

NEWS

“Improving and Protecting the Health, Well-Being and Self-Reliance of All Montanans.”



Department of Public Health and Human Services

www.dphhs.mt.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2020

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936
Chuck Council, Communications Specialist, DPHHS, (406) 444-4391

DPHHS Announces Plan to Continue Services While Temporarily Closing Some Offices in Response to COVID-19

- *DPHHS has technology infrastructure in place to maintain services*

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Director Sheila Hogan today announced steps the agency is taking to ensure Montanans continue to have access to various agency programs and services, while still protecting the health and safety of the clients and staff related to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.

Hogan said in response to COVID-19 concerns, **select DPHHS offices** with services that require face-to-face interaction with clients and staff will be closed beginning **Friday, March 20, 2020** until further notice. These closures will impact the Offices of Public Assistance, Child and Family Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Vital Statistics, Women, Infants and Children, Child Support Enforcement, and the Developmental Disabilities Program.

“DPHHS has the technology infrastructure in place to continue serving clients during this time,” Hogan said. **“For now, we’ll be expanding on the use of various tools already in use until we can resume in-person assistance that we know is important.”**

Here’s the changes Montanans can expect:

Offices of Public Assistance (OPA)

DPHHS will shift additional staff to serve clients through the Public Assistance Helpline at 1-888-706-1535. Currently, the Helpline handles about 1,000 calls a day. There, clients are able apply for SNAP food assistance, TANF cash assistance or health care coverage. Call scheduling is a convenient feature that allows clients to make an appointment for a call back instead of waiting on hold. Clients can check their SNAP benefits at 1-866-850-1556.

The website apply.mt.gov is also another option. By opening an online account, clients can apply for, renew, report changes and check their benefits online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To date, about 20,000 clients already have active online accounts.

Clients can also submit applications via the OPA fax number at 1-877-418-4533 or by mail at Field Offices of Public Assistance, PO Box 202925, Helena MT 59620.

Montanans are also encouraged to reach out to OPA office staff through email. A list of OPA office email contact information can be found here:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/OfficeofPublicAssistance>

Current offices are located in Anaconda, Billings, Bozeman, Browning, Butte, Glasgow, Great Falls, Hamilton, Hardin, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Lame Deer, Lewistown, Libby, Miles City, Missoula, Polson, and Wolf Point.

A tutorial on how to use apply.mt.gov is available on the agency YouTube page at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtPFbUqjTos> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADwEiJA2pSQ>

Child and Family Services Division (CFSD)

The only change at this time will be to family visitations. Rather, CFSD staff will be reaching out to families on their current caseload to arrange the best way to hold visitations through technology such as Skype or Facetime.

CFSD staff will continue to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect, and deliver services and respond to the needs of children and families. Also, CFSD staff will be reaching out to all families in their caseload to make sure cell phone contact information is current. To report suspected child abuse or neglect, please call Centralized Intake at 1-866-820-5437.

Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED)

Child Support payments will continue to be processed and disbursed during this time. Parents and employers are encouraged to make their child support payments electronically at <https://app.mt.gov/csp/>. For case specific questions, CSED staff are available by phone and email.

Disability Employment and Transition Division (DETD)

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Blind and Low Vision instructional staff will continue to support Montanans with disabilities by providing employment, transition, and telecommunication access services via telephone or online where appropriate. DETD staff will be reaching out to consumers on their current caseload to arrange the best way to continue services. DETD contact information: (877) 296-1197 (toll-free consumer line); (406) 444-2590 (voice/TTY); or email vrinfo@mt.gov.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC offices will be closed to the public. Services will be available remotely and benefits will continue to be issued for anyone currently on the program. Clients may reach out their local WIC clinic (www.signupwic.com) or call the state office to inquire about WIC benefits. The state office may be reached at 1-800-433-4298 or emailed at montanawicprogram@mt.gov. WIC

Benefits issued on EBT cards will continue to be used as usual. Anyone experiencing difficulty with getting formula at their local store is encouraged to contact the state office.

Montana Office of Vital Records

The Montana Office of Vital Records, located at 111 North Sanders in Helena, will continue to serve the public via phone and online for birth and death certificate needs. Please call 406-444-2685 or email: hsvitalrecords@mt.gov or visit <https://dphhs.mt.gov/vitalrecords>. Business needs for clerk and recorders, clerk of district courts, coroners, funeral homes, hospitals and midwives will continue as normal.

Development Disabilities Program (DDP)

DDP will continue to support Montanans via telephone, video chat, online and via individually scheduled meetings as needed. Individuals and families are encouraged to stay in close contact with the case manager and/or regional administrator. Visit <https://dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/developmentaldisabilities/DevelopmentalDisabilitiesRegionalOffices> for local contact information.