

# Diversion Cash Assistance

Section (Your Administration): *ESA*

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## Purpose:

This category describes an emergency cash benefit available to families that meet the eligibility criteria for TANF or SFA but do not need ongoing monthly cash assistance. Assistance under this program is limited to one 30-day period every 12 months.

[Effective January 1, 2025 the maximum Diversion Cash Assistance benefit is raised from \\$1,250 to \\$2,000.](#)

## [WAC 388-432-0005](#) Can I get help from DSHS for a family emergency without receiving monthly cash assistance?

- [Clarifying Information and Worker Responsibilities](#)

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## Clarifying Information - [WAC 388-432-0005](#)

### 1. **TANF / SFA eligibility:**

In order to be eligible for Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA), the assistance unit (AU) must meet all of the eligibility requirements for TANF/SFA except WorkFirst requirements and assignment of child support rights. See [PROGRAM SUMMARY](#) for the eligibility requirements of each program. The eligibility requirements include the limits for earned income, unearned income and resources.

### 2. **Ineligible for cash assistance:**

- a. Reasons why an adult member of a family may not be eligible for DCA include but are not limited to:
  - i. Immigration status;
  - ii. Conviction in a state or federal court for unlawful practices in getting TANF/SFA;

- iii. Conviction in a state or federal court of misrepresenting residence in order to get public assistance in two or more states;
  - iv. Disqualification because of being a fleeing felon;
  - v. TANF/SFA was closed while in WorkFirst sanction on or after July 1, 2021; or
  - vi. TANF/SFA was closed because of an NCS (non-compliance sanction);
  - vii. A member of the household is in non-compliance with the division of child support; or
  - viii. An adult in the AU is over the TANF time limit, and no adults in the household qualify for a time limit extension.
- b. Child only cases (with non-needy relative caretaker) are not eligible for DCA.

**3. Effect of DCA on food assistance:**

- a. If DCA payment is made directly to the client:
    - i. It is considered a non-recurring lump sum payment and not counted as income.
    - ii. It is counted as a resource in the month received.
  - b. If DCA payment is made directly to the vendor:
    - i. It is considered a vendor payment for emergency and special assistance and not counted as income.
    - ii. It is not counted as a resource.
4. In determining the need for DCA, utilities are considered part of the housing costs.

## Worker Responsibilities - [WAC 388-432-0005](#)

- 1. An application is always required ([WAC 388-406-0010](#)).
- 2. When a family requests TANF/SFA:
  - a. Screen the application in ACES online for TANF/SFA,
  - b.** Review the application for DCA to see if the family has income that would meet the family's needs for at least 12 months.

b.c. If the family appears eligible for DCA (they are under the income limit but have a way to meet their ongoing needs), explain the option of DCA to the family.

d. If the family is not eligible for DCA or they opt not to apply for DCA, document this clearly in the remarks.

e.e. If the family decides to apply for DCA, add the DCA program in ACES 3G before you withdraw the TANF using ACES 3G closing code 550. (This can be done at screening if the family is in person or during the interview)

3. Determine if the family meets all eligibility criteria for TANF/SFA other than WorkFirst requirements and assignment of child support.

a. Determine if the family has a bona fide need, such as the ones listed in [WAC 388-432-0005](#)

- i. The family must provide proof of this need, and
- ii. You must document how each bona fide need was verified.
- iii. Issue a denial letter when the family does not have a need or does not provide proof of the need.

b. Determine if the family has enough, or is expected to have enough, income or resources to keep them off of TANF/SFA for 12 months.

i. Use these guidelines to help determine a family's ability to remain off TANF/SFA. Other factors may also be considered but must be documented in the case file:

A. Is there a current or potential income source? (e.g. Earned Income, Unemployment, Child Support, or other regular source)

B. Is this enough income to enable the family to stay self-sufficient? (i.e. will it cover the rent, utilities, and other bills monthly?)

C. Does the applicant's history indicate an ability to remain self-sufficient? (Review the case record to see if the family cycles on and off TANF.)

D. Is the applicant highly motivated to stay off TANF/SFA?

- ii. If there is little chance that the family could be self-sufficient, issue a denial letter for DCA benefits. Help the family consider applying for ongoing assistance or referrals to community resources.
- c. Review whether the family has received DCA payment in the past 12-month period or if the family is currently receiving TANF/SFA. If the family received DCA in the last 12 months or if the family is currently receiving TANF/SFA, issue a denial letter.
- d. Determine how much the family needs to meet their bona fide needs (up to ~~\$1250~~2,000). Do not pay more than the need. Document how each bona fide need was verified. Make the payment directly to the vendor whenever possible. When it is not possible to send a payment directly to a vendor, document why it's not possible.
- e. Refer the family for any other benefits and resources that can help them to be self-sufficient. Encourage clients to use Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) to help pay for childcare expenses.
- f. **TANF/SFA eligibility within the DCA 12-month period:** If you approve TANF/SFA within 12 months of the family's DCA begin date, establish the DCA loan.
  - i. The amount of the loan depends on how many months the client remained off TANF/SFA before they start receiving TANF/SFA. Calculate the loan amount by using these steps:
    - A. Starting with the month DCA benefits were authorized count the number of months before the month TANF/SFA benefits started.
    - B. Subtract those months from 12 to determine the number of remaining months.
    - C. The number of remaining months is multiplied by one-twelfth of the total DCA payment to calculate the amount that must be repaid.
  - ii. DCA assistance units remain active in ACES 3G for 12 months but doesn't issue monthly payments.
  - iii. When you approve TANF you must close the DCA assistance unit in ACES 3G using closing code 585 (DCA Adult Eligible for TANF, Establish Loan Repayment), updating overpayment reason code: Diversion Assistance loan (DA) on Eligibility screen. DCA overpayments are established at the time of TANF approval.

- iv. ACES 3G will create the necessary Benefit Error Group (BEG) for any closed months in the 12-month period.
- v. Create Overpayment Letter; Select the Diversion Assistance Loan (DA)/Overpayment (O) to create DCA Loan (0045-04); Select all adults in AU (children are no longer liable as of May 2019). Review letter for accurate dates, liability and overpayment amount before printing for state or local mail.

**EXAMPLE** A two-person AU (mom and child) applies for TANF. Mom has earned income that appears to meet the ongoing needs of the family. DCA and TANF are screened into ACES.online and then TANF is denied as a withdrawal. At the interview, mom's gross income is confirmed to be ~~\$1,200~~ 1,700 a month and this is entered in ACES 3G. The AU is not eligible for DCA since they do not meet the maximum gross earned income standard of ~~\$1,506~~ 1,640 a month. ACES 3G will deny the AU for being over the gross earned income standard. Have ACES 3G generate and send out the denial letter. Follow up to see if the family would like to apply for food and medical assistance and determine eligibility if family is interested.

**NOTE:** All DCA denials need to be in writing. Make sure you have ACES letter 04-01 Cash Denial for AU sent out.

**EXAMPLE** A four-person AU (mom and three children) applies for TANF and opts for DCA. Mom's gross earned income for the AU is \$1,200. No other source of income is available for the AU. Family is requesting \$800 to fix their car. Mom needs the car for transportation to and from her job. However, mom does not have proof of the amount needed to fix the car. The AU needs to provide proof that \$800 is needed to repair the car (e.g. telephone number and name of repair garage, invoice from garage showing estimated costs for car repairs). If mom does not provide proof, enter the ACES 586 code (DCA Ineligible) for the AU and have ACES 3G send out denial notice. Follow up to see if the family would like to apply for food and TANF/SFA cash assistance and determine eligibility if the family is interested.

**EXAMPLE** Three-person AU (mom, dad and child) requests DCA in September. Currently, they receive no assistance. They last received DCA in May of the same year. Since 12 months have not passed since the last time the AU has received DCA, enter in ACES 586 closing code (Ineligible for DA) and have ACES send out the denial notice.

**EXAMPLE** A two-person household (dad and child) requests DCA. The only source of income for the AU is L&I benefits of \$400 a month. Since the AU has Section 8 housing, their rent is \$57 a month. Dad's L&I benefits will end but he expects to go back to work in four weeks based on doctor's statement. The AU requests DCA to pay for car repair bills. Dad needs the car to return back to work. He provided an invoice from the garage to verify the estimated cost to repair his car at \$900. Send a 02-07 DCA approval letter. Make the payment to the car repair garage. Two weeks later, AU applies for additional DCA and requests \$50 for overdue utility bill. He provides proof of this need. The AU is eligible to receive this second payment since it is within the 30-day period. Send additional DCA request status ACES 75-01 letter and make the payment to the utility company.