

Welfare Rights Information Card

CHILDCARE

You ARE ENTITLED to child care if:

- You are working and on Temporary Assistance (TA).
- You are transitioning off of TA due to employment earnings for up to 12 months.
- You are a single parent working a night shift (11pm–7am)

You MAY BE ENTITLED to child care if:

- You are not on TA but remain at or below the income threshold (ask your caseworker).

Your Caseworker MUST:

- Provide WRITTEN information to you about Child Care.
- Help you find child care if you ask for help.
- INFORM YOU THAT YOU CANNOT BE SANCTIONED IF YOU CANNOT WORK DUE TO LACK OF CHILD CARE!!!

HINTS:

In May, ask your worker for a summer camp provider list



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WORK

Work Activities include:

- Paid employment.
- On-the-job training.
- Job searching.
- COMMUNITY SERVICE
- Vocational/educational training.

If you are on Temporary Assistance (TA), you ARE ENTITLED to the following:

- Transportation.
- Work related expenses (uniforms, shoes, tools, licensing fees, etc.).
- Child Care.
- Case Management.
- A supplement grant, if work pays less than your TA grant.
- An EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT of up to \$1,000 for each dependent child, if working.

HINTS:

If you have a consistent problem getting work help at DSS, go over your caseworker's head. See "Bureaucracy" card for more info.



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HEALTHCARE

You ARE ENTITLED to Medicaid if:

- You meet income criteria.

To find out if you qualify, you will have to provide: Landlord statement; Income vs. bills breakdown; Nimo bills; Phone bills; Cable bills; Transportation; Documentation of regular expenses. You will have to recertify every 3 to 6 months.

If you need more services than offered by Medicaid you CAN:

- Ask your doctor to fill out a special form called a "Threshold Override Application" to ask Medical Assistance to increase the number of services you receive or to exempt from service limits.

If you are not eligible for Medicaid, you MAY BE ENTITLED to:

- Family Health Plus
- Catastrophic Health Care Expense Program (CHCEP)

☞ HMOs (CDPHP, Fidelis, etc.) don't cover **dental**, but Medicaid does. The tricky thing is finding a dentist who takes Medicaid - try Small Smiles in Colonie.



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FAMILY HEALTHCARE

You are ENTITLED to the Prenatal Care Assistance Program (PCAP) if:

- You are pregnant and meet income criteria.

Children & Pregnant Women MAY BE ENTITLED to:

- Child Health Plus A (more stringent income and resource limits than Medicaid).
- Child Health Plus B (less stringent than Child Health Plus A).
- WIC (Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children).

🚑 If you take your child to the **emergency room**, you MUST call your child healthcare provider (Child Health Plus, etc.) **right away**, or they won't pay for it.

👶 Moms are NOT REQUIRED to work or seek employment for the first 3 months of a baby's life -- your case is officially "suspended." If your child has health problems, this period may be longer.



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TRANSITIONS

You MAY BE ENTITLED to the following benefits:

- Medicaid
- Food Stamps
- Child Care
- Transportation expenses, including car repair (this is a once in your benefits lifetime deal - so wait for a big repair!) and 3 months of insurance.

Your Caseworker MUST:

- Inform you of your eligibility to Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Child Care.
- Close your case using the "EI" code to ensure your eligibility to Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Child Care. (EI stands for 'earned income' and is the reason for closure.)

Eligibility criteria and duration of benefits vary. Please contact your case worker (or the *Popular Technology Workshops* at 892-6697) for more information.

HINT: Apply for transitional foodstamps to supplement your income once DSS cuts you off



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FOOD

You ARE ENTITLED to Food Stamps if:

- You meet income criteria (ask your caseworker).
- In the case of an emergency.

You MAY BE ENTITLED to:

- School Breakfast and Lunch Programs.
- Summer Food Service Program.

If you are applying for food stamps **ONLY**, you have to reapply every month – check with your worker for timeline.

If you're certified, you don't have to reapply for food stamps, but you do have to re-certify every 3 to 6 months.

Food stamps are only for food, no hot food, no diapers, no soap, no hygiene products, etc.

Transitional food stamps (for the 4-5 months after your case is closed) are available and can be generous.

Ask your worker for a list and schedule for local food pantries (like Second Helping).



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FAIR HEARINGS

You ARE ENTITLED to your CIVIL RIGHTS!

If you think your rights have been violated

(Unfair Decision, Sanctioning, Inadequate Services, etc.),

You HAVE THE RIGHT to:

A Conference, where you meet with someone other than the person who made the decision about your case, who reviews the decision.

A Fair Hearing, where you can tell an Administrative Law Judge from the NYS OTDA why you think the decision about your case was wrong. The judge makes a final decision that both you and DSS must follow.

DSS MUST provide:

- Written information about Fair Hearings.
- Documentation of your request for a Fair Hearing--
INCLUDING YOUR CASE RECORDS!

If your fair hearing is in response to a sanction, that sanction **WILL BE LIFTED** (and your benefits restored) until the hearing is complete.



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ABOUT US

THE POPULAR TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOPS:

These cards were created by a group of public assistance recipients (and their allies) who meet on the second Saturday of every month to talk, network, organize, and act to create social and economic justice in the Capital Region. We believe that people closest to problems have the best information about them, and are most invested in creating positive and lasting change.

Interested in coming to our meetings? Contact us at (518) 892-6697 with your name and address, and we'll send you more information!

We provide lunch and childcare for all meeting participants.



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EDUCATION

You CAN go to college, if you're persistent.

Since the "reforms" of 1996, the number of welfare recipients who attend college has declined rapidly. But research shows that 2 years after getting into college, 75% of students move off of welfare, and 88% of women on welfare who earn a Bachelor's degree move to a job with a living wage and permanently off of welfare.

You ARE ENTITLED to an education:

- Students enrolled in approved 2-year college programs can count classes as "work activities" for up to 12 months.
- All students can count as "work activities" any federal workstudy, internship or externship.
- If you are enrolled in a job training program or school, DSS should cover childcare, transportation, etc
- Hints: Go outside of DSS to other agencies (Adult Education Center, CareerLinks); DSS is generally supportive of attaining a GED

For more information, contact the *Welfare Rights Initiative* at Hunter College, CUNY at (212) 650-3592



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BUREAUCRACY

You ARE ENTITLED to be treated with respect, and case workers are required to obey the law.

If you have a consistent problem, call:

- 1) your worker first;
- 2) their supervisor next;
- 3) and then the commissioner.

Commissioners: Rensselaer: John Beaudoin 283-2000
Albany: Elizabeth R. Berlin 447-7300
Schenectady: Dennis J. Packard 388-4470

Remember, each different person is a new conversation so start fresh with them.

HINTS: Find a good worker.

If you still can't see someone, reapply for benefits.

Document **everything** – even if it's a call with no answer or you leave a message.

Don't give them any ammunition: be on time, have all your paperwork together, control your emotions.

Bring something to do while you wait.

Suck up to people who look official as they walk by you.

Apply for a job at DSS. You're already there!



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SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

You ARE ENTITLED to a living wage! If you are unable to obtain a job that supports you and your family, the state should provide support.

Your best shot at getting a job that pays a living wage is to get an education: complete your GED, and then attend some college (either 2- or 4-year). See Education card for more information.

- If furthering your education is not an option, focus on attaining a city/state job or unionized work.
- Volunteer as community service hours at places that interest you, it might lead to a job. Volunteer work counts as work hours!
- Though temporary agencies aren't a long-term solution, they do pay the same day.



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EMOTIONS

You are a citizen of the United States.

You have rights.

You deserve to be treated with respect.

HINTS:

Know your rights. Ask friends, friendly case workers, community organizations when you have questions.

Control your anger: Count to 7 (or 17! or 27!)

Assume good intentions until you're proven wrong.

Pay it forward: When you have a success, help someone else...we can solve these problems as a community.



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