

If you're 60 or over, call your local legal aid office:

Eastern CT	800-413-7796	Western CT	800-413-7797
Hartford Area	860-541-5000	Bridgeport Area	800-809-4434
Stamford Area	800-541-8909	New Haven Area	203-946-4811

If you're under 60, call SLS for help:



Statewide Legal Services
1-800-453-3320
860-344-0380

Search our website for help:



www.ctlawhelp.org

BENEFITS

LEGAL SERVICES

SELF-HELP SERIES

Cash Assistance for Families

September 2022



We offer free legal help in many areas, including

- welfare,
- SNAP (food stamps),
- divorce,
- child support,
- domestic violence,
- bankruptcy,
- special education,
- nursing home care,
- health insurance,
- eviction,
- foreclosure,
- and more.

See the reverse side for more about legal services.

Cash Assistance for Families

If your family has very low income or no income at all, you may be able to get cash assistance.

If you cannot work because of a **disability**, you should also apply for Social Security disability and SSI. See the legal aid booklet, *Disability and SSI*.

How much cash assistance could we get?

If you have children at home, a family of three could get about \$771 a month in the form of TFA cash assistance.

How to apply: Get an application online at www.ct.gov/dss, from any DSS office, or by calling 1-855-626-6632. Fill it out and mail it to the Scanning Center (the address will be on the application) or take it to your local DSS office. Call 2-1-1 for the local DSS address. You will be contacted for an in-person interview. You should get a decision within 45 days of when you applied.

How long can I get cash assistance?

If your family income stays low, you could get cash assistance for 21 months. After that, you could apply for two six-month extensions, for a total of 33 months.

If you have a disability that makes it hard to do all the steps DSS asks when you apply, ask your DSS worker for help. Explain your disability and tell your worker what kind of help you need.

You can ask

- for help filling out forms;
- for help getting documents that you need; or
- to meet with DSS in person or by phone, depending on which is better for you.



If you're under 60, call us for help:



Statewide Legal Services
1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380

Search our website for help:



www.ctlawhelp.org

If you're over 60, call your local legal aid office.

Connecticut Legal Services

www.ctlegal.org

Bridgeport

1000 Lafayette Blvd Suite 950 203-336-3851

New Britain

16 Main Street 860-225-8678

New London

125 Eugene O'Neill Dr. Suite 120 860-447-0323

Stamford

1177 Summer Street 203-348-9216

Waterbury

85 Central Avenue 203-756-8074

Willimantic

1125 Main Street 860-456-1761

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

www.ghla.org

999 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
860-541-5000

New Haven Legal Assistance Association

www.nhlegal.org

205 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06510
203-946-4811

Consumer Law Project for Elders

Free legal assistance to people 60 and over throughout Connecticut who have money/debt problems.

1-800-296-1467

This booklet was produced by Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut.

The information in this booklet is based on laws in Connecticut as of 9/2022. We hope that the information is helpful. It is not intended as legal advice. For advice on your situation, call Statewide Legal Services or contact a lawyer.

Keep a copy of your letter and your fax confirmation.

Can I get help with my hearing?

Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320. If DSS made a mistake, you might be able to get a lawyer for your hearing.

Who will be at the hearing?

- You.
- Someone from DSS to explain why they think your cash assistance should stop.
- An independent hearing officer (like a judge) who will decide your case.

What happens at the hearing?

- The hearing officer may ask you why you think you should not lose your cash assistance.
- Give the officer your answer. Also tell the officer that you want safety net services.
- The hearing officer will ask DSS to explain their side.
- The hearing officer will decide if he or she agrees with you or DSS.

What if I lose my cash assistance?

If you lose your cash assistance, you should

- ask your DSS worker for safety net services, which can help you pay rent and other expenses; and
- call 2-1-1 and ask for help.

Important! Even if you lose cash assistance, your medical coverage and SNAP should continue.

After 33 months you could get additional 6-month extensions (up to 60 months total) if you have two barriers that make it so you can only work in a limited way:

1. A child in the home who

- has a serious physical or behavioral health problem, or
- is having problems with the courts or the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

2. An adult in the home who

- has a serious physical or mental health problem,
- has a learning disability,
- has substance abuse problems,
- has problems with domestic violence,
- can't read English, or
- has childcare or transportation problems that interfere with his or her ability to work.

You can apply for another extension at any time, even years after TFA ended if you have not used up 60 months.

Special help for victims of domestic violence

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you may be able to get help extending your cash assistance from your DSS worker or from Statewide Legal Services (1-800-453-3320).

If you are getting DSS emergency housing and cash assistance, ask DSS if you can get help with

- moving expenses;
- expenses to store your things (in some situations);
- money to pay a security deposit for heating;
- money to pay a security deposit for a new apartment if you can afford the rent; and
- fixing or replacing clothing or household items.

Are there things we must do while we get cash assistance?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, work requirements are suspended. But normally, if the adult family members who get cash assistance are *able to work*, they must work, or do a work training program called JFES.

Able to work means you are not disabled, caring for a baby, or caring for a disabled family member.

What is JFES?

JFES is short for *Jobs First Employment Services Program*. If you are not working, you will have to go to JFES before you can get benefits.

If you don't go to JFES and cooperate with the program they develop for you, you may lose your cash assistance.

If DSS sends a notice saying you did not follow these rules Ask for a hearing right away, even if you do not need cash assistance now.

If you do not ask for a hearing, you may never be able to get cash assistance in the future.

What if we can't work?

If your family is in a special situation, you may be exempt, which means you could get cash assistance for longer. Here are some examples:

- You have a baby at home who is under the age of 1.
- None of the adults at home can work because
 - they have to stay home to care for a family member with a disability, or
 - they have a disability that prevents them from working.

Exempt families can get cash assistance for as long as they are eligible, even after 60 months. Even if you lost assistance because you broke a program rule, you could become eligible again if things in your life changed and you are now *exempt*.

What if they want to stop my cash assistance?

If you get a notice from DSS reducing or ending your assistance you can ask for a hearing. If you ask for a hearing within 10days of the notice your benefits will continue unchanged until the hearing decision.

How do I ask for a hearing?

To ask for a hearing, you can

- **fill out and return the appeal form** that came with the notice, or
- **mail or fax DSS a letter** asking for a hearing.

If you decide to mail or fax DSS asking for a hearing, use the address or fax number printed on your notice. You can fax it to **860-424-5729**.

Your letter should have the following:

- Your name, address, the date, and your DSS client number.
- Your reason for wanting a hearing.
- Your signature.

Sample Appeal Letter

To: OLCRAH, DSS
55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

[Date]

From: [Your Name, Address, and DSS Client Number]

[Put your reason here. For example:]

I want a fair hearing because my worker thinks I did not have good cause to leave my job, but I disagree.

[Your Signature]