



BASIC FOOD EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (BFET) PROGRAM

COVID-19 Guidance

During the current environment of campus closures, teleworking, and online-only education options, colleges and students are experiencing challenges in meeting many program requirements designed for in-person engagement. In this environment, there is much opportunity for BFET programs to increase student access across our system - some options may already be available and there are spaces for creativity as well.

The intention of this initial guidance document is to share information about current processes and decisions to help colleges support BFET students during this unprecedented time. Issues the State Board staff are aware of and working on will also be identified. A revised version will be shared as we collect additional information about processes, policies, resources and opportunities.

If you would like to have a direct conversation in relation to your college specific scenarios and ways to support students, please contact the BFET Program Administrator, Jennifer Dellinger, at jdellinger@sbctc.edu.

Signatures on Required Forms

As in-person engagement is not an option at this time and colleges are doing their very best to continue to provide services, it is a challenge to collect student signatures on all required forms.

BFET Policy

The program application, individual employment plan (IEP), consent form, and participant reimbursement forms all require a student signature.

Policy Modification

As of March 17th, 2020, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) confirmed the continued federal requirement for signatures on program documents and provided the following alternative options to collect signatures if the student is not available in person to sign the form:

- PDF electronic signature
- Picture of the signed form
- Mailed signed form

If you choose to utilize electronic signatures, follow your college's electronic signature policy when implementing. If you are unsure of your college's policies, check with your Business Office or IT Department.

Before the end of the federal fiscal year, original documentation with signatures must be included in program records. Do what you can at the time you are working with students to meet their needs and have a plan to gather documentation afterwards when necessary.

Continued Advocacy

The need to waive the requirement for signatures at every point of service request when a student is already participating in a BFET program at our colleges is continuously raised with DSHS and national advocates.

Participant Reimbursements & Receipts

As a result of campus closures, students are experiencing the need for additional support and it is a challenge for staff to deliver services while continuing to meet program requirements, especially related to participant reimbursement policies.

The SBCTC understands obtaining receipts for student files may be a challenge during this time. Do what you can to obtain any form of documentation at this time, including accepting scanned, photographed or mailed documents and receipts. In instances when you cannot obtain the receipt for a Participant Reimbursement within the quarter it was issued, you should have a plan in place to ensure receipts are documented in the students file by the end of this FFY.

BFET Policy

All participant reimbursements must be tracked using the Participant Reimbursement form and receipts must be maintained in the participant file.

Please note the missing receipt policy from the DSHS Providers Handbook: *If a participant fails to submit a receipt, providers must document the attempts in eJAS that were made to get the participant to return the receipt. If a participant fails to return two receipts, PR can no longer be issued to that participant.*

Continued Advocacy

The need for more options to meet existing participant reimbursement requirements or waivers to these requirements has been requested with DSHS and we are awaiting further information.

Reverse Referral

As a result of college campus and Community Service Office closures, there is a need for alternate options for efficient reverse referral delivery and response processes to ensure students are quickly connected to BFET programming for support services and the maintenance of their basic food.

BFET Policy

The Reverse Referral Form is a formal agreement between the college and DSHS allowing the student to become eligible for food benefits. The form provides DSHS with the students' eligibility information for the BFET program. BFET staff complete the Reverse Referral Form when a student does not have an open food indicator (FI) in eJAS which is required for all BFET enrollments.

The following are the three options available for submission:

- Faxing to: 1-888-388-7410, or
- Taking it to your local Community Services Office (CSO), or
- Mailing to:
DSHS CSD Customer Service Center
PO Box 11699
Tacoma WA 98411-6699

Continued Advocacy

The SBCTC has submitted a request to DSHS for the use of the Washington State Secure Email portal to submit Reverse Referral forms.

In the meantime, staff working with a student requiring a Reverse Referral can call the Verification Hotline at 1-877-309-9757 to report enrollment.

Updating Expired Components

Most colleges maintained open winter quarter components to cover the gap between winter and spring quarters, as appropriate per policy. Since many colleges are delaying the start of spring quarter to accommodate the move to online instruction, the open components may expire before spring quarter. Expired components may be administratively closed by DSHS if not updated within 10 business days. Therefore, colleges should monitor component expiration dates and update components as necessary.

BFET Policy

As of December 4th, 2019, all expired components must be updated or closed within 10 business days after the component's scheduled end date. In addition to this, colleges were given the ability to maintain an open component during the break periods between the quarter(s) as long as it does not exceed 150 days.

Policy Modification

During COVID-19, there will be a 5-day grace period for the 10-day expired component rule. If you have any questions about how to update your caseload to reflect the current circumstances, please contact the BFET Program Support Team directly or at BFETHelp@dshs.wa.gov.

Example Scenario

Spring quarter was scheduled to start March 30, but is now delayed to April 16. Winter quarter components are set to expire on March 29. There is now a gap of greater than 10 business days between March 30 and April 16.

Here are two actions you can take to update your components and keep them from expiring:

1. Extend the end date of the components to the new start date of the Spring Quarter. This is the best action if you do not know if the student will be returning for the Spring Quarter.

2. Extend the end date of the Spring components to the start of the Summer Quarter to cover the entire quarter. This is the best action if you know the student is returning for the Spring Quarter.

Billing and Invoicing

With colleges continuing to operate remotely as a result of campus closures, there could be some challenges and delays in obtaining the necessary documents, reports, or information to complete your BFET invoicing and submit by the deadline.

BFET Policy

Invoicing for BFET is submitted monthly by the 10th of the month for the previous month through the [Online Billing and Invoicing System](#) (OBIS). All costs must be reported for the period incurred.

Policy Modification

If your current situation prevents you or your business office staff from submitting your invoice by the deadline, please email the BFET Program Administrator, Jennifer Dellinger, jdellinger@sbctc.edu.

If you need to adjust your payment method options from a paper check to an electronic funds transfer during campus closures, you may do so by emailing the SBCTC's Accounts Payable Department at accountspayable@sbctc.edu.

Purchasing & Receiving Goods

As college staff expand and develop new loaner programs to ensure students have equitable access to online instruction, there are challenges with purchasing, receiving and delivering equipment. In addition to the Internet Access guidance document already released, two specific questions to BFET have also emerged:

1. Can staff use their personal credit card to purchase hotspots and be reimbursed?
2. Can the items be shipped directly to a BFET staff person's address to deliver to students?

BFET Policy

Staff are not permitted to use their personal funds to purchase items on behalf of the BFET program or BFET students.

Policy Modification

As a temporary solution during stay at home orders, the SBCTC recommends that colleges set up processes and procedures to ensure the items ordered:

1. Are not purchased using the BFET staff person(s) personal monies,
2. College receives confirmation of delivery from delivery company or delivery service (if delivered to an employee's home address), and
3. Electronic items are logged in with IT and include serial numbers and number of each item received.

Additional Resources:

SBCTC COVID-19 Response Webpage

For the most up-to-date resources for our agency, the CTC system, and our state please visit the [SBCTC COVID-19 Response webpage](https://www.sbctc.edu/coronavirus/default.aspx) at <https://www.sbctc.edu/coronavirus/default.aspx>

Access to Online Books for Classes

The SBCTC Educational Technology & Open Education supports and promotes open educational resources (OER) policies and initiatives in the community and technical colleges by managing and supporting projects and practices designed to increase access to open resources and educational technology tools for system faculty, staff and students. Here is a link to the [current available OER resources](http://www.openwa.org/) that students have access to: <http://www.openwa.org/>

New funding to boost benefits for Basic Food recipients

As of the week of March 30, some Washington residents who receive Basic Food benefits will have additional funds available for March and April 2020. Congress approved extra benefits up to the maximum allowed for each household. In Washington state, this means the Department of Social and Health Services will provide additional benefits to approximately 277,000 households.

USDA Announces Online Tool to Help Families Find Meals for Kids During COVID-19 Emergency

April 3, 2020 –The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the launch of an online tool – the “Meals for Kids” Site Finder – to help families find meals for children while schools are closed during the coronavirus pandemic. This is the latest in a series of swift actions USDA has taken to keep children and low-income individuals fed during the ongoing health crisis.

The [“Meals for Kids” interactive map](http://www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids) directs people to local sites where kids can get free meals. The site finder currently lists more than 20,000 meal sites from 23 states, and more sites will be added as states submit data each week. The map is available in both English and Spanish at www.fns.usda.gov/meals4kids.

National Hunger Hotline

The USDA National Hunger Hotline remains a helpful resource for people seeking food assistance. The hotline, operated by Hunger Free America, can be reached Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET. at 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479) or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273) (for Spanish).