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Legal Aid, NYLAG, and Dechert LLP Reach Landmark Settlement Ending Chronic Delays in SNAP and Cash Assistance Processing

Agreement mandates sweeping reforms to ensure timely access to food and cash benefits, modernize HRA systems, and strengthen oversight for hundreds of thousands of low-income New Yorkers

(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society, New York Legal Assistance Group, and Dechert LLP announced a [landmark settlement](#) in [Forest et. al. v. the City of New York et. al.](#), a class action lawsuit brought against the City of New York for failing to process applications and recertifications for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Cash Assistance (CA) within the 30-day timeframe required by federal and state law.

Under the terms of the settlement, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) agreed to a series of concrete, enforceable reforms designed to fix long-standing problems in how SNAP and Cash Assistance benefits are delivered to New Yorkers in need.

Specifically, the settlement requires HRA to:

- overhaul its systems to ensure New Yorkers can apply for and maintain access to SNAP and Cash Assistance benefits without unnecessary delays;
- meet clear benchmarks for processing applications and renewals on time, ending chronic backlogs that left families waiting weeks or months for food or income support;
- implement strict limits on call-in interview wait times, provide same-day callback options, and guarantee the right to an in-person interview for anyone who requests one;
- modernize its online and mobile platforms, including easier document uploads through ACCESS HRA, automatic receipts, and new tools to prevent wrongful denials;
- provide regular public reporting on application timeliness, call wait times, and case processing to ensure compliance and continued oversight by plaintiffs' counsel and the court; and

- provide updated training to front-line workers on new procedures, client communication, and use of technology to improve service quality and reduce errors.

The reforms will help hundreds of thousands of low-income New Yorkers receive the food and cash aid they are entitled to more quickly, reliably, and with fewer administrative barriers.

“For too long, low-income New Yorkers have been forced to wait—sometimes for months—for the food and cash benefits that federal and state law guarantee them,” said **Emily Lundgren, Staff Attorney with the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “This settlement finally holds the City accountable and ensures that families can access life-sustaining benefits without facing unnecessary red tape, technical barriers, or bureaucratic neglect.”

“New Yorkers in need have faced endless delays, dropped calls and wrongful denials just trying to access the help they are entitled to. This settlement is a hard-won victory for those who have waited too long for food or cash assistance. It promises faster processing, improved technology, and the basic ability to complete an interview without spending hours on hold,” said **Abby Biberman, Associate Director of New York Legal Assistance Group’s Public Benefits Unit**. “This is an important step toward ensuring that New Yorkers in need have access to vital support without delay, confusion and other barriers.”

“We all share responsibility for a safety net that works on time so families aren’t left without the basics,” said **Mark Thierfelder, co-chair of Dechert**. “Together with The Legal Aid Society and New York Legal Assistance Group, this settlement delivers timely decisions, accessible tools and real accountability, so hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers receive the food and cash assistance they are owed without delay and with dignity.”

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The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit organization that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For nearly 150 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.

www.legalaidnyc.org

Founded in 1990, New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) is a leading civil legal services organization combatting economic, racial and social injustice by advocating for people experiencing poverty or in crisis. Our services include comprehensive, free civil legal services, financial empowerment, impact litigation, policy advocacy and community partnerships. Prioritizing client-centered, trauma-informed and community-rooted programming, NYLAG worked at more than 200 community sites and impacted the lives of more than 127,000 people last year. www.nylag.org

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