poverty program. Recent research has shown that SNAP benefits reduce the depth and severity of

poverty, and have a particularly strong effect on reducing child poverty.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) within the USDA regulates SNAP. Although Federal regulations do allow a few state options, any significant variation from the regulations must be approved by FNS through a formal process.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) TANF is a critical safety net program for families with children living in extreme poverty. TANF helps families, including over 63,000 children, from a variety of diverse backgrounds to address their most basic needs. TANF provides eligible families with cash assistance, connections to support and community resources, case management, and employment and training services. Safety net programs are usually the last step for families with few or no resources left, and any assistance can have an immediate impact on their health, safety and well-being. These families typically use TANF funds to prevent homelessness and to help with other factors contributing to family instability. The goal of the program is to help families address barriers, and gain skills and access to employment opportunities to become self-sufficient.

TANF is a collection of programs directed at improving the lives of very low-income Oregon families with children.

Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. Most parents and caretaker relatives must meet additional requirements to receive TANF services. The JOBS program provides employment and skill building services to parents receiving TANF assistance. Individuals must participate in JOBS to gain skills necessary to join the workforce and retain a

job or face possible sanctions, including losing benefits. A TANF family may participate in the JOBS program and access a variety of other programs and services as part of the plan to move a client towards self- sufficiency.

State Family Pre-SSI/SSDI (SFPSS) Program is designed to assist TANF-eligible individuals with disabilities obtain Social Security disability benefits through the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs. The program serves individuals who are not required to participate in the JOBS program due to their health condition.

Post-TANF is a program that provides an incentive to employment. This program has been suspended for the remainder of the biennium because of budgetary constraints. Post-TANF provided a small transitional payment of (Reduced from \$150 a month to \$50 due to budget reductions) a month for up to a year for those who leave TANF due to employment. The goal of this incentive was to help families transition to financial independence to reduce their chances of returning to the program.

Family Support and Connections provides supports to prevent children in at-risk TANF families from entering the child welfare system. Home visiting and community based services are used to guide interventions that build on family strengths and address family functioning issues.

Temporary Assistance to Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) provides temporary financial assistance and support services to families with children affected by domestic violence during crisis or emergent situations when other resources are

not available. TA-DVS is used to help the domestic violence survivor and the children address their safety concerns and stabilize their living situation, thus reducing the likelihood of the survivor returning to the abuser. These services maintain the safety of these vulnerable children and their parents, and can prevent sometimes life-threatening situations. These services also help prevent child abuse and the need for child welfare intervention.

Refugee Program serves individuals and families who fled persecution in their country of origin and were legally admitted for resettlement by the United States government. The program helps refugees and asylum residents successfully resettle in this country by providing financial, employment-related services and acculturation services. The program guides refugees into self sufficiency through employment as early as possible. The program serves only those persons in immigration categories approved by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Youth Services includes age-appropriate, medically accurate sexual health education programs and multi-site AmeriCorps prevention programs. These services support community prevention efforts to enable TANF families in breaking the generational dependence on public assistance. The Youth Services Programs expand on the historical teen pregnancy prevention program to provide education and tools for youth to resist multiple risk taking behaviors. DHS partners with the Oregon Department of Education and the My Future - My Choice Advisory Committee to develop and implement this sexual health education program. During the 2010-2011 school year, this curriculum was implemented in 17 counties and 26 school districts.

Employment Related Day Care program (ERDC) helps very low-income working families from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds arrange and pay for quality child care. ERDC provides low-income families with the same opportunity to quality child care as other families with higher incomes. Quality child care nurtures a child's learning and development so the child is better prepared to succeed in school. ERDC helps parents stay employed and gain self-sufficiency by assisting with the consistent, stable child care parents need to remain on the job. ERDC also supports care for children with special needs, as well as offering providers who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Providers required to register with the State must meet a set of health and safety standards, and all are required to complete background checks.

Program Delivery and Design

Program provides design, personnel and service delivery in addition to oversight, planning, reporting, implementation, training, eligibility and benefit issuance for programs that support a diverse, low-income population in need of economic supports and self-sufficiency services to meet their basic needs.

Staff at the State and local levels coordinates with Child Welfare to work with families to increase their stability and prevent Child Welfare involvement. This collaboration helps to support safety by ensuring children are cared for regardless of the system of service. Other collaborations have been built around domestic violence; housing; alcohol, drug and mental health treatment; workforce development; Vocational Rehabilitation; health care, and education.

When adequately resourced, staff delivering these programs helps break the cycle of poverty and help Oregonians transition to jobs. This keeps families safe and stable, supporting the healthy development of young children. Unfortunately, with program reductions and an economic recession that triggered a dramatic increase in demand from Oregonians, these programs have been significantly challenged to achieve results managing caseloads.

Even with the number of Oregon families in extreme poverty seeking cash assistance, increasing by 80 percent since the start of the current recession, DHS employees rose to the occasion – reducing wait-time for food stamp benefits from nine days to same day/next day service for more than 90 percent of the nearly 820,000 Oregonians served.