



## CORONAVIRUS: THE IMPACT ON PUBLIC BENEFITS

Some federal, state and local agencies have changed their protocols in response to the COVID 19, Coronavirus. Currently there is no impact to any payment of benefits as a result of the Coronavirus. However, guidance and instructions are evolving rapidly regarding benefit access, appointments and fair hearings. This guide provides information on these changes, as well as additional resources. Note, the following information may change in the coming days. In this fast-moving landscape, we will update this fact sheet periodically to provide the latest information.

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## **APPEALS**

### ***Fair Hearings***

The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) - Fair hearing procedures that will apply during this emergency period are as follows:

- No Defaults for Hearing No-shows: If an appellant fails to show up to a hearing scheduled during the state of emergency, there will be no default, that is no negative action taken.
  - Instead of defaulting people who do not appear at hearings scheduled during the state of emergency, OAH will administratively adjourn the hearings, and preserve aid to continue pending the outcome of the hearing, for cases in which aid continuing is in place.
- New Requests for Fair Hearings & Hearings on the Calendar for Upcoming Date: Individuals who have a scheduled fair hearing during the state of emergency have the option to proceed with the hearing by telephone. Individuals who make new requests for a hearing during the state of emergency are given the option of a hearing by telephone. OTDA is reaching out to appellants with scheduled hearings to offer them the option of a telephone hearing.
- OTDA is in the process of adjourning and rescheduling 9,000 fair hearings by hand. They will re-schedule as telephone hearings if the appellant or the appellant's representative consents. No word as of yet as of the time for the adjourned dates. OTDA will notify appellants of the new date by mail, they will not notify by e-mail.

### ***NYC Housing Court***

There will be no evictions from March 16, 2020 until further notice. Beginning March 17, 2020, NYC Civil Court will only hear emergency applications on cases and continue trials that were started before 5 pm on March 16. All other matters, including appearances in all housing part (as well as regular civil court) calendars will be administratively adjourned for approximately 45 days. All parties will be notified of adjourned dates by postcard. For additional information go to the NYC Housing Court site at <https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/>.

### ***NYS Courts***

If conditions warrant court closure or any change in operations, notice will be posted on the court system's web site at [www.nycourts.gov](http://www.nycourts.gov) or at 800-268-7869. Notifications also will be sent out via the New York Courts Alert Emergency Portal (to sign up to receive alerts, visit: [www.nycourts.gov/alerts/](http://www.nycourts.gov/alerts/)). For more information go to <https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/covid.shtml>.

## **CASH BENEFITS**

### ***Social Security Administration***

All local Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service beginning Tuesday March 17, 2020 until further notice. Online services remain available at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Individuals who cannot complete their Social Security business online, should call SSA's National 800 Number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).



If an individual cannot conduct their Social Security business online, they should check SSA's online field office locator for specific information about how to directly contact a local office. The local office will be able to provide critical services for application assistance, answer questions and provide critical services over the phone. To locate the nearest local Social Security office go to <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>, click on "Other Services" to find the address and phone number. SSA field offices may offer in-person assistance for certain crucial services. These include reinstatement of benefits in dire circumstances, assistance to people with severe disabilities, blindness or terminal illnesses, and people in dire need of eligibility decisions for Supplemental Security Income or the associated ongoing eligibility for Medicaid when returning to work. Those seeking these services must call the local office in advance.

If an individual has a scheduled appointment during this emergency state, SSA will call the individual to conduct business over the phone. If an individual has a hearing scheduled, SSA will call the individual to discuss alternatives, including offering a telephonic hearing. Please note that SSA calls may come from a PRIVATE number and not from a U.S. government phone.

Go to <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2020/#3-2020-2> for more detailed information.

### ***Cash Assistance (NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA))***

HRA offices remain open. Clients do not need to go to their assigned center and should be helped no matter which center they report to. NO NEGATIVE action will be taken for applicants or recipients who miss a scheduled appointment at a Job Center or a SNAP center, as well as other HRA offices, which includes the Office of Child Support Services and Career Service providers. Go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/index.page> for additional information.

ACCESS HRA, at <http://www.nyc.gov/accesshra>, can be used to upload documents needed for eligibility determinations, as well as submitting recertification forms. Can also be used to submit requests for special grants and emergency assistance without having to go to a Job Center.

### ***Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)***

Individuals can now apply for UIB if an individual is quarantined, not working due to a risk of exposure or infection, or to care for a family member. In addition, NYS has waived the 7-day waiting period for benefits for these individuals.

#### **Filing a Claim Online:**

- Individuals will only be able to file a claim online according to the day that corresponds to the first letter of their last name. To see what day to file, go to [https://labor.ny.gov/ui/how\\_to\\_file\\_claim.shtm](https://labor.ny.gov/ui/how_to_file_claim.shtm).

#### **Filing a Claim over the Phone:**

- Individuals can file a claim over the phone at 888-209-8124
- The NYS Department of Labor is extending telephone filing hours as follows:
  - Monday through Thursday, 8 am to 7:30 pm.
  - Friday, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.
  - Saturday, 7:30 am to 8:00 pm.



There is no information as yet as to whether there will be a waiver of the work search requirement.

### *Workforce1 Career Centers*

Some Workforce1 Career Centers remain open at this time. However, all Workforce1 Career Center events (e.g, workshops, recruitment screenings) are cancelled until further notice. Workforce1 Career Centers can be used for assistance is filing claims for unemployment benefits. Find a Career center at <https://maps.nyc.gov/sbs/>.

## Food

### **SNAP**

ACCESS HRA, at <http://www.nyc.gov/accesshra>, can be used to submit SNAP applications and recertification, and to upload documents needed for eligibility determinations. There is no word to date as to whether SNAP is waiving work requirements.

**Note:** Changes in ABAWD that were supposed to take place April 1<sup>st</sup> has been postponed.

### **School Lunch**

For students under 18, the Department of Education, Office of Food and Nutrition Services is serving both breakfast and lunch from 7:30 AM- 1:30 PM, Monday-Friday, at the entrances of all school buildings. **Note:** If there is a school that is closed go to <https://www.nycenet.edu/schoolsearch> for a neighboring school.

### **WIC**

Participants can visit a WIC clinic if they are well and if the WIC clinic is open. All appointments, including applications and recertifications may be completed by phone. WIC Cards for new participants can be mailed or offer a “drive up” as an option. Additional details can be found at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2020/topic/0316covid19.pdf>.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

### **New York Statewide Directive**

As directed by Governor Cuomo, all New York health insurers have been directed to waive cost-sharing expenses related to coronavirus testing, emergency room visits, urgent care, telehealth, and office visits.

### **Medicare**

In addition, Medicare has been directed to:

- Waive cost-sharing for testing
- Waive cost-sharing for coronavirus treatment in doctor's offices or emergency rooms and services delivered via telehealth
- Remove prior authorization requirements
- Waive prescription refill limits
- Relax restrictions on home or mail delivery of prescription drugs
- Expand access to certain telehealth services



- Has temporarily expanded its coverage of telehealth services to respond to Coronavirus. Medicare beneficiaries can temporarily use [telehealth](#) services for common office visits, mental health counseling and preventative health screenings. Go to the right hand side of the page and indicate the state of residency. A listing of various services will show with phone numbers.

### ***CMS Issues Guidance on Nursing Facility Visits***

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/gso-20-14-nh-revised.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=23036eb9-2439-42d1-a014-eebc7664544e>

### ***Special Enrollment Period for Uninsured New Yorkers***

Individuals who are currently uninsured have a special enrollment period from March 16<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup> to enroll in Qualified Health Plans on the NY State of Health Marketplace or directly with a health insurer; insurance will be effective as of April 1, 2020. There is no cost sharing for Covid-19 for individuals enrolled in qualified health plans. Individuals can apply for coverage through NY State of Health on-line at [nystateofhealth.ny.gov](https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov), by phone at 855-355-5777, and by working with [enrollment assistors](#).

Individuals who are eligible Medicaid, Essential Plan and Child Health Plus can enroll year-round, as usual. Go to [https://www.dfs.ny.gov/reports\\_and\\_publications/press\\_releases/pr202003161](https://www.dfs.ny.gov/reports_and_publications/press_releases/pr202003161) for more information.

### ***Available Help with Health Insurance***

- CSS Navigator Network at 1-888-614-5400: assists consumers apply for health insurance through the NYS of Health Marketplace, including Medicaid, Essential Plan, Child Health Plus and qualified health plans.
- CSS Community Health Advocates at 1-888-614-5400: assists consumers resolve insurance disputes, file complaints, appeal plan decisions, obtain needed medical services, and access affordable care for the under or uninsured.
- CSS Independent Consumer Advocacy Network at 1-888-614-5400: assists consumers with accessing Medicaid long-term care services, answer questions and solve problems with consumers' Medicaid managed long-term care problems.
- CSS Community Health Access to Addiction and Mental Healthcare Project at 1-888-614-5400: assist New Yorkers with mental health and substance use disorders access needed health insurance benefits and access needed care.

## HOUSING

### ***HPD Section 8 Applicants and Recipients***

The HPD Client Services Center at 100 Gold Street in Manhattan is closed effective Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> until at least Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup> for in person interactions. HPD will be suspending any subsidy termination actions until further notice.

Participants experiencing a rent hardship due to a decrease in income may contact HPD via [DTRAI@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:DTRAI@hpd.nyc.gov) or by fax at 212-863-5299. For more details go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/section-8.page>



## ***NYCHA Public Housing***

### Rent Hardship Program

Households experiencing loss of income should access the rent hardship program. Residents can request a rent reduction by completing an Interim Recertification via NYCHA Self Portal (at <https://selfserve.nycha.info>) or by contacting their Property Management Office.

Households may qualify for the rent hardship program when:

- There is at least a 5% reduction to gross income
- Current rent is more than 30% of household income
- Reduction in income has lasted at least 2 months

### Zero Income Policy

Households that experience a complete loss of income may qualify for NYCHA's Zero Income Policy. Residents should contact their Property Management Office.

## ***Foreclosure Moratorium***

Properties secured by FHA-insured Single-Family mortgages are subject to a moratorium on foreclosure for a period of 60 days. For more information go to

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/20-04hsgml.pdf>.

## **TAXES**

All taxpayer must continue to file their taxes by April 15<sup>th</sup>. However, for those who owe the IRS, the U.S. government will provide a 90-day extension to pay 2019 income-tax bills. Postponement on payments applies to federal returns at this time. No word on whether NYS/NYC will postpone payments.

## **OTHER NEWS**

- Federal Emergency Relief Package – Federal Paid Sick Leave

The coronavirus emergency relief package, which became law on March 18<sup>th</sup>, gives many American workers paid sick leave if they need to take time off because of the coronavirus. It provides qualifying workers two weeks of paid sick leave if they are ill, quarantined or seeking diagnosis or preventive care for coronavirus, or if caring for a sick family member. It gives 12 weeks of paid leave to people caring for children whose schools are closed or whose child care provider is unavailable because of coronavirus.

Most workers at small and midsize companies and non-profits can obtain the paid leave, as can government employees, as long as they have been employed at least 30 days. Those at companies with more than 500 people are excluded. Workers at places with fewer than 50 employees are included, but the Labor Department could exempt small businesses if providing leave would put them out of business. Employers can also decline to give leave to workers on the front lines of the crisis: health care providers and emergency responders. Part-time workers and the self-employed, including gig economy workers like Uber drivers, can also receive paid leave, assuming they pay taxes.



People will be paid the full amount they are typically paid, up to a maximum of \$511 a day. If caring for a sick family member or a child whose school or day care is closed, they can be paid up to 2/3 of their typical pay up to \$200 per day.

By April 2<sup>nd</sup> individuals will be able to contact employers to receive their pay. Businesses and nonprofits will be reimbursed for the full amount they paid out within 3 months, in the form of a payroll tax credit. The reimbursement will also cover the employer's contribution to health insurance premiums.

This package includes other types of aid, including unemployment benefits, free coronavirus testing and food and medical aid.

- **NYS Paid Sick Leave Bill**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a bill guaranteeing paid leave for New Yorkers under mandatory or precautionary quarantine due to the coronavirus. It also provided for guaranteed paid sick leave for those not related to the virus. Employers with 4 or fewer employees and a net income of less than \$1 million will provide at least 5 days of unpaid sick leave each year. For more information visit <https://libn.com/2020/03/18/governor-announces-paid-sick-leave-job-protection-for-quarantined-workers/>

- **Con Edison**

Coned will not shut off service for non-payment and will be waiving new late-payment fees, among other actions. For more information visit: [https://www.coned.com/en/about-us/media-center/news/coronavirus/updates?utm\\_campaign=covid&utm\\_source=questline&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=image-body](https://www.coned.com/en/about-us/media-center/news/coronavirus/updates?utm_campaign=covid&utm_source=questline&utm_medium=email&utm_content=image-body)

- NYS will temporarily halt the collection of medical and student debt owed to the State of New York, and has referred to the Office of the Attorney General for collection, for at least a 30-day period. This includes but is not limited patients that owe medical debt due to the five state hospitals and the five state veterans' home and students that owe student debt due to State University of New York campuses. For more information go to <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-and-attorney-general-james-temporarily-suspend-state-debt-collection-response>.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDC Informational Videos: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/videos.html>
- CDC Fact Sheets: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- U.S. State Department: <https://www.state.gov/coronavirus/>
- Tips to Reduce Spending: <https://www.nylag.org/coronavirusfinancialplanning/>
- NYC Department of Health: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/coronavirus-factsheet.pdf>





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- Coping with Stress of Coronavirus: Follow <https://www.instagram.com/nimhgov/> and/or read <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/messages/2020/coping-with-coronavirus-managing-stress-fear-and-anxiety.shtml>