



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

ROBERT GORDON  
DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Sept. 2, 2020

**CONTACT:** Bob Wheaton

517-241-2112

[wheatonb@michigan.gov](mailto:wheatonb@michigan.gov)

**MDHHS launches streamlined renewal forms making it simpler  
to keep critical benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic**

*Project Re:New improves client experience across four largest assistance programs  
as more families and individuals need help*

LANSING, Mich. – The benefits renewal process is now simpler for roughly two million food, health care, child care and cash assistance clients with the rollout of new, streamlined benefits renewal forms, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced today. Now, Michigan is the first state to have this kind of streamlined application and renewal in print and online.

Project Re:New, a collaboration between MDHHS and Detroit-based [Civilla](#), began in 2018 and spans the department's four largest assistance programs. The changes will help MDHHS serve Michigan residents and families better and faster during the COVID-19 pandemic – a crisis that has left federal agencies and some state governments struggling to reduce application or renewal backlogs, and handle more hotline traffic across assistance programs that are a temporary lifeline for many residents.

"Life today is more stressful and complicated than ever. That's why it's as urgent as ever to simplify the way we deliver benefits - to treat people with dignity, meet them where they are, and take as little as possible of their time," said Robert Gordon, director of MDHHS.

Project Re:New follows the 2018 launch of a simplified application that was also completed in collaboration with Civilla through an effort called [Project Re:Form](#). Like the updated application, the new renewal forms feature human-centered design to emphasize urgent information and outline clear steps, deliver directions in plain language and, importantly, incorporate feedback from clients and caseworkers on their experiences completing or processing forms.

Instead of using a renewal form that includes questions that may not apply to an individual's assistance program, clients will complete one core redetermination form, and a one- to two-page supplemental form specific to each of their assistance programs.

-MORE-

Project Re:New also led to the simplification of the six-month review form, annual review form and online renewal option in [MI Bridges](#), the state's online assistance application and case management portal. Changes follow all existing eligibility and program requirements.

The new renewal was piloted in MDHHS' Madison Heights and Monroe field offices. It resulted in:

- 50 percent fewer office visits, an important reduction that puts clients and MDHHS field office employees at lower risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- A 96 percent completion rate, up from 73 percent.
- 60 percent fewer errors, reducing delays in processing time and generating a higher renewal rate.

"In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, this work demonstrates MDHHS' ongoing commitment to improving benefit delivery and designing services that better meet people's needs," said Lena Selzer, design director at Civilla. "The work was guided by the expertise of hundreds of Michigan residents and MDHHS field staff. It would not have been possible without them."

Rollout began this month by mail, in person and online. It will continue gradually through next year as clients are due for renewal of benefits. Clients will receive forms and a reminder to renew sooner than usual to give them time to submit forms before their interview with field staff—another change aimed at further reducing processing delays.

Project Re:Form was recognized by Harvard University as one of the [2018 Innovations in American Government Award's Top 25 Programs](#). It took one of the longest benefits applications in the nation and transformed it, cutting the amount of time clients spent filling out the form, reducing error rates and helping caseworkers process applications in less time.

# # #