**ANTICIPATED LOSS OF ABAWD CONTRACT FUNDS FROM DSHS: CURRENT SITUATION & NEEDED NEXT STEPS**

Current Situation

* WA State is a pledge state[[1]](#footnote-1) for individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that do not have children - ABAWDs (able bodied adults without dependents).
* WA State received $9 million for federal fiscal year 2021 (October 1 – September 30) from the Federal Nutrition Service (FNS) to be a pledge state. These funds sit with the Department of Social Health Services (DSHS).
* The SBCTC holds a contract with DSHS to connect individuals to resources to help meet their basic needs through a single point of contact at all 34 community and technical colleges. This design included a foundational core network of navigation connecting individuals in the community and students to SNAP access, housing resources, food pantries/banks, employment and training programs like Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET). This also includes resources such as emergency assistance grants, child care, etc.
* FFY21 is the first year the model was implemented and from Oct 1, 2020 to Jan 30, 2021 navigators served more than 3,055 individuals. A total of 33 ABAWD Navigators are in place at community and technical colleges.
* FNS has reviewed state eligibility for these funds and WA State and Texas (only two states receiving pledge funds) anticipate having funds revoked for this current FFY for reasons that remain unclear. DSHS is in regular communication with FNS on this and formal notification is expected shortly.

Next Steps Needed

* SBCTC has notified BFET Administrators at the colleges who oversee ABAWD Navigators. SBCTC is notifying Instruction and Student Services Commissions, and Jan Yoshiwara will brief WACTC at its Business Meeting on March 26
* The SBCTC is proactively identifying alternative means of funding for these critical basic needs supports for students. Among these possibilities are:
	+ Exploration of biennial funding added to the Operating Budget of the State Legislature (we have costed this out and key Legislators have been identified—the window of opportunity for this option is short)
	+ Considering use of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for COVID-19 pandemic be deployed in part to fund ABAWD Navigators at the colleges
1. Department of Social Health and Services (DSHS) committed to creating opportunities to help ABAWDs meet work requirements even though waivers are in place for all but King County. For more information on what this includes visit: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)