

Can I receive government benefits such as Cash Assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP", formerly known as Food Stamps), and Medicaid if I have a criminal conviction?

Yes. If you are a New York State resident you can apply for and receive government benefits like Cash Assistance, SNAP and Medicaid regardless of the number of convictions you may have.

How do I apply for Cash assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid?

Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the need for social distancing, the best and safest way to apply for all benefits from the Human Resource Administration ("HRA") is on the internet by going online on a computer or a smartphone to **ACCESS NYC** at www.access.nyc.gov. On the Access NYC page you can link to the online application at www.nyc.gov/accesshra and also find out what other benefits you may be eligible for. On **Access HRA** click on "Apply" under the "Cash Assistance (CA)" heading to apply for Cash Assistance, SNAP and Medicaid within the same application.

What if I do not have access to a computer or a smartphone?

If you cannot apply online, please call **HRA's INFOLINE at 718-557-1399** and request an application be mailed to you. You can complete the application and return it by mail. HRA may soon also provide a fax option or drop-box for submitting applications. Please check the Access HRA link periodically for updates.

Can I go to an HRA Center location to apply if I need assistance because I can neither apply online nor call HRA?

Many HRA Center locations are now closed and some have been joined with other centers. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply online or call the INFOLINE to have an application mailed. If you cannot resolve your issues either of these ways, you should **call 311** or check online at this link below before attempting to visit a center to make sure it is open to the public: www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/locations/locations.page. You should be served at any open location you visit during this time.

Could having an open warrant affect my eligibility for benefits?

When you apply for benefits, the Department of Social Services ("DSS") will run a national warrant check on anyone applying for benefits. Your Cash Assistance and SNAP will be denied if you have an open warrant for violating a condition of your probation or parole, or, are found to be actively fleeing to avoid prosecution for a felony. Just having a warrant for your arrest is not enough to prove that you are fleeing to avoid prosecution because many people do not know that they have open warrants. Instead, the warrant must have been issued because you are intentionally fleeing law enforcement. Even if you are found to be a "fleeing felon" or violating probation or parole, you remain eligible for Medicaid.

If I was convicted for welfare fraud, will this affect my benefits?

Yes, it can. An intentional program violation ("IPV") or a criminal conviction for welfare fraud could affect your benefits. If you were found guilty of an IPV for Cash Assistance, SNAP or Medicaid you may be disqualified for a specific period of time before you will again become eligible to receive benefits.

If I have questions or am having problems with any of the situations listed above, how do I get assistance from The Legal Aid Society?

Call the Legal Aid Society's Access to Benefits (A2B) Helpline at 888-663-6880. Hours of operation during the Covid-19 emergency are Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. A2B staff can assist NYC residents with questions about cash assistance, SNAP, issues related to Medicaid/health law, disability, employment and unemployment benefits matters, and, other benefits and issues related to COVID-19. For more information you can also visit our website at: www.legalaidnyc.org/get-help/covid-19/covid-19-information-for-clients/