

**E2SHB 2075** - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation

**ADOPTED 03/03/2022**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the  
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that  
4 establishing minimum service requirements for the department of  
5 social and health services economic services administration's  
6 community services division is necessary due to the increase in call  
7 center wait times due to the closure of community services offices  
8 during the COVID-19 public health emergency, resulting in individuals  
9 being unable to access safety net programs administered by the  
10 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's community services  
14 offices. The legislature further intends to prohibit the department's  
15 community services division from imposing punitive measures against  
16 individuals when they have attempted to contact or access the  
17 community services office, per requirements to apply for and maintain  
18 their benefits, and are unable to connect due to long wait times over  
19 the phone or due to closure of the community services offices, to the  
20 extent allowable under federal and state law.

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

23 (1) Minimum service expectations and requirements for the  
24 department's community services division are established.

25 (a) The community services division must ensure that clients may  
26 apply for and receive services in a reasonable and accessible manner  
27 that is suited to the clients' needs. This includes, but is not  
28 limited to, meeting client needs related to technology, language, and  
29 ability.

1 (b) Community services offices must be open for walk-in and in-  
2 person services during normal business hours.

3 (i) The community services division may not limit which clients  
4 are able to use walk-in and in-person services or limit which  
5 services may be accessed in community services offices.

6 (ii) The department retains the right to close an office for  
7 emergency, health, safety, and welfare issues.

8 (c) The community services division must maintain telephonic  
9 access to services.

10 (i) The community services division must strive to ensure that  
11 clients do not experience total call wait times that exceed 30  
12 minutes.

13 (ii) The community services division must monitor the average  
14 wait time for client telephone calls per week, and include a  
15 measurement of all incoming calls, including dropped calls.

16 (iii) Beginning November 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the  
17 department must report to the appropriate committees of the  
18 legislature and the governor in compliance with RCW 43.01.036 on the  
19 average wait time for client telephone calls per week, the  
20 measurement of all incoming calls, and the number of dropped calls,  
21 and the methodology the department uses to monitor the total wait  
22 times, the incoming calls, and the dropped calls.

23 (iv) By November 1, 2022, the department must provide to the  
24 legislature recommendations on achieving the goal of 30-minute call  
25 wait times, including recommendations on staffing, technology, and  
26 any other infrastructure needed to efficiently serve clients.

27 (2) Where a cash and food assistance applicant or recipient is  
28 negatively affected by excessive call wait times, dropped calls, or  
29 community services division office closures during normal business  
30 hours:

31 (a) The department must prioritize the processing of the  
32 applicant's application to the extent allowed under state and federal  
33 law; and

34 (b) To the extent allowed under state and federal law, an  
35 applicant or recipient may not be terminated or sanctioned by the  
36 department or have their application for assistance denied based on  
37 an applicant's or recipient's inability to contact the community  
38 services division."

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1        On page 1, line 2 of the title, after "services;" strike the  
2 remainder of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter  
3 74.04 RCW; and creating a new section."

EFFECT: The term "negative action" is struck and replaced with the following language: To the extent allowed under state and federal law, an applicant or recipient may not be terminated or sanctioned by DSHS or have their application for assistance denied based on an applicant's or recipient's inability to contact the community services division. The null and void language is struck.

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