
**Housing, Human Services & Veterans
Committee**

HB 2075

Brief Description: Establishing service requirements for the department of social and health services.

Sponsors: Representatives Peterson, Fitzgibbon, Simmons, Morgan, Chopp, Walen, Macri and Sutherland.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes minimum service expectations and requirements for the Department of Social and Health Services.

Hearing Date: 2/1/22

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was established in 1970 and was created by merging the former Department of Health, Department of Public Assistance, Department of Institutions, Veterans' Rehabilitation Council, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Coordinating Council on Occupational Education. The DSHS was intended to "integrate and coordinate all those activities involving the provision of care for individuals who, as a result of their economic, social, or health condition, require financial assistance, institutional care, rehabilitation, or other social and health services." The DSHS consists of seven program area administrations including:

- the Aging and Long-Term Support Administration;
- the Behavioral Health Administration;

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- the Children's Administration;
- the Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- the Economic Services Administration (ESA);
- the Financial Services Administration; and
- the Rehabilitation Administration.

The DSHS ESA services are available in community services offices (CSO), online, and via telephone. As of November 15, 2021, CSO lobbies are open for limited services.

Summary of Bill:

Minimum Service Requirements.

Establishes minimum service expectations and requirements for the DSHS. Requires the DSHS to ensure that clients may apply for and receive services in a manner that is suited to the clients' needs, including but not limited to, technology, language, and ability.

Community Services Offices.

Requires CSOs to be open for walk-in and in person services. Prohibits the DSHS from limiting which clients are able to use walk-in services or limiting which services may be accessed in CSOs. Requires the DSHS to restore a certain level of staffing for in person services during a state of emergency.

Telephone Access to Services.

Requires the DSHS to maintain telephonic access to services. The average wait time for a DSHS call center may not exceed 30 minutes. The DSHS must determine the average wait time for client telephone calls per week, and include a measurement of all incoming calls, including dropped calls. The State Auditor shall monitor average telephone wait times monthly.

If the DSHS fails to meet the minimum service requirements of the bill, benefit recipients may not be subject to punitive measures as it relates to their assistance. The DSHS may not terminate or sanction any client's benefits unless the CSOs are fully open and operational to the public in the client's region.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: January 28, 2022.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.