

# Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights

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## Verification

Dear Self Advocate,

**Knowing your rights about what information you need to give to DSHS to qualify for benefits is important. Some caseworkers are reasonable about verification requirements and others seem to just keep asking for more and more information, often information that is already in your file. Whenever you turn in paperwork, get a date stamped copy for your own protection. That way if the document is lost, you don't have to go and get it again and you can show that you turned it in and when. If you feel your caseworker is asking for information above and beyond what is required, speak to a supervisor. If you are denied benefits and you feel you have met the verification requirement, ask for a fair hearing and call POWER!**

**The department requires proof before authorizing benefits for cash, medical, and Basic Food. WAC 388-490-0005**

This rule applies to cash, medical, and Basic Food.

(1) When you first apply for benefits, the department may require you to provide proof of things that help us decide if you are eligible for benefits. This is also called "verification." The types of things that need to be proven are different for each program.

(2) After that, we will ask you to give us proof when:

(a) You report a change;

(b) We find out that your circumstances have changed; or

(c) The information we have is questionable, confusing, or outdated.

(3) Whenever we ask for proof, we will give you a notice as described in WAC 388-458-0020.

(4) You must give us the proof within the time limits described in:

(a) WAC 388-406-0030 if you are applying for benefits; and

(b) WAC 388-458-0020 if you currently receive benefits.

(5) We will accept any proof that you can easily get when it reasonably supports your statement or circumstances. The proof you give to us must:

(a) Clearly relate to what you are trying to prove;

(b) Be from a reliable source; and

(c) Be accurate, complete, and consistent.

(6) We cannot make you give us a specific type or form of proof.

(7) If the only type of proof that you can get costs money, we will pay for it.

POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated.

(8) If the proof that you give to us is questionable or confusing, we may:

(a) Ask you to give us more proof, which may include providing a collateral statement. A "collateral statement" is from someone outside of your residence who knows your situation;

(b) Schedule a visit to come to your home and verify your circumstances; or

(c) Send an investigator from the Division of Fraud Investigations (DFI) to make an unannounced visit to your home to verify your circumstances.

(9) By signing the application, eligibility review, or change of circumstances form, you give us permission to contact other people, agencies, or institutions.

(10) If you do not give us all of the proof that we have asked for, we will determine if you are eligible based on the information that we already have. If we cannot determine that you are eligible based on this information, we will deny or stop your benefits.

(11) For all Medicaid programs, you must provide proof of citizenship and identity as specified at Section 6036 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (PL 106-171 amending USC 1396b). Exempt from this requirement are recipients of:

(a) SSI cash benefits; or

(b) Medicare.

**You get a request letter when we need more information. WAC 388-458-0020**

(1) We send a request letter to you when we need some information from you or you have to do something in order to get benefits.

(2) On the letter, we tell you:

(a) What is needed;

(b) The date it is due; and

(c) What will happen to your benefits if you don't do what we ask.

(3) You get at least ten days to give us the information or do the activity. You can ask for more time if you need it.

(4) If the tenth day is on a weekend or holiday, you have until the next business day to do what we need.

(5) If we don't get what we need by the due date, we may deny, reduce, or stop your benefits. We will send you another letter if this happens.

**POWER members want you to know your rights. We copied these WACs (Washington Administrative Code) from the internet. You can find a complete list at the Washington State Legislative site at the laws and agency rules link. All WACs guiding DSHS (the Department of Social and Health Services) start with 388. You can also find other handy information there, like who are your elected officials and how you can contact them. Let them know if your caseworker is not following the rules or if there are changes you would like to see at DSHS.**

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