



# CORONAVIRUS: ITS IMPACT ON PUBLIC BENEFITS

Currently there is no impact to 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 resource guide 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 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 will be taken.
  - Instead, 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. OTDA is reaching out to appellants with scheduled hearings to offer them the option of a telephone hearing. Individuals who make new requests for a hearing during the state of emergency are given the option of a hearing by telephone.
- 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.

***NYS Courts***

- Beginning Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, virtual court operations will commence in NYC Criminal Court. All parties will participate in court proceedings by videoconferencing using Skype for Business.
- Beginning Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, NYC Family Court will hear by remote video appearances and/or by telephone the following matters: child-protective intake cases involving removal applications, newly-filed juvenile delinquency intake cases involving remand applications, emergency family offense petitions, applications where there is a court order of custody or parenting time.
- For more information visit: [http://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/press/PDFs/PR20\\_07.pdf](http://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/press/PDFs/PR20_07.pdf).
- 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 call 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>.



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**CASH BENEFITS**

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

- Applicants: Applications for Cash Assistance should be completed online at [nyc.gov/accesshra](https://nyc.gov/accesshra). Required documentation can be uploaded using the HRA mobile app found on Apple Store or Google Play. All in-person interviews are waived and will now take place over the phone.
  - In addition, all requests for special grants and emergency assistance (one shot deals), can be made online via ACCESS HRA. A summary of the changes can be found at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/misc/ACCESS-HRA-Coronavirus-Flyer.pdf>
  - Home Bound clients and clients with disabilities are being informed that applications can be submitted through ACCESS HRA. For clients who cannot or do not want to use ACCESS HRA, Home Visits are available. Staff conducting these home visits will adhere to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's guidelines and protocols for such visits.
- Recipients: 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.

***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.



## ***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:

- To file a claim [click here](#).
- Individuals will need to establish a “NY.GOV ID”, if they do not currently have one, by creating a username and password.
- 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 in filing claims for unemployment benefits. Find a Career center at <https://maps.nyc.gov/sbs/>.

## **FOOD ACCESS**

### ***SNAP***

Applicants should file a SNAP application and recertifications at ACCESS HRA, [nyc.gov/accesshra](https://nyc.gov/accesshra), where they can also upload documents needed for eligibility determinations. All interviews will be done via phone. There is no word to date as to whether SNAP is waiving work requirements.

**Note:** All federal Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) requirements have been suspended. Changes in the rules regarding ABAWD that were set to take place April 1<sup>st</sup> have 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> to find an open 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 [here](#).

## **Greenmarkets**

All markets are currently operating as normal, however, they have implemented the following practices:

- There is no sampling and no touching produce at markets until further notice.
- All staff processing credit/debit/SNAP transactions will wear protective gloves.
- There will be hand sanitizers at market manager stations.

Go to <https://www.grownyc.org/greenmarket/ourmarkets> for Greenmarket locations and updates.

## **Meals and Food Pantries**

- CityMeals on Wheels Available: <https://www.citymeals.org/get-meals>.
- Meals at Senior Centers: Senior centers are operating strictly to offer food, either as take-home meals or meals delivered to home. Individuals MUST call in advance for availability. Find a local senior center at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dfta/index.page>.
- Food Pantries: Many emergency food providers have temporarily suspended normal operations. Some sites have switched to “grab and go” meals and pantry bags to minimize the risk of exposure. For a local food pantry go to <https://www.foodbanknyc.org/get-help/>.

## **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.

### ***Medicaid***

Effective March 19, 2020, no one who currently has Medicaid will lose coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***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***

- For information [click here](#).

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

- Individuals who are currently uninsured have a special enrollment period from March 16th through April 15th 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 <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov/>, by phone at 855-355-5777, and by working with Navigators: <https://info.nystateofhealth.ny.gov/IPANavigatorSiteLocations>.
- Individuals who are eligible for 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***

The Community Service Society of New York provides assistance to New Yorkers who need help accessing health insurance benefits. Following are their programs:

- 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.



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## HOUSING

### ***Eviction Moratorium in NYS***

- All eviction cases and pending warrants of eviction for non-payment or any other reason are suspended statewide until further notice. For more information, go to the NYC Housing Court site at <https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/>.

### ***Administrative Adjournments***

- All appearances in regular housing court will be adjourned (postponed) for approximately 45 days. All parties will be notified of adjourned dates by postcard.

### ***Essential Proceedings***

- Effective March 22<sup>nd</sup>, filings for essential proceedings only will be accepted by Housing Courts. Essential proceedings include:
  - Illegal lockouts (including reductions in essential services, such as heat, hot water, etc.).
  - Serious housing code violations.
  - Serious repair orders.
  - Post-eviction relief.

This listing is subject to ongoing review and changes as necessary by the Chief Administrative Judge of the Courts.

- Bronx Housing Court: Effective Tuesday, March 24, 2020, all essential/emergency appearances for the Bronx Housing Court will be held at the Bronx County Courthouse located at 851 Grand Concourse. For more information call 646-386-5409.

### ***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.
- Section 8 vouchers set to expire will automatically renew. Households with an active voucher will automatically receive additional time to search for housing.
- Non-emergency Housing Quality Standard inspections are suspended 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>.

### ***HCR Section 8 Applicants and Recipients***

- The HCR Client Services Center at 25 Beaver Street in Manhattan is closed until at least Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup> for in person interactions. All appointments will be conducted by telephone or email.
- HCR has not provided any information about subsidy terminations or extensions of renewals or active vouchers. Recipients can call their case manager or the general phone number at (212) 480-6672. Calls will be returned as soon as possible.





- Housing Quality Standard inspections are taking place for households that are new to the program or relocating, and in response to immediate health and safety complaints.
- For more details, go to <https://hcr.ny.gov/hcr-program-notice-covid-19>.

### ***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>.

### ***Legal Advice***

Tenants can contact these organizations for free housing-related Legal Advice. (Phone calls only.)

- Housing Conservation Coordinators at (212) 541-5996, Monday evenings, 7-9 pm
- Take Root Justice Housing Hotline at (646) 459-3022
- Goddard Law Project at (212) 799-9638, x0
- PALANTE Harlem, Inc. at (212) 491-2541 -- English & Spanish spoken
- Legal Services NYC at (917) 661-4509 -- serves residents city-wide in several languages

### ***Housing Search***

[Landlord Watch](#) has put together an FAQ on how housing search in NYC (with or without a rental assistance program, such as FHEPS, CityFHEPS, HASA, Section 8) is affected. The FAQ will be updated regularly. Website visitors can submit questions and share information on the site as well. To access the FAQ site, go to <https://landlordwatch-covid19.webflow.io>.





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## TAXES

- The U.S. Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service announced on March 21<sup>st</sup> that the federal income tax filing due date is automatically extended from April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020.
- Taxpayers can also defer federal income tax payments due on April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020, without penalties and interest, regardless of the amount owed. This deferment applies to all taxpayers, including individuals, trusts and estates, corporations and other non-corporate tax filers, as well as those who pay self-employment tax.
- Taxpayers do not need to file any additional forms or call the IRS to qualify for this automatic federal tax filing and payment relief.
- Individual taxpayers who need additional time to file beyond the July 15 deadline, can request a filing extension by filing Form 4868 through their tax professional, tax software or using the Free File link on <https://www.irs.gov>. Businesses who need additional time must file Form 7004.
- The IRS urges taxpayers who are due a refund to file as soon as possible. Most tax refunds are still being issued within 21 days.
- In response to the national emergency and to protect our employees and America's taxpayers, the IRS has temporarily closed all Taxpayer Assistance Centers and discontinued face-to-face service throughout the country until further notice. The IRS is continuing to process tax returns, issue refunds and help taxpayers to the greatest extent possible.
- NYS is following the federal government and extending its tax filing deadline to July 15<sup>th</sup>.

## 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/>

- Student Debt

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>.

- Con Edison

Con Ed will not shut off service for non-payment and will be waiving new late-payment fees, among other actions. For more information [click here](#).

- National Grid

National Grid has temporarily suspended collection-related activities, including service disconnections, to lessen any financial hardship caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. These policies will remain in effect until the end of April, when they will reevaluate continued need. For customers look for more information [click here](#).

### 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/>



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- NYC Department of Health: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/coronavirus-factsheet.pdf>
  - Coping with Stress of Coronavirus:
    - <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/messages/2020/coping-with-coronavirus-managing-stress-fear-and-anxiety.shtml>
    - CDC guidance on managing mental health and coping with Coronavirus:
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), OR text “START” to 741-741 to reach the Crisis Text Line.
    - Free mental health services: Call 1-888-NYC-Well 24/7 hotline or text “WELL” to 65173. For more information visit: <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>