

# Washington Cares Fund Update

Washington State is the first in the nation to develop a way to make long-term care affordable for all workers in the state as we age. The Long-Term Services and Supports Trust Program (referred to as the “LTSS Program” or “WA Cares Fund”) is a new fund which will provide access to long-term care when we need it.

The LTSS Program will be funded by premium assessments. Starting January 1, 2022, all Washington employee wages (those employees who work in Washington, receive wages reported on a Form W-2, and work at least 500 hours per year) are subject to a 0.58% premium assessment (for example, \$0.58 premium assessment on every \$100 of eligible wages)

Starting January 1, 2025, proceeds of this premium assessment will be used to provide long-term services and supports benefits to Washington State residents who have paid into the LTSS Program for a specific amount of time and who need a certain amount of assistance with activities of daily living.

Upon becoming eligible, a person may receive approved services of **up to \$36,500 over the course of the person’s lifetime**. The DSHS will pay, in \$100 increments (may be adjusted annually for inflation), long-term services and supports providers. These can include adult day services, in-home personal care, assisted living services, adult family home services, nursing home services, care transition coordination, dementia supports, home safety evaluation, adaptive equipment, respite for family caregivers, transportation, home-delivered meals, education and consolation, relative care, professional services, and services to assist family members to care for eligible individuals.

**Employers are required to collect premiums through employee payroll deductions and remit proceeds to the Employment Security Department (EDS). This agency will deposit funds in a trust for the individual until they qualify for the benefit.**

## ***Eligibility to Receive Benefits Under the LTSS Program***

Starting January 1, 2025, an individual may receive benefits from the LTSS program if they are a Washington resident, at least 18 years old, have either temporarily or permanently vested\* and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has determined they need assistance with at least three activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating, personal hygiene, etc.).

**\*Vesting:** An employee is temporarily vested if they have worked a minimum of 500 hours per year for three years within the last six years (from the date of application of benefits). An employee is permanently vested if they have worked at least 500 hours per year for at least 10 years, with at least five of those years being consecutive.

Employees' have a **one-time** opportunity to opt-out if they have comparable private long-term care insurance. **All qualifying employees are subject to the premium assessment, with the following exceptions:**

- ***Individuals who have private long-term care insurance may opt-out:*** Any employee who attests that they have comparable long-term care insurance purchased before November 1, 2021, may apply to ESD for an exemption from the premium assessment. The employee must provide proof of their ESD exemption to their employer before the employer can waive collecting the premium assessment from the employee's wages. The employee must apply for the opt-out exemption to ESD between October 1, 2021, through December 31, 2022.
- ***Self-employed individuals may opt-in:*** Starting on January 1, 2022, any self-employed individuals (non W-2 wage employees) may choose to participate. They may elect this option by January 1, 2025, or within three years of becoming self-employed for the first time.

**For more information please visit the [WA Cares Fund](#) website.**