

The Alaska Department of Health Division of Public Assistance plays an essential role in the lives of Alaskans. They help our community access food, health care, and cash assistance through a variety of programs. The backlog of cases in the state is unacceptable. 1 in 8 Alaskans rely on SNAP benefits. More than 66% of participants are families with children and more than 30% are in families with member who are older adults or disabled. More than 37% of working families are accessing SNAP benefits. The backlog of more than four months has left families in dire financial straits from benefits they are entitled to. Equitable access to basic needs must be a priority in public policy. The lack of systemic support to the Division of Public Assistance and the people it serves for many years and across many administrations has led to this backlog. The Equity Committee of the Anchorage Assembly believes several steps must be taken immediately to address the situation.

1. Provide funding to hire and train staff and update and upgrade technology. We ask that the AK legislature support the recent \$54 million in budget amendments from Governor Dunleavy to accomplish this.
2. Permanently stop unnecessarily verifying housing, utility, and dependent care costs.
3. Extend recertification periods to 24 months for elderly/disabled households and to 12 months for all other households. Alaska is one of a few states not doing this.
4. Reduce the number of interviews required and eliminate recertification interviews.

We also call on our neighbors to help through the current crisis. Donate to your local food pantry. Participate in a mutual aid organization to provide resources. Reach out to your legislator and the Governor and ask them to support these changes. Any day beyond the 30 day requirement to receive benefits is too long.

Resources:

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Alaska>