

Oregon Department of Human Services

Self Sufficiency Programs

Overview

Oregonians access self-sufficiency services when they are in need and have no other alternatives. From all corners of the state, we served over one million Oregonians last year through our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Most Oregonians seeking assistance need help meeting needs such as nutritious food – over 800,000 just this month – 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. 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 them move as quickly to supporting themselves and their families. Families can also receive help to apply for other federal programs (SSI) if employment is not a viable option.

Challenges

When adequately resourced, staff delivering these programs help 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.

Nevertheless, 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.

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 dramatic 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 have prepared a strategic budget to focus on reinvestment in programs that accomplish two primary objectives: 1) stabilize and help Oregonians meet their basic needs; and 2) help people gain jobs and become self-sufficient as quickly as possible.

The Self Sufficiency Agency Request Budget for Economy and Jobs is:

Self Sufficiency Total						
	GF	OF	FF	TF	Positions	FTE
LAB	304,505,914	136,030,140	433,050,280	873,586,334	2,123	2,117.8
ARB	461,929,466	140,153,072	435,640,114	1,037,722,652	2,113	2,091.3
Difference	157,423,552	4,122,932	2,589,834	164,136,318	(10)	(26.50)
Percent Change	51.7%	3.0%	0.6%	18.8%	-0.5%	-1.3%

Note: \$109 million of this increase in GF is due to backfilling one time funding and the phase out of one time reductions in the JOBS program in 2011-13 due to budget shortfalls. An additional \$31 million is the phase out of furlough savings and other personnel costs.

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This includes:

- Reinvestment in Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program; and
- Enhance the up-front screening and assessment process to help families identify their strengths and challenges to be better able to quickly connect to employment
- Improved access to services
- Improve staffing levels
- Enhance family stability and child well-being
- Increase Access to Quality Child Care.

Self Sufficiency Totals							
Self Sufficiency Investments/Reductions	GF	OF	FF	TF	Positions	FTE	
Staff TANF case managers to 75% and eligibility staff to 85% of world. model	3.32	0.06	2.10	5.48	37	32	
DHS IT modernization and eligibility automation continuation	7.12	14.18	34.66	55.96			
Continue 185% FPL TANF eligibility for non-needy caretaker relatives	(6.84)	0.00	0.00	(6.84)			
Continue 120 day ineligibility for TANF if unemployed without good cause	(0.91)	0.00	0.00	(0.91)			
Continue up front assessment and JOBS orientation to be TANF eligible	(3.08)	0.00	0.00	(3.08)			
Increase JOBS funding to reduce TANF cases and return clients to work	16.55	0.00	0.00	16.55			
Add Family Support and Connections services to 4,400 more families	2.00	0.00	0.00	2.00			
Continue ineligibility for ERDC for Self Employed	(1.97)	0.00	0.00	(1.97)			
Continue Increased Co-Pay of 10% started in 11-13	(3.41)	0.00	0.00	(3.41)			
Increase ave monthly caseload from 8500 to 9000	5.60	0.00	0.00	5.60			

Modernization. In addition to an increased demand for services at a time of limited resources, DHS recognizes that Oregon - and our clients, are changing. We are serving more people of diverse backgrounds and with a wide-range of skill sets – and yet, our model of service delivery continues to offer a “one-size-fits-all” approach to qualifying for services. In addition, as the Health and Early Learning systems continue to transform, our model of case management for Oregonians receiving TANF services (and Oregonians receiving Medicaid Long-Term Care services, *see* LTC 3.0), merits re-examination to ensure maximum results and minimal duplication.

To that end, the DHS “Modernization” initiative has two major components:

1. **Service Delivery Modernization:** Changing our service delivery approach to improve the customer experience by creating opportunities for clients to access services in more customized ways and ensuring that clients have the time they need with case managers. This approach allows the department to focus on person and family-centered approaches, rather than service models that are driven by specific programs.
2. **Modernized Technology:** By automating eligibility processes and ensuring data interoperability within and across DHS and OHA programs, including the Health Insurance Exchange, streamlined systems will free up time currently spent on paper and manual processing and allow for that time to be re-invested in time with clients and community partners. This is an extension of our current “continuous improvement” or Lean Daily Management efforts, recognizing the barrier that our outdated technology infrastructure currently plays in the workload effort our staff must make to produce results.

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Reinvest in JOBS program. Today, the JOBS program is only funded to serve approximately -15 percent of families needing employment and training services. Funding the program closer to the projected need will allow more Oregonians in extreme poverty find jobs and improve their family stability. When parents go back to work, they leave the TANF caseload, reducing costs for public services. This investment is also a priority to help Oregon avoid \$27.7 million in federal penalties for failure to meet work participation rates.

This investment also anticipates improved capacity of the JOBS programs to better align with community based Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services. Building on the foundation of early partnership across workforce programs, DHS, OED and CCWD are in the process of identifying strategies to better align service innovations to expand capacity for assessment and referral to both job search and WIA funded training opportunities. Finally, this budget anticipates scaling up efforts to support local development of partnerships with employers for a sector-focused effort to increase subsidized work and on the job training opportunities through work experience.

Enhance upfront assessment process to help families identify their strengths and challenges to be better able to quickly connect to employment. Today there is virtually no funding to support an effective assessment process upfront. There is a small amount of funding available to help meet basic needs upfront. By enhancing the assessment process, the TANF program, in collaboration with other workforce programs will be better able to assess the strengths and challenges upfront and quickly provide supports to connect job ready applicants to employment opportunities.

In addition, this budget will continue eligibility limitations for non-needy caretaker relatives above 185 percent of the federal poverty level and those who are self-employed. Both are set to expire at the end of the 2011-13 Biennium. These funds are then redirected into the JOBS budget to increase the number of TANF clients receiving JOBS services.

Enhance family stability and child well-being. More than 35 percent of children in foster care were receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) supports within two months of coming into care. This budget proposes an investment in this program to enhance family stability and child well-being for families in extreme poverty receiving funds through TANF, thereby reducing the likelihood that those children are abused or neglected and come into foster care. We served 7,336 families during the 2009-2011 biennium – half the estimated need in this program area. Enhancing program resources would allow us to help serve an additional 4,408 families with risk factors shown to lead to child abuse and neglect further reducing the reliance on state funded programs.

Increase Access to Quality Child Care. DHS proposes continuing two eligibility limitations set to expire at the end of 2011-13 in order to increase the biennial monthly average caseload from 8,500 to 9,000. This budget also includes a General Fund backfill of one time revenues used in 2011-13. This proposal expands opportunities for low-income parents to access child care subsidies and strengthens training for providers in support of positive child development.

DHS, in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Employment's Child Care Division, will leverage the existing Head Start contracted child care and expand through a field test to Oregon Program of Quality providers. The key goals of the field test are for children to have access to continuous quality child care and for

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providers to have stable funding. A statewide research team will be engaged to evaluate the field test. The field test for expanding contracted child care is related to priorities set by the Governor and the state's new Early Learning Council to better prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. DHS is engaged in this work and is building stronger collaborations with other agencies and partners to integrate our ERDC program with the state's early learning system. Guiding more of our providers through the Oregon Program of Quality will be a priority.

Conclusion

It's important to consider these investments within a larger service-delivery modernization proposal, the focus of which is in the Health People outcome area. That proposal seeks to streamline DHS eligibility processes, including for TANF programs, allowing DHS to re-purpose staff time to support improved employment outcomes for parents receiving TANF.

DHS estimates that with that service innovation and these strategic investments, we can increase job placements for individuals receiving TANF and reduce the number of families requiring TANF supports by about 175 families each month. These investments would not only improve the economic stability of families, but it would equate to TANF caseload savings next biennium and beyond. Improving participation and employment outcomes will also help avoid a \$27.7M penalty payment to the federal government, keeping our limited state dollars in Oregon.

This transformation, or Modernization, of our human service delivery model is dependent on the strategic investments in this budget. These upfront investments will, in the short-run, maximize results for clients and begin reducing the TANF caseload by maximizing employment outcomes. In the long-run, these investments will improve service quality and equity, ensure that DHS clients benefit from coordination with other child and family serving systems (including health, education, and workforce systems), and allow the Department to maximize results with fewer staff by increasing productivity and accuracy.