

Self-Service Portal and Consolidated Eligibility System - SPACES

What is SPACES?

SPACES is North Dakota's new state-of-the-art eligibility system for economic assistance benefits. It stands for the **Self-Service Portal and Consolidated Eligibility System**.

SPACES was developed to meet the requirements of the Affordable Care Act and to take advantage of federal funding made available to states to help them modernize the delivery of health and human services and comply with federal requirements.

Why is the Department of Human Services (DHS) changing how it does business?

DHS is implementing a new eligibility system to provide enhanced customer service to our clients and community partners, and to help ensure that North Dakota families are getting the economic assistance benefits for which they qualify.

About 165,000 people a month will directly benefit from the improvements DHS is making to both technology and business processes.

What are the overall benefits of this modernization project?

SPACES will consolidate into *one* modern, web-based system all the information and functions currently found in several different 30-year-old eligibility systems.

DHS clients will have more convenient, self-service options, and eligibility workers will have new capabilities to provide enhanced customer service.

Modern tools that reduce paperwork, streamline processes, and enhance program integrity will improve the accuracy of payments, safeguard tax dollars and verify that benefits go to those who are eligible.

What is the timeline to implement SPACES?

DHS is taking a deliberate, phased-in approach to the launch of SPACES.

- ❖ The first phase, completed in February 2016, included a self-service portal for individuals to apply for benefits online and a worker portal for county workers to

determine eligibility and process case information for Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program individuals under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

- ❖ The second phase, launching in March 2019, will incorporate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Child Care Assistance Program into the system.
- ❖ Over the next few years, DHS will add in Traditional Medicaid for Aged, Blind and Disabled coverages, as well as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

What are the benefits for clients?

SPACES streamlines the application process, especially for those applying for multiple DHS programs. In addition to applying for benefits online at www.nd.gov/dhs/eligibility/index.html, North Dakotans will now have more convenient, self-service options to manage their cases, including the ability to go online 24/7 to check benefit status, review case history, report changes, view correspondence and securely upload documents. This information will then be automatically sent to a worker portal so the case can be updated, and the household's eligibility can be evaluated.

The new self-service portal also includes the ability for child care providers to register with DHS, submit payment requests for services rendered, and check the status of child care assistance payments.

What are the benefits for county eligibility workers and DHS staff?

Workers will be less burdened by redundant data entry and outdated technology and business processes. They will also have new tools to give them more accurate and timely information, including automated data verification through state and national databases, real-time updates to case information, and electronic case management for a clearer picture of a client's benefit history and family relationships. A worker portal will automatically generate tasks to improve workflow.

Why is this project even necessary?

- to replace inefficient workflows and unsustainable technology systems that have been in use for 30 years
- to meet the requirements of the federal Affordable Care Act
- to administer economic assistance programs in compliance with the complex rules that govern them
- to make significant security improvements
- to take advantage of unprecedented federal funding made available to help states modernize their health and human services systems

- to combine critical technology upgrades with key business process improvements so DHS, county workers and service providers can provide enhanced assistance to the people they serve

How has DHS prepared for the implementation of SPACES?

We are taking a prudent approach – implementing the project in phases, conducting extensive staff training, and thoroughly testing the new system to identify and remedy as many issues as possible before we go-live with the next phase.

Throughout this process, we will be making system fixes, enhancements and business process improvements to better address the complex economic assistance needs of North Dakota families.

The new system was developed with DHS policy and subject matter experts to ensure that rules for determining eligibility and calculating benefits are enforced appropriately.

SPACES is based on a standard set of modern infrastructure and software components which, over time, are expected to reduce the cost of system maintenance and operations.

How will the launch of SPACES impact services?

We are replacing several outdated technology systems with one modern, integrated eligibility system that will enhance customer service, increase the accuracy of benefits, and transform business operations.

With any new technology system this large and complex – in both the public and private sectors – there are issues that surface in the days, weeks and months following the launch. This is normal, and DHS has teams in place to resolve issues, minimize any inconvenience to clients and workers, and provide people with the benefits for which they are eligible as quickly as possible.

There will likely be some temporary slowness and delays in service as workers gain proficiency with new technologies, tasks and workflows. Some complex cases may also require additional worker review, which may take longer the first time a case is processed in the new system.

DHS encourages clients to take advantage of the self-service options available to conveniently report changes and manage their benefits, 24/7.