
HOUSE BILL 2075

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

By Representatives Peterson, Fitzgibbon, Simmons, Morgan, Chopp, Walen, Macri, and Sutherland

Read first time 01/21/22. Referred to Committee on Housing, Human Services & Veterans.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing service requirements for the
2 department of social and health services; adding a new section to
3 chapter 74.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that
6 establishing minimum service requirements for the department of
7 social and health services is necessary due to the increase in call
8 center wait times due to the closure of department offices during the
9 COVID-19 public health emergency, resulting in individuals being
10 unable to access safety net programs at the department.

11 (2) The legislature intends to establish minimum service
12 expectations and requirements to ensure that eligible individuals
13 receive needed services through the department of social and health
14 services. The legislature further intends to prohibit the department
15 from imposing punitive measures against individuals when they are
16 unable to comply with the requirements the department imposes for
17 individuals to maintain benefits if they are unable to interact with
18 the department due to operating decisions made by the department,
19 such as the closure of community service offices.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) Minimum service expectations and requirements for the
4 department are established.

5 (a) The department shall ensure that clients may apply for and
6 receive services in a manner that is suited to the clients' needs.
7 This includes, but is not limited to, meeting client needs related to
8 technology, language, and ability.

9 (b) Community service offices must be open for walk-in and in-
10 person services.

11 (i) The department may not limit which clients are able to use
12 walk-in services or limit which services may be accessed in community
13 service offices.

14 (ii) The department shall restore a certain level of staffing for
15 in-person services during a state of emergency.

16 (c) The department shall maintain telephonic access to services.

17 (i) The average wait time for a department call center may not
18 exceed 30 minutes.

19 (ii) The department shall determine the average wait time for
20 client telephone calls per week, and include a measurement of all
21 incoming calls, including dropped calls.

22 (iii) The state auditor shall monitor average telephone wait
23 times monthly.

24 (2) If the department fails to meet the minimum service
25 requirements of this section, benefit recipients may not be subject
26 to punitive measures as it relates to their assistance.

27 (3) The department may not terminate or sanction any client's
28 benefits unless the community service office is fully open and
29 operational to the public in the client's region.

--- END ---