

Eligibility Staffing

ODHS Budget request | 2022 Oregon Legislative Session

Summary

In response to unprecedented demand during the pandemic, Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) is requesting **328 new, full-time staff positions** to serve Oregon residents

who apply for medical, cash, food, and/or childcare benefits through the ONE eligibility system.

Oregoneligibility

An era of historic demand

As Oregonians continue to experience economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are applying for assistance at unprecedented levels. In the first 18 months of the pandemic, enrollment in the Oregon Health Plan increased by 26 percent, Employment Related Day Care enrollment increased by 25 percent, and enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program grew by 10 percent. Now, ODHS and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) are **collectively serving more than 1.4 million Oregonians — and demand for services continues to grow.**

In the spring of 2021, ODHS and OHA launched the ONE eligibility system, which for the first time allowed Oregonians to apply for medical, cash, food, and childcare benefits in one place. The streamlined system has made it possible to serve more people than ever before and has been a crucial element of the state's pandemic response. But **demand has far outpaced our staffing capacity.** Oregon is currently operating at a ratio of one eligibility worker to more than 1,600 cases, resulting in delays and disruptions to Oregonians' benefits.

Staffing to meet Oregonians' needs

Unless we invest in additional staffing, Oregonians will continue to face continued application backlogs and other obstacles to critical supports. Oregon also stands to incur federal penalties if application processing times continue to lag at their current rates. **The requested positions will be key to getting Oregonians the benefits they need throughout the pandemic** and ensuring that these benefits can ripple out into our local economies. The investment will also translate into rural job creation and more bilingual eligibility workers, furthering the ONE system's aims of reducing access barriers around the state.

Request

This \$26.9 million request would increase critical capacity by funding 200 eligibility positions, 16 lead workers, 16 supervisors, 86 support staff positions, and 10 human resources analysts.

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