

Self-Service Portal and Consolidated Eligibility System - SPACES

What is SPACES?

SPACES is North Dakota's state-of-the-art eligibility system for economic assistance programs. It stands for the **S**elf-Service **P**ortal and **C**onsolidated **E**ligibility **S**ystem.

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 did the Department of Human Services (DHS) implement SPACES?

DHS implemented a new eligibility system to provide enhanced customer service to 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 directly benefit from the improvements DHS is making to both technology and business processes.

SPACES is being implemented in phases.

What are the overall benefits of this modernization project?

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

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

Modern tools that reduce paperwork, streamline processes, and enhance program integrity 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.

- ❖ Release 1, 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).
- ❖ Release 2, launched in March 2019, incorporated the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and the Child Care Assistance Program into the system.
- ❖ In August 2020, DHS will add in Medicaid for Aged, Blind and Disabled coverage groups. In the future, North Dakota will add the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to SPACES.

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 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 is automatically sent to a worker portal so the case can be updated, and the household's eligibility can be evaluated.

The 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 human service zone eligibility workers and DHS staff?

SPACES reduces redundant data entry and replaces outdated technology and business processes. Workers 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 automatically generates tasks to improve workflow.

Why was this project necessary?

SPACES has enabled North Dakota:

- 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, and
- 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?

North Dakota took a prudent approach – implementing the project in phases, conducting extensive staff training, and thoroughly testing the system to identify and remedy as many issues as possible before go-live with each release.

SPACES was developed with DHS policy and subject matter experts to ensure that rules for determining eligibility and calculating benefits are applied 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 has the launch of SPACES impacted services?

North Dakota is replacing several outdated technology systems with one modern, integrated eligibility system to 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 a release. This is normal, and DHS has teams in place to resolve issues, minimize inconvenience to clients and workers, and provide people with the benefits for which they are eligible as quickly as possible.

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