WASHINGTON CONNECTION

- Washington State’s Online Benefit Portal
Goal

- Assure that everyone in Washington can meet their basic needs and has the opportunity to prosper
Web-based universal application; easier for low-income individuals and families to **screen for eligibility** and **apply for** a broad array of services and benefits online

- Replaces DSHS Online Services Application (OSA)
- Available in both English and Spanish
- Launched December 2010
- Public-private partnership with website hosted by DSHS
Why a New System?

- Provides a single access point for a growing number of resources and services
- Streamlines work, provides clients direct access to their information, and connects more people with more benefits and services
- Ability to:
  - Screen for and apply for benefits
  - Renew DSHS benefits
  - Report a change in benefits to DSHS
What Services?

- **Washington Connection** allows you to screen for eligibility and apply for:
  - Food assistance
  - Cash benefit
  - Medical assistance
  - Child care subsidies
  - Long-term care services and support
  - Drug and alcohol treatment
For services that require different application processes, the portal provides contact information and links to where people can apply for those services through “Explore Options” or during the “Am I Eligible” screening process.

- WIC Nutrition Program
- Housing Assistance
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Tribal TANF
- Basic Health
- Assistance for Veterans
- Child Support
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Supplement Security Income
WHY USE WASHINGTON CONNECTION?
Advantages

• 24/7 access to screening and applying for benefits
• Web-based, no special software required
• Ability for customers to work with community based organizations to access benefits
Designed For

- Households in need of services
- Community based organizations that work with households
Customer Advantages

- Secure and easy to use, including pop up “help” windows
- Ability to apply for multiple services by answering one set of questions
- Clients can save application and return later to complete
- If eligible for Food Assistance; assistance will be effective as of date customer submitted application online (M-F before 5pm)
- Ability to create personal account (Client Benefit Account; CBA) that will allow someone to:
  - Monitor their DSHS benefits and application status for services applied for online
  - Renew DSHS benefits
  - Report changes to DSHS
Tips for Success

- Always start with “Am I Eligible” – accurate screening information ensures customers are connected to benefits they are most likely to receive.
- Use portal navigation buttons (don’t use the back button!)
- Don’t forget to sign electronic consent and application forms (ensures eligible application)
Agency Advantages

- Community based organizations (CBO) that work with households may create secured agency accounts (CBO account) to complete, submit, and view their clients’ applications.
- Agency account enables supervisor to assign cases to staff, add new staff to the account, or remove staff from the account.
- Easier, faster, ability to track application submission.
- Partners are connected to a local contact who can answer questions and provide support, including Washington Connection marketing materials.
- Sign up to receive announcements about changes to the portal at [http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=W A-CONNECTION](http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=W A-CONNECTION).
CBO Accounts

- To learn more about CBO account, view online tutorial (*will be posted in October*)
Residents of the City of Seattle and those who have City of Seattle utility accounts can apply for benefits provided by the City of Seattle using the same online application and screening tools.

Clients who apply for City of Seattle programs must sign an electronic consent indicating they give City of Seattle permission to view the data they submitted via Washington Connection.

The Consent form appears after the Zip Code page and before the “Your Needs” page.
City of Seattle Benefits

- Utility Discount Program
- Other Seattle Energy Assistance Programs
- Seattle Public Utilities Emergency Assistance Program (SPU-EAP)
- Homewise Home Weatherization
- Child Care Assistance (City of Seattle)
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Seattle Step Ahead Preschool
BECOME A PARTNER
How Do I Become A Partner?

- Fill out a Community Partner Registration Form, [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml)
- Fax or email it to your DSHS Regional Community Partnership Coordinator
- Choose service level for your agency, either “host” or “assisting”
- Note: *if your organization has previously signed a partnership agreement with DSHS Community Services Division (CSD), you must re-register*
Host Agency

- Encourage and connect people to the benefit portal
  - Display posters and printed marketing materials about *Washington Connection*
  - Provide applicants with access to a computer with a *Washington Connection* icon on the desktop
  - Provide applicants with navigation assistance for *Washington Connection*
Assisting Agency

- Provide applicants with assistance in completing and submitting the online application
  - **Limited Access:** Your address will **not** be published online (services for your customers only)
  - **Public Access:** Your address **will** be published online (provide access to *Washington Connection* to the general public)
- To protect the confidentiality of client information, Assisting Agencies will be required to complete a Data Share Agreement, Contractor Intake Form and Non-Disclosure Form(s), and establish a Secure Access Washington (SAW) account
Home Base for Partners

- Relevant links and documents
- Washington Connection marketing materials (PDF format)

http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml
USING WASHINGTON CONNECTION
Try it Out!

- www.washingtonconnection.org
- Supports multiple Internet browsers:
  - Internet Explorer 6, 7, 8, and 9
  - Firefox 3.5, 4, and 5
  - Google Chrome 11
  - Opera 10
  - Safari 5
- Help is available:
  - Online tutorial provides step-by-step illustration of the eligibility screening process and online application process
  - Pop-up “help” windows accompany every question
Questions? Comments?

- Please share your thoughts about the portal
  - The “Contact Us” link to submit inquiries
  - The “Feedback” link to submit suggestions

- Look for two new online tutorials that specifically talk about partnership and assisting agency accounts
WHAT IS NEXT?
Future of Washington Connection

- The long-term goal is to make more benefits and services available through the portal
- Continued outreach to underserved populations and counties where services are underutilized
Your Role

- Help spread the word about Washington Connection
  - Become a Host or Assisting Agency
  - Become a Champion of *Washington Connection* by sharing this presentation with your network
Thank You