



Applying for Public Assistance at a Job Center

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What are Job Centers?

Job Centers are where you apply for public assistance. Job Centers used to be called Income Support Centers. Some parts of the City still have Income Support Centers.

The rules at Job Centers are different from the Income Support and Income Maintenance Centers. At Job Centers, you need to do a job search while you are applying for benefits. This booklet is about the rules at Job Centers.



Who can apply for public assistance?

Anyone. Whether you and your family will get public assistance depends on your income, resources, family size, and immigration status.

Can only families get public assistance?

No. Anyone who meets the rules for income, resource, and immigration status can get public assistance.

There are two types of public assistance in New York State: Safety Net Assistance for individuals and Family Assistance for families with children. Pregnant women can also get Family Assistance even if they do not have any other children.



How do I apply for public assistance?

Call 1-877-472-8411 to find out which Job Center covers your zip code. Go to the Job Center and ask the receptionist for an application. You can fill out your application at the Job Center or you can take it home. If you need help filling out your application, the Job Center must help you. If you cannot get help, call the Legal Aid Society.

What if I am homeless?

If you are homeless, you can apply at a Job Center or an Income Support Center. You can choose any location. Remember that there are more rules and requirements at Job Centers. It may be easier to apply at an Income Support Center.



What other forms will I have to fill out?

Besides your application, at most Job Centers you must fill out two screening forms. One screening form is about domestic violence. The other is about drugs and alcohol.

After you hand in your application, you should be sent to the Financial Planning Unit and then to the Employment Planning Unit (see page 12).

What happens at the Financial Planning Unit?

You will meet with a Financial Planner. First, the planner should find out if you have any emergencies that must be fixed right away.

If you have an emergency the Financial Planner should fill out the paperwork to find out whether you can get emergency help, like "pre-investigative cash assistance" and "expedited food stamps."

Hand in your application as soon as possible.

The sooner you hand in your application, the sooner you will get your benefits. If your application is accepted for Family Assistance, Medicaid, and Food Stamps, your benefits should start from the day your application was completed. If your application is accepted for Safety Net Assistance, your benefits will start 45 days from the day your application was completed.

The financial planner will also:

- Ask you about family and friends who could give you money or shelter
- Ask you about who lives with you
- Set up finger imaging for you and any other adults who live with you if you are getting emergency help, such as "pre-investigative cash assistance" or "expedited food stamps"
- Set up the initial interview within 5 work days of the first day you handed in your application (The initial interview is called an "I" appointment)
- Schedule an Eligibility Verification Review (EVR) appointment within 11 days
- Send you to the Employment Planning Unit to meet an employment planner after you are done with the financial planner



What kind of emergency assistance can I get?

You may be able to get emergency assistance if:

- You have no money to buy food, medical prescriptions, or other necessary things
- You face eviction or an electricity or gas shutoff
- You are homeless

Tell the Job Center about your emergencies when you hand in your application. The Center should tell you that day if you can get emergency assistance.

If you are not told by the end of the day if you will get emergency assistance, contact the Legal Aid Society.

What if I am a domestic violence victim?

You should be sent to the Domestic Violence Liaison if you are a victim of domestic violence. You will be exempt from work requirements if domestic violence makes it too difficult for you to work.

What happens at my initial or “I” appointment?

At your “I” appointment you will show your documents to a Job Center worker. The worker will look at these documents to see if you can get public assistance.

What if I am going to be evicted?

You should be sent to the Diversion Unit if you have an eviction emergency.



What documents should I take to my "I" appointment?

You should take these documents to your "I" appointment if you have them:

- Social security cards for each person in your home who is applying for assistance
- Birth certificates for all children you list on your public assistance application
- Passports for you and your children
- Proof of address (for example, a housing lease)
- Utility bills (for example, a telephone, gas, or electric bill)
- Proof of your income (for example, a pay stub if you worked in past 6 months or a letter from your last employer telling why you are no longer working)



If the Job Center wants you to bring in more documents, you will get another "I" appointment so you can get the documents. Sometimes it may be difficult for you to get documents quickly. Tell the worker at your "I" appointment that you will need more time to get documents. Ask to speak to a supervisor if the worker does not give you more time.

What is an Eligibility Verification Review (EVR) appointment?

EVR means Eligibility Verification Review. At an EVR appointment you are asked to prove that you are eligible for benefits. You must go to a Brooklyn EVR office for this appointment, no matter where you live in New York City. You will be sent to 320 Schemerhorn St. or 250 Livingston St. in Brooklyn.

What happens at an EVR appointment?

There are usually two parts to the EVR appointment. There is an office interview and a home visit.

First, an EVR investigator will talk to you. This happens at the Brooklyn EVR office. The investigator will check all the information on your application, like your identity, who is living with

you, and your income and resources. You may be asked for more documents.

The second part of your EVR appointment is a home visit. You will get an appointment for a home visit. On that day, two EVR investigators will visit your home between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M. to make sure that you live there. The EVR investigators may ask your landlord and neighbors if you really live at the address you gave on your application. If the EVR investigators do not show up by 4 P.M., call EVR and tell them no one came to your home.

After both appointments, EVR will tell the Job Center to accept or reject your application.

What happens at the Employment Planning Unit?

You will be required to do a job search when you apply for public assistance. For the first five days of your search, you will go to a "resource room" at the Job Center. In the resource room, you will look through job listings, the telephone book, and newspapers, to find a job. After the first five days, you may be told to go to workshops and talks at another office.

What if I need child care while I am doing the job search?

The Job Center must help you get child care. You should get a list of child care providers. If no one on the list can care for your child, tell the Job Center that you cannot do a job search without child care. The Job Center should give you more choices. **You can not be assigned to a job search or punished until you find safe and reliable child care.** Request a fair hearing right away if you are not given benefits because you could not find child care.

Do not miss any appointments and do not be late to more than two appointments.

During your job search, your application may be denied if you miss one appointment or are late for more than two appointments. Tell your worker if you have a good reason for missing an appointment and you should be excused. If the worker refuses to excuse you, keep a record of what happened so that you can request a fair hearing.

(See Legal Aid's booklet "How to Win Your Fair Hearing" for more information.)

Do I have to do job search activities if I have a disability?

It depends on your disability. you must tell the city that you have a disability. You will be seen by one of the City's doctors at an office called HS Systems. The doctor will decide if you are able to work. When you go to HS Systems, bring copies of any letters and papers from your own doctor that show you are ill or disabled. You do not have to do job search activities if your disability prevents you from working. See Legal Aid's booklet "Working for Your Check" for more information about disability and welfare benefits.

How will I know if I have been approved to get welfare?

You will get a blue letter in the mail 30-45 days after your application is complete. It will say if your application was accepted or denied. If your application is accepted, the letter will tell how much cash assistance and food stamps you will get, how long you will get it, and whether you will get Medicaid.

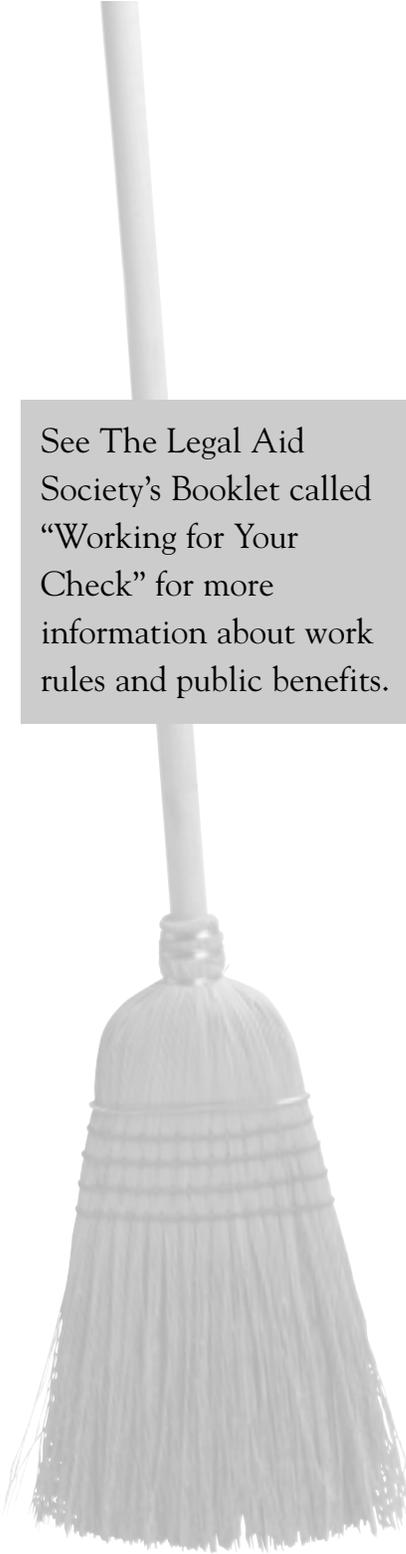
Some special welfare benefits.

Remember, there is an extra pregnancy allowance of \$50.00 per month for women who are at least 6 months pregnant. There is also an extra restaurant allowance of \$3.33 a day for people who do not have a place to cook their meals.

What do I do if my application for welfare is denied?

You can request a fair hearing by phone at (212) 417-6550 or in person at 14 Boerum Place in Brooklyn. Even if you request a fair hearing, it is best to go back to the Job Center and start a new application for public assistance that day. If the Center will not let you start a new application, contact The Legal Aid Society. For more information about how to win your fair hearing, see The Legal Aid Society's booklet called "How to Win Your Fair Hearing."





If I get public assistance, do I have to work for my check?

See The Legal Aid Society's Booklet called "Working for Your Check" for more information about work rules and public benefits.

Yes. After you start receiving cash assistance, you may be required to participate in the Work Experience Program (WEP).

However, you do not have to do the Work Experience Program if any of these facts are true:

- You attend a training program that counts as work activity
- You are disabled or care for a disabled family member
- You are unable to find safe and reliable child care

Complaints about your Welfare Center

Some problems cannot be solved at a fair hearing. If someone is rude or mean to you at a welfare center in New York City, write a letter to:

HRA Central Complaint Unit
P.O. Box 3011, Jamaica Station, NY 11431

The Legal Aid Society's Public Benefits Education Project

Fair Hearings



Immigrant
Rights



Working for
Your Check



Job Centers



Young People
and Welfare



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Medicaid



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