Welcome to this orientation for the Washington State Benefits Portal. My name is ___________ and (if applicable) ___________ is assisting me today at the computer.

Give a brief explanation of who you are/where you are from, and/or who invited you today.

We’re going to start today by taking a few minutes to learn about the website and services, and then we’ll do a live demonstration from the website.

The entire presentation lasts about 40 – 30 minutes so you can expect to be done here at______ o’clock.

There is a sign-up sheet located (LOCATION), and we would really appreciate it if you can sign in with your organization and email address.
Washington State Connections has a Vision, not unlike your organization. We want to assure that everyone in Washington can meet their basic needs and has the opportunity to prosper.

The WA Connections portal was created with this in mind.

Create a web-based universal benefit application portal that makes it easier for low-income families and individuals to apply for and access a variety of vital services and benefits that help them achieve self-sufficiency and move out of poverty.

The Washington State Connection portal is a collaboration between DSHS, Community Partners, and has also received support from philanthropic organizations. Through this portal residents can easily and securely learn about and apply for available social services. By developing community partners, we will all be supporting the important vision to reach more people in need.
You are here representing your organization because you care about connecting people to benefits. Most of you are already familiar with the paper application or the OSA (Online Services Application) website customers have had access to over the years. So you might be asking what the difference is between how you’ve been doing business and the new portal. Why change? What’s in it for me? What’s in it for my client?

WEBINAR: As this (webinar/training) goes along, feel free to submit questions in the chat box. (Point to chat box. This may include anything from “How do I...? To Why would I...?”

IN PERSON: There will be an opportunity to ask questions later, so please make a note of anything that comes to your mind during the presentation.

The Washington Connection portal provides a single access point for a growing number of resources and services. Not just for DSHS services, but for other state, city, county and community resources.

The goal is that the portal streamlines your work, provides clients direct access to their information, and connects more people with more benefits and services.
What can Washington Connection DO? Clients can now use Washington Connection, in English and Spanish, to

• Check whether they are likely to be eligible for public benefits, including:
  • Cash
  • Food, Medical
  • Adult Care Services
  • Child Care
• Apply online for benefits
• Renew benefits
• Report a change in benefits
Washington Connection also serves as a central place where people can find additional information on other services and community resources including:

- Earned Income Tax Credit
- Child Support, WIC, Basic Health
- ECEAP & Head Start preschool
- Federal Student Aid, and Housing assistance
- LIHEAP Energy Assistance
- Tribal Services
- Veteran’s Benefits
- Foster Care Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation

This list will continue to grow as new partners come on board!
The Washington Connection Benefit Portal is a secure and easy to use.

Many resources exist that can help clients while they are using the portal. In a moment I will point to the online tutorial and content related help which is available on every page.

Individuals can set up a Client Benefit Account that will allow him/her to:
• Track the status of their benefit application
• Renew benefits
• Report changes of circumstances

As of July 2011, individuals will be able to log into their account to see all the benefits they are receiving, including dollar amounts.
Washington Connection is a tool that serves community-based organizations as well as individuals. Community-based organizations can elect to create an account that enables staff to submit applications with or on behalf of clients, search for client applications that have been submitted online, and check the application status for clients.

After the break we will transition to talking about what it means to be partner of Washington Connection and how to sign up.
This kind of collaborative partnership with local municipalities puts Washington State on the forefront of providing service to customers.

Washington Connection’s long-term goal is to make more federal, state and local government services available through the portal.

In July Washington Connection will be linked to the City of Seattle, enabling Seattle residents to apply for benefits provided by the City from this website.
LETS
Get Started With a Demonstration!

https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/

http://www.washingtonconnection.org/home
Here is an example of what that letter will look like.

Note that we can’t show you all the Renew Benefits and Report A Change pages, but the functionality is set up just like the Am I Eligible/Apply now pages.
I recognize that we have covered a lot territory. What questions do you have that I can help address?

(For webinars, acknowledge technological barriers and address any questions in the chat box.)
TRUE:

Anyone who creates a Secure Access account in the system will be able to check the status of the Washington Connection application online!
TRUE:

Anyone who creates a Secure Access account in the system will be able to check the status of the Washington Connection application online!
Fortunately, the answer to this question is False. This website is dynamic. The goal is to continue to change and improve the website to meet the needs of the people we are serving.
True for agencies that sign on to be a partner of Washington Connection.
False, the website is available in English and Spanish.
TRUE or FALSE?

We need your help to determine the answer!

- Agencies barriers might include lack of Internet access, insufficient computer equipment or bandwidth, or no available staffing to work with clients.
- Client barriers could be the lack of transportation, disability, illiteracy, cultural stigma, or language barriers.
- Part of the outreach effort is to identify these existing barriers in local areas so we can help you find resources to address these barriers. We may be able to find needed support -- such as funding, donated equipment, or volunteers -- if we understand what these barriers are. Your information will also help us understand the types of challenges these populations are facing so we may be able to connect with the appropriate organizations to provide the kind of help they need.
So... how did you do?

As a reminder, there’s a lot of information on the website including an online tutorial. Most questions can be answered by reviewing these materials.

As you use Washington Connection please share your thoughts about the site through the “feedback” link at the bottom of the portal website.
This completes the introduction to Washington Connection. After a short break (define timeframe) we are going to talk about how and why to become a partner of Washington Connection.
WASHINGTON CONNECTION
Partnership
What are some advantages for my organization to become a partner for Washington Connection?

You will have a direct local contact for your questions, and have the opportunity to attend local community meetings, network with other organizations, and provide feedback. You may also receive technical assistance and marketing materials as needed.

You can periodically receive updated information (emails, newsletters, etc.) related to services or features that are supported by Washington Connection. The update information will be useful when supporting clients to find the services and benefits they need.
What are some advantages for my customers if my organization becomes a partner for Washington Connection?

Partnership implies that both parties benefit. Here are some of the benefits:

• Reduced travel and time to get to Social Services agencies
• Eventual ability to apply for multiple services with 1 portal and only 1 series of questions
• Reaching customers at a community program they already use
• Increase participation in the number of historically underserved populations
• Mitigating the strain on hard-pressed community resources, such as local food banks, by connecting eligible household with available programs
• The Washington Connection website has links to finding many services above and beyond those that can be applied for through the portal. There are health plans, including medical and dental providers that accept Medicaid reimbursement, career development, community resources and many others!
• Increasing participation in the number of historically underserved populations – including working poor, new immigrants and refugees, unemployed, elderly, Hispanic, and out-of-the-labor-force SNAP-eligible individuals.
How can my organization become a partner for Washington Connection?

Our regional coordinators, contract managers and program staff (who are here in the room) can explain to you the process and the requirements to join our growing ranks of Washington Connection partner agencies.

A Community Partner Agreement is available. Your organization can fax or email the Community Partner Registration to the CSD Regional Community Partnership Coordinator in your region.

If your organization has previously signed a partnership agreement with DSHS Community Services Division (CSD), you will be asked to re-register.

You may hear and/or receive information about Washington Connection from more than one place (i.e. government agencies or other community based organizations).
If my organization decides to become a partner for *Washington Connection*, how many levels of partnership are there? What decisions do we, as an organization, have to make around partnering?

We now have a formal process for building community partnerships. In this program, partners are asked to allow access to our services from their sites (i.e. applications, changes to existing cases). These services can be provided at 2 different service levels:

Washington Connection currently has 674 partners

**Service Level 1: Host Organization** – (partners may elect to participate in one or all three functions)
- Display posters and printed marketing materials about Washington Connection; or
- Provide applicants with access to a computer with an icon to Washington Connection on the desktop; or
- Provide applicants with assistance in answering questions about Washington Connection benefit portal

**Service Level 2: Assisting Agency** –
Provide applicants with assistance in completing and submitting the online application.
(To protect the confidentiality of client information, Assisting Agencies will be required to complete a Data Share Agreement, Secure Access Washington (SAW) accounts, Contractor Intake Form and Non-Disclosure Form(s).)
In addition to a service level, your organization must select the type of access you are able to provide:

**Limited Access** – Your address will not be published. (Provide access to *Washington Connection* to your customers only.)

**Public Access** – Your address will be published. (Provide access to *Washington Connection* to the general public.)

Note: This is targeted for a future enhancement to *Washington Connection*.

Current & new partners must complete a new Registration Form which can be found at the following website [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml)
For agencies who are not yet ready for that step or don’t have the resources available you can simply:
Display posters and printed marketing materials about *Washington Connection*.

Here are a few additional ways an organization can support *Washington Connection*:
Provide the applicant with access to a computer with an icon to *Washington Connection*.
Provide the applicant with access to additional equipment, such as printer, fax machine, scanner, or telephone.
Provide the applicant with assistance in answering questions while navigating the website.
Provide the applicant with assistance in completing and submitting the online application.
How can my organization receive marketing materials?

• Here at this event

• By becoming a partner

• From the portal:
  www.WashingtonConnection.org

• And
  www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml

How can my organization receive *Washington Connection* marketing materials?

Marketing materials are available here in the room. Organizations that are already registered as partners will receive an initial packet. The electronic printable marketing materials will be made available on the *Washington Connection* website: [www.WashingtonConnection.org](http://www.WashingtonConnection.org) and [http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/servicereform/communitypartner.shtml)

If you have questions about marketing materials, please contact your local Community Partnership Coordinator.
Where do we go from here?

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”
- Henry Ford
Any questions?