



Applying for Public Assistance

WHO CAN APPLY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE?

Anyone. Whether you and your family will get public assistance depends on your income, resources, family size, and immigration status.

IS PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ONLY FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN?

No. Anyone who meets the rules for income, resources, and immigration status can get public assistance. There are two types of public assistance in New York State: Safety Net Assistance for individuals and Family Assistance for families with children. Pregnant women can also get Family Assistance even if they do not have any other children. Pregnant women can receive a \$50 per month allowance starting the 4th month of pregnancy. Cash assistance for public assistance is paid twice a month for food, clothing, and housing. The amount of money you get depends on how many people are in your home and what your income is.

Family Assistance is better than Safety Net Assistance because you can get cash for a longer time and the rules are not as strict. With Safety Net Assistance, you can get cash assistance for up to two years only. After two years you can still get help paying your rent and other expenses, but only a small part of the grant will be cash.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE?

Call 718-557-1399 to find out which Job Center covers your zip code. Go to the Job Center and ask the receptionist for an application. You can fill out your application at the Job Center or you can take it home. If you need help filling out your application, the Job Center must help you.

WHAT IF I AM HOMELESS?

You can choose any Job Center location.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED FOR MY APPLICATION?

- I.D. for you and for each family member applying, for example a driver's license, a passport, a birth certificate
- Social Security number for you and each family member applying
- Documents showing that you are married, divorced, or legally separated
- Proof of your residence and rent amount
- Proof of present income

- Proof of how you sustained yourself in the past
- Proof of age
- If applicable, documents showing that children reside in your home for example school records, a report card, a clinic card, a letter from the child's doctor

If you have tried but have been unable to get these documents, tell the case worker and the Job Center must assist you in getting those documents. This includes paying fees to get the documents and making calls to other persons to verify who you are.

CAN I GET EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE WHILE MY APPLICATION IS BEING PROCESSED?

You may be able to get emergency assistance if

- You have no money to buy food, medical prescriptions, or other things you need
- You are facing eviction or an electricity or gas shutoff
- You are homeless

Tell the Job Center about your emergencies when you hand in your application. The Center should tell you that day if you can get emergency assistance.

WHAT IF I AM A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

You should be sent to the Domestic Violence Liaison. You will be exempt from work requirements if domestic violence makes it too difficult for you to work.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I HAND IN MY APPLICATION?

You will be fingerprinted electronically. Computer matches will be done to verify your income and resources. You will be screened for alcohol and substance abuse by the case worker. The initial screening is done by a questionnaire and if you answer "yes" to two or more questions related to alcohol or substance abuse, you will be sent to the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Treatment may be required for anyone found unable to work because of alcohol or substance abuse. You will then be mailed an appointment with the Bureau of Eligibility Verification (BEV).

WHAT IS A BEV APPOINTMENT?

At a BEV appointment you are asked to prove that you are eligible for benefits. You must go to Brooklyn for this appointment unless you are a domestic violence victim. If you are a domestic violence victim, you can make other arrangements with the Domestic Violence Liaison.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A BEV APPOINTMENT?

There are usually two parts to the BEV appointment. There is an office interview and a home visit. First, a BEV investigator will talk to you. The investigator will check all the information on your application, including your identity, who is living with you, and your income and resources. You may be asked for more documents.

The second part of the BEV appointment is a home visit, unless you live in a domestic violence shelter. You will get an appointment for a home visit. On that day, two BEV investigators will visit your home between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The BEV investigators may ask your landlord and neighbors if you really live at the address you gave on your application. If the BEV investigators do not show up by 4:00

p.m. on the day of the appointment, call BEV at the number listed on your appointment letter, and tell them no one came to your home.

After both appointments, BEV will tell the Job Center to accept or reject your application.

CAN I GET CHILD SUPPORT WHILE RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE?

You can get a portion of your child support payments. As part of the application, you have to give up your right to collect child support to the Human Resources Administration. If you refuse, your public assistance grant will be reduced by 25% or your application will be denied. You will receive the first \$100 of child support payments for one child and \$200 for two or more children. This is called the Child Support Pass Through. If the amount you receive in child support is less than this, you will receive the full amount.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN APPROVED TO GET PUBLIC ASSISTANCE?

You will get a letter in the mail 30-45 days after your application is complete. It will say if your application was accepted or denied. If your application is accepted, the letter will tell you how much cash assistance and food stamps you will get, how long you will get it, and whether you will get Medicaid.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY APPLICATION WAS DENIED?

You should request a fair hearing immediately. You can request a fair hearing in the following ways:

- Going to 14 Boerum Place, 1st Floor Brooklyn, New York 11201
- Calling 800-342-3334
- Visiting <http://otda.ny.gov/hearings/request/#online>
- Faxing a fair hearing request to 518-473-6735
- Writing to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 1930, Albany, NY 12201-1930

Keep copies of everything you send.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN HRA WORKER IS UNFAIR TO ME?

When an HRA worker mistreats, misinforms, refuses to follow the law you have the right to file a complaint, often referred to as a grievance. Grievances should be mailed to:

New York City Human Resources Administration
Family Independence Administration
Office of Constituent's Communication
150 Greenwich Street, 38th Floor New York, NY 10007

Once the complaint has been filed, contact the Office of Constituent Affairs at 212-331-4640.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may call Mobilization for Justice, Inc.'s Government Benefits Project at 212-417-3732 on Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

DISCLAIMER: This fact sheet gives general information for NYC residents; it is NOT legal advice.