

# Public Benefits & Wage Boost Payments

Best Starts for Kids  
Child Care Wage Boost Pilot



# Disclaimer

The information provided in this presentation is not legal or tax advice. Any reliance upon the information provided is at your discretion and risk.

The government program(s) administering your public benefit(s) will make any final decisions about how Wage Boost payments are treated with regards to your benefit(s).

Your public benefits can change for other reasons while you are participating in the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot. The information provided in this presentation only addresses possible impacts to your public benefits from Wage Boost payments you receive from the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot.

# Agenda

In this presentation we will review:

- How public benefits work
- Public benefits that MAY BE impacted by Wage Boost payments
- Your reporting responsibilities for your public benefits while participating in the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot.

# Public Benefits Overview

# What are Public Benefits?

**Public benefits are forms of assistance from the government.**

Public benefits include programs such as:

- Apple Health (also known as Medicaid)
- Basic Food
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)
- Social Security disability, retirement, and survivor benefits

And others!

# How do Public Benefits work?

- Many public benefit programs look at your household income when deciding if you are eligible for the program.
- Some public benefit programs also look at your resources (sometimes called “assets”). Resources include property that you or household members own and money that is available to your household. **Money usually starts counting as a resource the month AFTER you receive it.**
  - Money includes cash, checking and savings accounts, and investments (such as retirement accounts).
- Each public benefit program has its own rules about who is in your household.

# How are Wage Boost payments counted for Public Benefits?

- Wage Boost payments are counted as part of your household **income** for most public benefits.
- If you save any money from your Wage Boost payments, the money you save will start counting towards any **resource (asset) limits** your household has for public benefits.
- Wage Boost payments are **taxable**. This means that they will be counted for public benefits that are based on your household's taxable income, such as Apple Health.
- If you receive a one-time retroactive payment, this income may be treated differently than your quarterly Wage Boost payments for some public benefits.

# Public benefits that MAY BE impacted - Income

**These benefit programs count Wage Boost payments as income.** If your current household income + Wage Boost payments exceeds the income limits for these programs, you may no longer be eligible. If you remain eligible, your monthly benefit amount may decrease, or your cost share may increase.

- Apple Health
- Basic Food
- Cash Assistance
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, and Project-Based Rental Assistance
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) & State Home Energy Assistance Program (SHEAP)
- Medicare\*
- National School Breakfast/Lunch Program
- Social Security Disability, Survivor, and Retirement\*\*
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

\* Wage Boost payments will not impact your eligibility for Medicare but may impact the amount you owe in premiums.

\*\* See slide 11 for more information

# Public benefits that MAY BE impacted - Resources

**These benefit programs have a resource (asset) limit.** If you save any money from your Wage Boost payments, the money you save will start counting towards the resource (asset) limits your household has for these public benefits.

- Apple Health **Classic (non-MAGI)** Medicaid: The resource limit depends on the Apple Health program you are enrolled in. If you are not sure if your program has a resource limit, contact DSHS at 877-501-2233.
  - Classic (non-MAGI) Medicaid is for adults age 65+, people who have Medicare, people who are blind or have a disability, and people who are receiving long-term care.
  - **Apple Health programs that use Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) do not have a resource limit.** This includes programs for adults ages 19 to 64 without Medicare, children, pregnant persons, and parents/caretakers of children.

# Public benefits that MAY BE impacted – Resources (2)

**These benefit programs have a resource (asset) limit.** If you save any money from your Wage Boost payments, the money you save will start counting towards the resource (asset) limits your household has for these public benefits.

- Basic Food – Certain households have a resource limit. **Most households do not.** If you are not sure if you have a resource limit, check your most recent approval letter or contact DSHS at 877-501-2233.
- Cash Assistance – All households have a \$12,000 resource limit.
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, and Project-Based Rental Assistance – All households have a \$100,000 resource limit.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - \$2,000 for individuals, \$3,000 for a couple in which both people receive SSI. You can put resources that exceed the limits into special protected accounts such as an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Account.
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) – All households have a \$1 million resource limit.

# Special Case – Social Security Title II benefits

- Title II benefits include Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Survivor benefits, and Retirement.
- If Social Security decides Wage Boost payments are **earnings**, the payments may impact your eligibility or monthly payment amount for these benefits.
- If Social Security decides Wage Boost payments are **unearned** income, there will be **no impact** to these benefits.
- We have asked Social Security if they will count Wage Boost payments as earnings or unearned income. We will update you if we hear back.

# Special Case – Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- If Social Security decides Wage Boost payments are **earnings**, about **50%** of your Wage Boost payment will be counted when determining your eligibility and payment amount for SSI.
- If Social Security decides Wage Boost payments are **unearned** income, about **100%** of your Wage Boost payment will be considered when determining your eligibility and payment amount for SSI.
- Social Security will likely count the full quarterly Wage Boost payment amount as income in the month you receive it. This means that you may lose eligibility for SSI during the month you receive a Wage Boost payment, but re-gain eligibility the following month.
- **If other members of your household receive SSI, contact us for more information about possible impacts.**
- We have asked Social Security if they will count Wage Boost payments as earnings or unearned income for SSI. We have also asked for a special exclusion so that Wage Boost payments are not counted at all for SSI. We will update you if we hear back.

# Reporting Wage Boost Payments

# Reporting Responsibilities

- The Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot will **not** report your Wage Boost payments to any federal, state, or local benefit agencies.
- AidKit will report the Wage Boost payments you receive to the IRS. You will receive a 1099-MISC tax from AidKit listing the amount you received in Wage Boost payments each tax year.
- **You are responsible for reporting Wage Boost payments as required by your public benefit program(s) and the IRS.**

# General Reporting Rules

- **Report Wage Boost payments on all public benefit applications, renewals/ recertifications/ eligibility reviews, and any other forms that ask about your income.**
- Provide a copy of your Wage Boost enrollment letter when reporting your payments to public benefit agencies (see slide 15 for example).
- Tell public benefit agencies that you will receive your Wage Boost payment quarterly, but that it represents additional compensation for the prior 3 months.
  - Example: The June 30 quarterly payment represents additional compensation for April, May, and June.

# Program-Specific Reporting Rules

Some public benefit programs also require you to report the Wage Boost payments when you first start receiving them, or in certain situations:

- Apple Health: Report Wage Boost payments within 30 days of your first payment.
- Basic Food: If your gross (before taxes) household income + **quarterly** Wage Boost payment exceeds the [reporting income limit](#) for your household size, you must report the Wage Boost payments within 10 days from the end of the month of your first payment. Check your most recent approval letter for your household's reporting income limit or contact DSHS at 877-501-2233.
- Cash Assistance: If your monthly gross (before taxes) earned income + **quarterly** Wage Boost payment exceeds the [earned income limit](#) for your household size, you must report Wage Boost payments within 10 days from the end of the month of your first payment. Check your most recent approval letter for your household's reporting income limit or contact DSHS at 877-501-2233.
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, and Project-Based Rental Assistance: Report Wage Boost payments within 10 days of your first payment.

# Program-Specific Reporting Rules

Some public benefit programs also require you to report the Wage Boost payments when you first start receiving them, or in certain situations:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Report Wage Boost payments within 10 days from the end of the month of your payment. **Report your Wage Boost payment each time you receive it (every quarter)**. Remind the representative that you don't receive this payment every month.
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Report Wage Boost payments in a timely manner. **Tell your caseworker if you or a household member are receiving Apple Health, SNAP, or Cash Assistance benefits** as this may help your household remain eligible for WIC.
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC): If your gross (before taxes) household income + Wage Boost payments exceeds the **reporting income limit** for your household size (85% SMI), you must report Wage Boost payments within 10 days of your first payment.

# Program-Specific Reporting Rules

Some public benefit programs also require you to report the Wage Boost payments when you first start receiving them, or in certain situations:

- Social Security Title II benefits
  - Disability Insurance (SSDI): Report Wage Boost payments within 10 days from the end of the month of your first payment. Tell the representative that this is a quarterly payment that represents income for the prior 3 months (ex the June 30 quarterly payment represents additional compensation for April, May, and June.)
  - Survivor benefits: Report Wage Boost payments in a timely manner if your gross (before taxes) earned income + Wage Boost payments exceeds \$23,400 (in 2025).
  - Retirement: You must report Wage Boost payments if you are under Full Retirement Age and earning over certain limits. Check the earnings limit for your retirement situation here: <https://www.ssa.gov/prepare/plan-retirement>

# Supporting Documentation

Submit a copy of your enrollment letter **any time** you report Wage Boost payments to a public benefit agency.

The enrollment letter is your proof that you are participating in the Best Starts for Kids Child Care Wage Boost Pilot. It also provides important information that public benefit agencies need to know to process your Wage Boost payments correctly.

# Where to report changes

You can report Wage Boost payments to DSHS for Apple Health Classic (Non-MAGI) Medicaid, Basic Food, and Cash Assistance:

- Online at [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org)
- By phone: 877-501-2233
- In person at your local DSHS office: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/office-locations>
- By mail: Submit documentation of the change to DSHS-CSD Customer Service Center PO Box 11699 Tacoma WA 98411-6699

For Basic Food and Cash Assistance, you can use the [Change of Circumstances form](#) when reporting Wage Boost payments in person or by mail.

**Make sure to provide a copy of your Wage Boost enrollment letter no matter which reporting method you choose.**

# Where to report changes

- Apple Health MAGI Programs (includes programs for adults ages 19 to 64 without Medicare, children, pregnant persons, and parents/caretakers of children):
  - Online: Go to [Washington Healthplanfinder](#) - log in and select “Report a change in income or household” under Quick Links.
  - By Phone: Call the Washington Healthplanfinder Customer Support Center at 1-855-923-4633.
  - By Mail: Submit verification of the change to: HCA-MEDS, PO Box 45531, Olympia WA 98504
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, and Project-Based Rental Assistance: Contact your housing worker or public housing authority. If you are not sure who to reach out to, check your most recent rental agreement or housing eligibility letter for a contact person.

**Make sure to provide a copy of your Wage Boost enrollment letter!**

# Where to report changes

- Social Security - including Title II programs and Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Call the national line at 1-800-772-1213 or your local Social Security office. You can find the contact information for your local office at <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>.
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC): Call the DCYF Child Care Contact Center at 1-844-626-8687.

**Make sure to provide a copy of your Wage Boost enrollment letter!**

**Questions? Need help?**

# Need help?

If you need more information or have questions about your personal benefits situation, contact the **Imagine Institute**:

Phone: 206-492-5249

Email: [BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org](mailto:BSKwageboost@imaginewa.org)

