

Public Benefits in the District During the COVID-19 Emergency

(Updated October 4, 2021)

Cash Assistance

I lost my job because of COVID-19. Is there assistance I can get besides unemployment benefits to help pay for food and other expenses?

I didn't lose my job, but I'm working fewer hours because of COVID-19 and have less income. Can I still get SNAP or TANF benefits?

How long will it take for me to start receiving SNAP or TANF benefits?

After I started receiving SNAP and TANF, I began receiving other income. Will I keep getting SNAP and TANF?

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for SNAP and/or TANF?

Health Insurance

When I lost my job, I also lost my health insurance. Can I apply for public health insurance?

If I make some money delivering for Instacart, but lost my job that provided health insurance, will I still be eligible for Medicaid or Alliance?

How long will it take for the health insurance coverage to start?

After I started receiving Medicaid, I began receiving other income. Will I continue to receive Medicaid?

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for health insurance?

Appeals

How Do I Appeal a SNAP, TANF, IDA, or health insurance decision I disagree with?

Disability Assistance

I have disabilities that make it really hard to work. Are there resources that can help? Even though my disability keeps me from being able to work full-time, I'm working part-time to make ends meet. Can I still get SSI or SSDI?

How long will it take to start getting payments from SSI, SSDI, or IDA?

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for SSI, SSDI, or IDA?

Immigrant Eligibility for Benefits and Public Charge

I am not a U.S. citizen, and do not have a valid visa or work authorization. Am I eligible for any of the aid described above — SNAP, TANF, health insurance, or disability-related aid?

If I use any of the aid available to me, will it count against me under the public charge rule?

Cash Assistance

I lost my job because of COVID-19. Is there assistance I can get besides unemployment benefits to help pay for food and other expenses?

You may be eligible for SNAP benefits (often called food stamps) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF for short). TANF is cash and other assistance for families with very low income and children 18 or younger, including people who are pregnant.

You can apply [online](#), use the DC Access mobile app, fax an application (available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Amharic](#)) to a Service Center (numbers below), or drop off an application in person. In-person applications are discouraged at this time for health and safety reasons.

Congress Heights Service Center, 4049 South Capitol St., SW
Phone: (202) 645-4546
Fax: 202-654-4524

H Street Service Center, 645 H St. NE
Phone: (202) 698-4350
Fax: 202-724-8964

Anacostia Service Center
2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Phone: (202) 645-4614
Fax: (202) 727-3527

There is also a new program called **Pandemic-EBT, or P-EBT**, now available. It provides additional food assistance to families who have lost

access to free school meals due to COVID-19 related school closures. DHS has created a [website](#) and P-EBT Call Center for families, at 202-868-6663.

I didn't lose my job, but I'm working fewer hours because of COVID-19 and have less income. Can I still get SNAP or TANF benefits?

It depends on your income and how many people live in your household.

For SNAP, the income limits in the District (federal ones are lower) and maximum amount of benefits (for someone with no income) are:

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Maximum Allotment*
1	\$2,147	\$250
2	\$2,903	\$459
3	\$3,660	\$658
4	\$4,417	\$835
5	\$5,173	\$992
6	\$5,930	\$1,190

*The SNAP benefit level will be increased by 15% through November 2021.

For TANF, the income limits and maximum amount of benefits (for someone with no income) are:

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income to qualify at application	Maximum Monthly TANF Benefit Amount
1	\$574	\$414
2	\$675	\$515
3	\$818	\$658
4	\$964	\$804
5	\$1,088	\$928
6	\$1,251	\$1,091

How long will it take for me to start receiving SNAP or TANF benefits?

The Department of Human Services must process your SNAP application in 30 days, unless you qualify for expedited food assistance because: 1) you have less than \$100 and less than \$150 in income each month and/or 2) your rent and utilities are more than your income each month. These expedited applications must be processed in 7 days.

The Department of Human Services generally has 45 days to process TANF applications.

Once your application for SNAP and/or TANF is approved, the Department of Human Services will mail you an Electronic Benefits Transfer (or EBT) card so you can access your benefits.

After I started receiving SNAP and TANF, I began receiving other income. Will I keep getting SNAP and TANF?

It depends on how much income you are now receiving, and where the income is coming from.

You should call the Department of Human Services at (202) 727-5355 to report your change in income, and DHS will redetermine your benefit amounts. Income sources that should be reported and will be considered in the redetermination include, but are not limited to, wages, unemployment benefits, and Social Security benefits. Economic Impact Payments, or the stimulus checks that were released starting in April 2020 and again in late December 2020, and the advance child tax credits do **not** count as income for reporting purposes to DHS.

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for SNAP and/or TANF?

You can call the Department of Human Services at (202) 727-5355.

If you can't get through or still need help, you can contact Legal Aid at (202) 628-1161, or apply for services [online](#).

Health Insurance

When I lost my job, I also lost my health insurance. Can I apply for public health insurance?

Yes, you have a few different options depending on your income and immigration status.

Medicaid helps pay for medical services for low-income people and people with disabilities who are citizens, lawful permanent residents or some other lawful status. (See below for Medicaid income cutoffs.) To apply, you can complete an application [online through DC Health Link](#) or mail the [application](#) to:

DC Health Link
Department of Human Services
Case Records Management Unit
P.O. Box 91560
Washington DC 20090

The application is also available in Amharic, Spanish, Chinese, and French.

Alliance and **Immigrant Children's Program** provide health insurance for adults (Alliance) and children (Immigrant Children's Program) who meet Medicaid income requirements but not Medicaid immigration status requirements. Applications are the same as for SNAP and TANF. You can apply [online](#), use the DC Access mobile app, fax an application (available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Amharic](#)) to a Service Center (numbers below), or drop off an application in person. In-person applications are discouraged at this time for health and safety reasons.

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If I make some money delivering for Instacart, but lost my job that provided health insurance, will I still be eligible for Medicaid or Alliance?

The following chart shows income eligibility cutoffs for Medicaid and Alliance:

Household Size	Medicaid for Adults over 65 and with Disabilities	Alliance	Medicaid for Childless Adults 21-64	Medicaid for Parents and Youth Age 19-20	Medicaid for Pregnant People and Children 18 and Under
1	\$1,063	\$2,126	\$2,232	\$2,296	\$3,391
2	\$1,437	\$2,874	\$3,018	\$3,104	\$4,584
3	\$1,810	\$3,620	\$3,801	\$3,910	\$5,774
4	\$2,183	\$4,366	\$4,584	\$4,715	\$6,964
5	\$2,557	\$5,144	\$5,370	\$5,523	\$8,167
Each Additional Family Member	+\$373	+\$746	+\$783	+\$806	+\$1,190

If you are over the income limits for Medicaid and Alliance and you are a citizen, lawful permanent resident or have other legal status, you can enroll in private insurance through [DC Health Link](#) (the District's health care exchange). Depending on your income, you might be able to get subsidies that will lower your health care costs.

How long will it take for the health insurance coverage to start?

The Department of Human Services generally has 45 days to process Medicaid and Alliance applications.

After I started receiving Medicaid, I began receiving other income. Will I continue to receive Medicaid?

For the duration of the public health emergency and for at least 60 days after, you should continue to receive health insurance and you are not required to report any changes in circumstances. However, DC will begin

requiring reporting of changes in circumstances that could lead to changes in the type of health insurance you qualify for after the end of the public health emergency. Please pay close attention to mail or email you received from the Department of Human Services or the Department of Health Care Finance.

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for health insurance?

You can call the Department of Human Services at (202) 727-5355. You can also call the Office of the Health Care Ombudsman at (202) 724-7491.

If you can't get through or still need help, you can contact Legal Aid at (202) 628-1161, or apply for services [online](#).

Appeals

How Do I Appeal a SNAP, TANF, IDA, or health insurance decision I disagree with?

You can file an appeal with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) online (<https://oah.dc.gov/node/148662>) or by phone at (202) 442-9094. The office is closed to in-person business until November 11, 2020. The deadline to file an appeal is 90 days.

Disability Assistance

I have disabilities that make it really hard to work. Are there resources that can help?

People with disabilities that keep them from working can apply for [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI) and/or [Social Security Disability Insurance](#) (SSDI). SSI is monthly cash payments to people with disabilities who have low income and few resources; SSDI is cash payments to people with disabilities who have worked but have disabilities that make it difficult to work.

You can apply for SSI or SSDI by calling 800-772-1213 or submitting an application [online](#). Social Security offices are not open for in-person meetings [at this time](#).

If you have applied for SSI, have very little income, and do not take care of minor children in your household, you may qualify for a DC-specific cash assistance program called [Interim Disability Assistance](#) (IDA). Applications are the same as for SNAP and TANF. You can apply [online](#), use the DC Access mobile app, fax an application (available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Amharic](#)) to the H Street Service Center (number below), or drop off an application in person at the H Street Service Center (highly discouraged).

H Street Service Center, 645 H St. NE
Phone: (202) 698-4350
Fax: 202-724-8964

Your doctor will need to complete a [Medical Examination Report](#). You can apply for IDA without the report, but the Department of Human Services will not give you benefits without it.

Even though my disability keeps me from being able to work full-time, I'm working part-time to make ends meet. Can I still get SSI or SSDI?

It is possible for people who work part-time to be eligible for and collect benefits from SSI and/or SSDI.

When Social Security decides whether someone is eligible for SSI and/or SSDI, they look at how much money the person is making and at how much the person's disability impacts their ability to work. If a person makes too much money (in 2020, more than \$1,260 per month), or if Social Security decides that their disability does not affect their ability to work enough, Social Security will not find that person eligible for benefits.

Once a person is found eligible for SSI, Social Security uses their income to calculate the amount of their monthly benefit. In 2020, generally a person must make less than \$783 to receive a payment.

Once a person is found eligible for SSDI, they generally can still receive benefits if their income is not more than \$1,260 per month. The amount of each person's monthly payment is based on their past earnings.

It is important to tell Social Security about any work you are doing and how much you are earning every month.

How long will it take to start getting payments from SSI, SSDI, or IDA?

The application process for SSI and SSDI can take a very long time (generally, about six months for Social Security to gather medical records and make decisions about initial applications). It is important that you keep up with medical treatment (as best you can), continue to document your conditions, and respond by all deadlines given by Social Security.

Applications for IDA must be processed in 60 days, although that could be longer during the public health emergency. If you are approved for IDA, you may be placed on a waitlist for funds to become available before you begin receiving benefits.

Where do I call if I have trouble applying for SSI, SSDI, or IDA?

For SSI and SSDI, you can call Social Security at **(800) 772-1213**. For updates about Social Security's operations during the public health emergency, please visit <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus//>.

For IDA, you can call the Department of Human Services at **(202) 727-5355**.

If you can't get through or still need help, you can contact Legal Aid at **(202) 628-1161**, or apply for services [online](#).

Immigrant Eligibility for Benefits and Public Charge

I am not a U.S. citizen, and do not have a valid visa or work authorization. Am I [eligible](#) for any of the aid described above — SNAP, TANF, health insurance, or disability-related aid?

SNAP, TANF, SSI and Medicaid are available to U.S. citizens, permanent residents and other “qualified immigrants.” U.S. citizen children of parents who are ineligible for these benefits due to their immigration status can receive these benefits, if the children are otherwise eligible. IDA is only available for people likely to receive SSI.

SSDI is available for U.S. citizens and anyone who qualifies based on their work history who is “lawfully present” in the U.S.

Health insurance through [Alliance](#) is available for adults who do not qualify for Medicaid due to their immigration status. Health insurance for children who do not qualify for Medicaid due to their immigration status is available through the [Immigrant Children’s Program](#).

If I use any of the aid available to me, will it count against me under the [public charge](#) rule?

The Trump administration’s public charge rule is no longer in effect. The current public charge rule will only impact you if you receive public cash benefits or are receiving benefits for long-term institutionalized care. For purposes of the current public charge rule, “cash benefits” includes TANF and SSI; however, it does NOT include SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, WIC, Alliance, or other cash benefits programs.

If you are working with an immigration attorney, please tell him or her about any public benefits that you and your family members are receiving. If you have additional questions about public charge, you can contact Legal Aid by calling **(202) 628-1161** or apply for services [online](#).

If you would like legal advice about your situation, you can contact Legal Aid. Our Northwest and Southeast offices are closed to the public, but we are open for telephone and online intake. You can apply for our services by calling (202) 628-1161 or [online](#).