

Effective January 17, 2018

This office will no longer have staff
available to assist you.

You may call our

Public Assistance Helpline

1-888-706-1535

Or visit apply.mt.gov

To apply for

SNAP, TANF, or MEDICAID

You may also visit the nearest Public
Assistance Office at: 111 N. 31st Street
Billings, MT

DPHHS promotes ways Montanans can apply for benefits, access accounts

- *DPHHS points clients to apply.mt.gov*
- *Helpline is also available at 1-888-706-1535*
- *Due to state funding reductions, agency closing several OPA offices*

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is promoting all the options that are currently available for Montanans to apply for public assistance, check their account information, or ask questions through a toll-free hotline.

DPHHS Director Sheila Hogan said Montanans can submit an application for SNAP food assistance, TANF cash assistance or health care coverage by going online to apply.mt.gov. By opening an online account, clients can apply for, renew, report changes and check their benefits online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A tutorial on how to use apply.mt.gov is available on the agency YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/user/MontanaDPHHS>

The Public Assistance Helpline is also staffed by knowledgeable eligibility workers for clients to call at 1-888-706-1535 and receive assistance. The Helpline handles over 30,000 calls a month.

Another way to submit applications is via the OPA fax number at 1-877-418-4533 or by mail at Field Offices of Public Assistance, PO Box 202925, Helena MT 59620.

Hogan said DPHHS launched apply.mt.gov and the Helpline options in recent years and they have been very popular with the thousands of people DPHHS serves. And, they will no doubt be utilized even more with upcoming office closures in January 2018.

DPHHS is closing 19 Office of Public Assistance due to the recently announced budget cuts (MCA 17-7-140) that were finalized following the recent Legislative Special Session. The OPA office closures are part of a \$49 million funding reduction to DPHHS. This is part of a total \$76 million cut to state agencies. These funding reductions were passed during the recent Legislative Special Session to address the state's \$227 million budget shortfall.

Prior to the Special Session, DPHHS faced a \$100 million funding reduction. However, that amount was reduced to \$49 million when Governor Bullock and the Legislature came to an agreement to balance the state's budget during the session using a combination of cuts, transfers and other legislation.

The OPA closures are part of the DPHHS funding reductions. During this transition, Hogan said DPHHS is committed to working with all communities impacted by the office closures. "DPHHS is committed to serving Montanans, and we pledge to maintain an open dialogue with the communities during this transition time to ensure our clients' needs are being met," Hogan said. "We are doing everything we can to minimize the impact as much as possible."

For example, in each of the impacted communities, DPHHS will be working with community partners on ways to ensure clients are aware of the resources that are available or provide other outreach as needed. DPHHS will also consider sending OPA employees from nearby offices to impacted communities on a regular basis, if needed. "This is a strategy that has worked in communities where we have not been able to offer a full-time presence," Hogan said.

The offices are located in Big Timber, Chinook, Choteau, Columbus, Conrad, Cut Bank, Deer Lodge, Dillon, Forsyth, Fort Benton, Glendive, Livingston, Malta, Red Lodge, Shelby, Sidney, Plentywood, Roundup and Thompson Falls.

Hogan said these offices will be closed no later than January 31, 2018. Some offices may close sooner than January 31 due to staff availability. Exact office closure dates will be updated regularly on the DPHHS website at www.dphhs.mt.gov. Updates will also be noticed through social media on agency Facebook and Twitter accounts.