

Health & Welfare Will Close Nine Offices

Due to personnel budget reductions over the last two years, the Department is closing nine offices around the State. We regret the additional burden these closures will create for many people. Despite the fewer offices and staff resources, we remain steadfast in our commitment to provide the best customer service possible. Offices targeted for closure are:

Region	Offices Closing	Projected Closure Date
1	Bonnars Ferry, Saint Maries*	May 2010
2	Orofino	
3	Emmett	
4	McCall	
5	Bellevue, Jerome, Rupert	
6	American Falls, Soda Springs	

* The Saint Maries physical location will remain open; however, Self Reliance welfare services will no longer provide services there.

In addition to the office closures, Child Support staff will no longer be stationed in Lewiston. This reduction is expected to be completed by May 2010. After May, no Region 2 office will staff Child Support workers. Customers located in Region 2 will continue to be directed to contact Idaho Child Support Services by calling 1.800.356.9868.

A list and map of all offices remaining open is available on the Department's website: www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov. We encourage you to review this list to become familiar with the locations of the nearest offices. The list indicates which offices are closing.

Building a Community Safety Net for Welfare Customers

The reduced number of offices means fewer Department resources and staff are available to provide help to needy families. A community safety net is a critical piece to ensuring the families we serve continue to get the assistance they may be eligible for. We are actively informing community partners and other stakeholders about the office closures. Additionally, we are asking partners for their support during these challenging times. Partners can help by:

- **Meeting customer needs** – The Department will continue to work with partners to serve and meet the needs of customers. However, as record caseloads continue to increase while we have fewer resources, we anticipate it will take us a little longer to process applications and meet other needs, which means call volumes and lobby traffic could increase in the offices that remain open. We ask partners – especially those providing services – keep this in mind when assisting and referring customers.

- **Communication support** – Budget reductions must be in place before July 1, 2010; however, we expect the nine offices identified above to close in May 2010. We ask for your support in communicating the information outlined below with your staff and customers.

Communicating the Closures

A mutual effort will be required of the Department and community partners to effectively communicate the office closures to customers and help them understand their options for applying for Department services.

Department Communication Responsibilities

The Department is working on several communication deliverables to inform applicants, participants, and partners about the office closures. Communication deliverables include:

- **Posters** – Starting the week of April 19th, the Department will begin hanging office closure signs in the closing offices to inform and remind participants about the closures.
- **Press Release** – On April 6th the Department's Public Information Office issued a press release to media outlets in Idaho.
- **Department Website** – The Department has posted information about the closures on the website, provide an updated list of open offices, and enhance the site to make it easier to find program information and apply for services using forms available on the site.
- **Community Partner Safety Net** – The Department will keep community partners and stakeholders informed of office closures and other budget reduction methods so that they can help communicate these changes and impacts to customers.

In addition to announcing the closures, these deliverables also explain some options for applying for services. These options are outlined below in the Preferred Methods for Applying for Services section.

Community Partner Communication Opportunities (Ways You Can Help)

The following information will help partners communicate a consistent message to individuals and families impacted by local office closures.

- **Office changes** – Share office closure information with customers and help them learn the locations of those offices that remain open. Current office information (including a printable map and list) will be available on the Department website.
- **Customer service** – Explain to customers that they may go to any Department office in the State and apply for services. Help applicants understand how to apply for State services and what is needed (verifications, interview, etc.) to assure the application process is as expedient as possible. The Department's Welfare Assistance webpage (www.welfareassistance@dhw.idaho.gov) has printable forms, lists, and other information for the application process.
- **Options for applying** – Help customers understand how they can apply, and encourage them to visit a Department office, if possible. Visiting an office, with as much information (verifications) in-hand as possible will help speed up the application process. See "Preferred Methods for Applying for Services" below for more details.

Preferred Methods for Applying for Services

The Department has some preferred methods (options) that should be communicated to customers applying for benefits.

1. Whenever possible, encourage applicants to physically visit a Department office closest to them. Doing so provides the most expedient process for processing applications and making a benefit determination, as a DHW employee will be able to conduct an interview and help complete the process. If an applicant is willing to visit an office, help them know what verifications to take in order to ensure an expedient process and benefit determination.
2. If it is not possible for an applicant to visit the nearest Department office, encourage them to visit the Department's Welfare Assistance webpage (www.welfareassistance@dhw.idaho.gov) to download and complete the Application for Assistance. The application and other necessary forms, including a list of documents (verifications) to include with the application, may be printed and mailed, or faxed, to the following processing center. Mailed applications could take longer to process than applications submitted in a field office.

**Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Self Reliance Programs**

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3. If neither of the above two options are feasible for an applicant due to an inability to get to an office or access the Internet, encourage the applicant to call the Idaho CareLine by dialing 2-1-1 (touchtone phone) or 1.800.926.2588 and request an application be mailed to them. The completed application, along with verifications, may be mailed or faxed to the processing center mentioned above in #2.

Opportunities for Feedback

If you have questions, concerns or would like further information please contact the Department Program manager you work with.