

New System Includes Convenient Office Locations

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The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is creating a menu of options for consumers applying for state services, including Medicaid, food stamps, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and long-term care. In the new system, Texans will be able to apply for services in person, by phone, over the Internet and by fax or mail. Field offices will be strategically located across the state for consumers who are required or choose to handle part of the application process in person.

Convenient office locations

The new system will include 211 field offices and eligibility workers stationed in about 300 hospitals and other medical facilities:

- 167 full-service field offices will be staffed by state employees and be among several portals providing consumer access to the eligibility process.
- 44 satellite offices will be open for business on prescheduled days of the week as demand dictates.
- Traveling units will provide services to consumers who live in remote areas or have difficulty traveling.
- State eligibility staff will continue to provide services to patients in about 300 hospitals and other medical facilities across the state.

By way of comparison, there are 71 Social Security offices and 233 full-time driver's license offices in Texas.

State to close 99 offices

The new eligibility system will allow consumers to handle many transactions without appearing in a local office. This will enable the state to close 99 eligibility offices. HHSC considered several factors – including proximity to clients, the number of applications received each month and distance to other eligibility offices – in determining where to locate offices in the new system.

Of the 99 offices that will close over the next year:

- 87 process fewer than 1,000 applications each month, and 20 process fewer than 100 applications.
- 31 are located within 15 miles of another full-service eligibility office, and 13 are located within 5 miles of another office.
- 38 are in locations where health and human services employees also provide other services, such as child and adult protective services. These services will continue.
- 78 have 10 employees or fewer, and 59 of these offices have no more than five employees.

How the changes will take place

Office closings will take place as the new system is phased in and leases expire. An information campaign will help guide consumers through the changes, and information will be placed in offices before the state begins implementing the new system. In the new eligibility system, consumers can dial 2-1-1 from anywhere in Texas to begin the application process.