

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](http://www.ctlawhelp.org)

## BENEFITS

## LEGAL SERVICES

SELF-HELP SERIES

# Help if You Are Homeless or Have Low or No Income

July 2018



### 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.

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

**Connecticut Legal Services**

[www.ctlegal.org](http://www.ctlegal.org)

**Bridgeport**

1000 Lafayette Blvd 203-336-3851  
Suite 950

**New Britain**

16 Main Street 860-225-8678

**New London**

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

**Stamford**

20 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](http://www.ghla.org)

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

**New Haven Legal Assistance Association**

[www.nhlegal.org](http://www.nhlegal.org)

426 State 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

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*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 11/2015. 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.*

### ***What if my children don't have proof of their vaccines or other school records?***

They can still go to school. If they have never been in a Connecticut school until now, they will go to school in the district where you are staying.

### ***School meals and transportation***

Ask the school to enroll your children in the school lunch program for free lunches. Some schools also have free breakfasts. If you need help with transportation, the school must transport your children to school.

### ***What if I'm a teen on my own?***

You have the right to go to school and get help with transportation. For help, contact the Center for Children's Advocacy teen hotline:

- 860-570-5327
- 203-223-8975
- [www.speakupteens.org](http://www.speakupteens.org)

These programs are for people who are homeless or who have low or no income. If you qualify for one program, you may also qualify for others. For most of these programs, you must apply to the Department of Social Services (DSS).

**If you already get DSS benefits**, check your account at [www.connect.ct.gov](http://www.connect.ct.gov) to see what benefits you are getting now.

#### **How to Apply for DSS Benefits**

- ▶ **Apply online at [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss).**
- ▶ **Call 1-855-626-6632.**
- ▶ **Mail your completed application to DSS or drop it off at your local DSS office.**

#### **Mailing address:**

DSS ConneCT Scanning Center  
PO Box 1320, Manchester, CT 06045

Call 2-1-1 to get the local DSS address.

## **Benefits you could get from DSS**

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### ***Cash Assistance***

If you cannot work and **you do not have children at home**, you could get about \$220 a month in SAGA cash. Ask DSS for an application form and also for the SAGA medical forms. You will need to ask your doctor or mental health professional to fill out the medical form.

If you cannot work and **you have children at home**, a family of three could get about \$570 a month in TFA cash assistance.

To learn more about cash assistance for families, see our booklet, *Cash Assistance for Families*.

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.

### ***SNAP (Food Stamps)***

SNAP helps pay for food. If you have no income, or if your income is less than your rent and utilities, you should qualify within seven days of applying. See page 3 for information about how to apply for DSS benefits.

You will usually need a phone interview to qualify, so it is important to have a phone where you can be reached. Call DSS at **855-626-6632** if you don't hear from them in two weeks.

### ***Health Insurance***

You may qualify for free or low-cost health insurance with one of these programs:

- **HUSKY A and B** are for children under 19, pregnant women, and some parents or other caregivers.
- **HUSKY D** is for adults (19 to 64) with income below 138% of the federal poverty level. If you have SSI or Medicare, you do not qualify.
- **HUSKY C** is for people who are disabled and have low income.

Apply for one of these programs at [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss) or by calling **855-805-4325**.

***Remember: Keep a copy of everything you give to DSS!***

## Veterans

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If you are a veteran, you may be eligible for additional help including

- help with rent, utilities, or other basic needs through the Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund; and
- help with tuition, tax exemption, and other benefits.

Call **2-1-1** and ask about special help for veterans.

## Are you homeless with children in school?

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Your children can stay in their school for the whole school year even if you are homeless. They can also go to any school in the area where you are staying.

### ***What if they make my child go to a different school?***

If the district sends your child to a school that you did not want, they must give you the reasons in writing. They must also tell you how to appeal their decision.

### ***What if I am not happy about the school assigned to my children?***

You can get help from

- Statewide Legal Services at **800-453-3320** or [www.slscct.org](http://www.slscct.org), or
- the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children at **860-807-2058**.

## **Housing and Food**

If you get cash assistance from DSS and become homeless, you can get up to 60 days of emergency housing once a year. To apply, contact your DSS worker within 45 days of when you became homeless.

You can also call **2-1-1** to ask about

- subsidized housing for the elderly/disabled,
- emergency housing and shelters,
- soup kitchens that serve free meals, and
- food pantries that can give you free food.

## **Security Deposits**

DSS has a program that may help you pay your security deposit in limited situations. Ask your DSS worker how to apply.

## **Free Phone Service**

If you have low income, you could get a free mobile phone with free minutes. To apply, visit [www.safelinkwireless.com](http://www.safelinkwireless.com) or call **800-SAFELINK (800-723-3465)**. Say you want to apply for the Lifeline Phone Service.

## **Find a Job**

The Connecticut Department of Labor website helps people find jobs. Go to <http://connecticut.us.jobs> or call **2-1-1**.

## **Child Care**

If your family has low to moderate income and you need child care to work, Care for Kids could pay for some or all of your child care costs. To apply, visit [www.ctcare4kids.com](http://www.ctcare4kids.com) or call **888-214-KIDS (888-214-5437)**.

If you have a disability that makes it hard to do something DSS asks, ask your DSS worker for help. Explain your disability and tell them 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.

## **SSI and Social Security Disability**

SSI and Social Security Disability are federal programs that help people who cannot work because of a disability. You are eligible if your disability

- prevents you from working for a year or more, or
- will cause you to die.

## **What kinds of disabilities qualify?**

You will qualify if you have:

### **► A physical condition that**

- makes it hard for you to walk, sit, stand, lift or carry; or
- causes you pain, tiredness, shortness of breath, or other serious symptoms that affect your ability to work.

### **► A mental health condition that causes serious problems with**

- your memory, thinking, understanding, moods, concentration, or your ability to work with other people.

To learn more, see our booklet, *SSI and Social Security Disability*.

NOTE: It can take over a year to qualify for disability benefits. You should apply for SAGA or TFA in the meantime.

If you are disabled or over age 65, you may also be eligible for

- State Supplement program (including cash assistance and sometimes other kinds of help), and
- Medicare Savings Program (helps pay the Part B premium).

### ***What if DSS doesn't give me the benefits I asked for?***

If DSS says you cannot get benefits or you can't get all the benefits you asked for, ask for a hearing. You must do this **within 60 days** of when they denied you. You can also talk to a DSS supervisor about your situation.

**Remember: Keep a copy of everything you give to DSS.**

### ***How do I ask for a hearing?***

- Fill out and return the appeal form that came with the denial; or
- mail or fax DSS a letter asking for a hearing. Use the address or fax number printed on your notice. Keep a copy of the letter or the fax confirmation for your records. Your letter should have
  - your name, address, the date, and your DSS client number;
  - your reason for wanting a hearing; and
  - your signature.

For food stamps only, you can ask for a hearing by phone at 1-800-462-0134.

### ***What will happen at the hearing?***

- The hearing officer may ask you why you think you qualify for DSS programs. You will have to answer the officer.
- The hearing officer will ask DSS to explain their side.
- The hearing officer will decide if they agree with you or DSS.

You should get your decision in the mail within 90 days of when you asked for the hearing.

### ***Sample Appeal Letter***

To: DSS, Office of Administrative Hearings  
55 Farmington Ave.  
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]

### ***Can someone help me get ready for the hearing?***

Statewide Legal Services can give you free legal advice. Call **800-453-3320** or **860-344-0380** to ask for help with your hearing.

## Other programs

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### ***Energy Assistance***

If you have low income, there are a few energy assistance programs that could help you, including

- hardship protection from shutoffs,
- energy assistance, and
- arrearage (unpaid debt) forgiveness programs.

To find out where to apply, contact **2-1-1**, your local community action agency, or the Connecticut Energy Assistance program (**800-842-1132** or [www.ct.gov/staywarm](http://www.ct.gov/staywarm)).

### ***Basic Needs Program***

If you are in treatment for a drug, alcohol, or mental health problem, this program can help pay for emergency needs such as food, transportation, and housing.

Ask your substance abuse or mental health treatment provider to apply for you by calling DMHAS at **800-658-4472**.