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MDHHS re:forms assistance application to be more user friendly
New document is less than half the size of previous version

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan has debuted a more user friendly application for public assistance that is more comprehensive and less than half the size of the previous form.

The streamlined application for food assistance, Medicaid and other benefits now has 18 pages – down from 42 pages in the previous application that was the longest in the United States. It has 80 percent fewer words – with 3,904 – and 80 percent fewer questions – with 213.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Project Re:form resulted in the improved application, which is easier to navigate due to an updated design that includes the use of colors and improved headings and organization. The Detroit design studio Civilla worked with MDHHS and based the improvements on input from MDHHS clients and staff who tested and led the application redesign effort.

“As our staff experience significant reductions in time spent reviewing and correcting application forms that had become too complicated, they will be able to better assist our clients in removing barriers to self-sufficiency and finding jobs to support their families,” said MDHHS Director Nick Lyon. “Clients will find it is easier to receive the help that they need.”

MDHHS piloted the new application in 2017 in its Hamtramck office in Wayne County and in its office in Eaton County. Civilla monitored the pilot and engaged nearly 400 clients and numerous staff members in conversations about how to improve the form.

As a result, clients in the pilot counties spent an average of 20 minutes completing the application, compared to 45 minutes for the previous application. Staff spent 20 minutes less time reviewing each application, seeking additional information and making corrections.

MDHHS began using the new application statewide Jan. 22. It combines into a single form application for food assistance, Medicaid, cash assistance, State Emergency Relief and child care assistance.

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MDHHS has been working with Civilla on the improved application for more than two years. In addition to the design work and engaging clients who use the form, Civilla was involved in staff training, analysis of data that showed improved outcomes from use of the new form and months of meetings with MDHHS staff, stakeholders and community partners to introduce the new application and seek feedback.

The new application reflects client needs rather than program needs – a main concept behind the creation of MDHHS in 2015.

Lessons the department learned from Project Re:form will be incorporated into the online MI Bridges public assistance application process in the coming months.

The [new Assistance Application form](#) can be found on the MDHHS website. It is available to applicants for public assistance benefits at local MDHHS offices. Michigan residents also can apply for assistance online at www.michigan.gov/mibridges.

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