

RCW 74.04.225 Opportunity portal—Access to available services facilitated—Report to legislature and governor. (1) An online opportunity portal shall be established to provide the public with more effective access to available state, federal, and local services. The secretary of the department of social and health services shall act as the executive branch sponsor of the portal planning process. Under the leadership of the secretary, the department shall:

(a) Identify and select an appropriate solution and acquisition approach to integrate technology systems to create a user-friendly electronic tool for Washington residents to apply for benefits;

(b) Facilitate the adaptation of state information technology systems to allow applications generated through the opportunity portal and other compatible electronic application systems to seamlessly link to appropriate state information systems;

(c) Ensure that the portal provides access to a broad array of state, federal, and local services, including but not limited to: Health care services, higher education financial aid, tax credits, civic engagement, nutrition assistance, energy assistance, family support, and the programs under RCW 74.62.030 and 43.185C.220 and as defined in RCW 10.101.010, 13.34.030, *70.96A.530, 74.04.005, **74.04.652, 74.04.655, 74.04.657, and 74.62.005 through 74.62.030;

(d) Design an implementation strategy for the portal that maximizes collaboration with community-based organizations to facilitate its use by low-income individuals and families;

(e) Provide access to the portal at a wide array of locations including but not limited to: Community or technical colleges, community college campuses where community service offices are colocated, community-based organizations, libraries, churches, food banks, state agencies, early childhood education sites, and labor unions;

(f) Ensure project resources maximize available federal and private funds for development and initial operation of the opportunity portal. Any incidental costs to state agencies shall be derived from existing resources. This subsection does not obligate or preclude the appropriation of future state funding for the opportunity portal;

(g) Determine the solution and acquisition approach by June 1, 2010.

(2) By December 1, 2011, and annually thereafter, the department of social and health services shall report to the legislature and governor. The report shall include data and information on implementation and outcomes of the opportunity portal, including any increases in the use of public benefits and increases in federal funding.

(3) The department shall develop a plan for implementing paperless application processes for the services included in the opportunity portal for which the electronic exchange of application information is possible. The plan should include a goal of achieving, to the extent possible, the transition of these services to paperless application processes by July 1, 2012. The plan must comply with federal statutes and regulations and must allow applicants to submit applications by alternative means to ensure that access to benefits will not be restricted.

(4) To the extent that the department enters into a contractual relationship to accomplish the purposes of this section, such contract or contracts shall be performance-based. [2011 1st sp.s. c 36 s 19; 2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 2.]

Reviser's note: *(1) RCW 70.96A.530 expired June 30, 2013.
**(2) RCW 74.04.652 was repealed by 2012 c 57 s 1.

Findings—Intent—2011 1st sp.s. c 36: See RCW 74.62.005.

Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 36: See note following RCW 74.62.005.

Contingent validity—2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 2: "*If private funding sufficient to implement and operate the portal authorized under section 2 of this act is not secured by December 31, 2010, section 2 of this act is null and void." [2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 36.]

***Reviser's note:** The code reviser's office was informed by the department of social and health services that funding was secured to implement this section.

Implementation—2010 1st sp.s. c 8 ss 1-10 and 29: "Sections 1 through 10 and 29 of this act shall be implemented within the amounts appropriated specifically for these purposes in the omnibus operating appropriations act." [2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 37.]

Findings—Intent—2010 1st sp.s. c 8: "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Low-income families and individuals often face significant barriers to receiving the services and benefits that they are qualified to receive. These services are essential to meeting individuals' basic needs, and provide critical support to low-income individuals who are working or who have disabilities that prevent them from working;

(b) Each year millions of federal dollars go unclaimed due to underutilization of benefits such as tax credits, health care coverage, and food support;

(c) State agencies have been engaged in an effort to implement an online benefit portal to simplify and streamline access to state, federal, and local benefits that include a broad array of public benefits;

(d) Access to education and training gives low-income individuals and families the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to become successfully employed and attain self-sufficiency; and

(e) Agencies have been engaged in efforts to increase access to training and education for recipients of federal food assistance.

(2) The legislature therefore intends to strengthen existing efforts by providing enhanced structure and direction to ensure that a strong partnership among colleges, state agencies, community partners, and philanthropy be established. The legislature also intends to provide an efficient, effective, integrated approach to the delivery of basic support services and education and training programs. The integrated approach should include the creation of a one-stop-shop, online benefits portal where individuals can apply for a broad array of services, including public benefits and education and training support, and the expansion of the food stamp employment and training program.

(3) The legislature further finds that:

(a) The general assistance program can be reformed to better support the ability of persons who are unable to work due to physical

or mental health impairments to either return to work, or transition to federal supplemental security income benefits; and

(b) Persons who are homeless and suffering from mental illness or chemical dependency are particularly vulnerable, because homelessness is a substantial barrier to successful participation in, and completion of, needed treatment services.

(4) Through the reforms included in this act, the legislature intends to end the general assistance program and establish the disability lifeline program, and to implement multiple strategies designed to improve the employment and basic support outcomes of persons receiving disability lifeline benefits. The legislature further intends to focus services on persons who are homeless and have a mental illness or chemical dependency by providing housing vouchers as an alternative to a cash grant so that these persons can be in stable housing and thus have a greater opportunity to succeed in treatment." [2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 1.]

Short title—2010 1st sp.s. c 8: "This act shall be known and cited as the security lifeline act." [2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 33.]

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 8: "Except for section 10 of this act, this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 29, 2010]." [2010 1st sp.s. c 8 s 34.]