



Department of  
Social Services

Human Resources  
Administration  
Department of  
Homeless Services

*Serving New Yorkers with Care and Compassion*

March 8, 2024

## DSS/HRA/DHS Updates

### **Community-wide Conference Call**

If you were not able to join our last Quarterly call on March 5, 2024, please find an audio recording [here](#) and use Passcode: @v6JW0x+ to listen.

### **EBT Skimming Replacement Benefits Deadline Extension**

The **Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)** has further extended the deadline for submission of claims for replacement benefits from households impacted by electronic benefit theft. The date for submitting retroactive claims has now been extended until April 1, 2024. The following households are eligible to submit claims:

- Replacement benefit claims for SNAP benefits stolen between October 1, 2022, and August 20, 2023, and Cash Assistance benefits stolen between January 1, 2022, and August 20, 2023 (retroactive claims) can now be submitted **through April 1, 2024**. *The original retroactive claim form deadline was extended from October 31, 2023, to December 31, 2023, and has now been extended to April 1, 2024.*
- All other claim forms must be submitted within 30 days from the date the household discovered the theft.

**Note:** Households whose SNAP benefits were stolen between October 1, 2022, and August 20, 2023, or TA cash benefits stolen between January 1, 2022, and August 20, 2023, who do not submit their claims before April 1, 2024, still have the option to apply for replacement as long as the claim is submitted within 30 days from the date the household discovered the theft.

This updated replacement benefit claim submission deadline is effective retroactively to January 1, 2024. Submissions for retroactive claim reimbursement submitted on or after the previous deadline will be considered against this new deadline. Any retroactive claims denied for untimely filing during this time will be reconsidered. Retroactive claims that were rejected for untimeliness will be automatically reconsidered against the new deadline. These clients do not need to resubmit.

If clients submitted a retro claim and it was rejected for a different reason, it will not be automatically re-evaluated, and clients will have to resubmit.

As a reminder, when obtaining transaction history online, both OTDA and HRA recommend relying on [ConnectEBT](#) to obtain this information instead of third-party applications. When assisting clients with submitting their claims, please confirm that the correct date information is entered. Additionally, when completing their replacement benefit claims, clients must use the “Transaction” date and **NOT** the “Settlement” date. Submitted claims with this error may result in rejection or approval of a very low benefit amount.

If clients need assistance submitting their claims or have questions about the overall process, community-based organizations across the city can help. For more information on the assistance available or to schedule an appointment, clients should contact their preferred local organization at the phone numbers provided in the links at the bottom of our [Benefit Replacement page](#).

### **New Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC)/ Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Card Lock Feature**

Households will now have the ability to lock their EBT card, which prevents their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance (TA) cash benefits, or Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits issued as cash to a household, from being accessed. Cardholders must then unlock the locked card to make a purchase using their SNAP or cash benefits. This new feature is intended to be used as a tool to help prevent theft of benefits through skimming or other fraudulent methods. Locking and unlocking the EBT card has no impact on Medicaid or other benefits issuances, including restricted payments directly to a

landlord, utility, or other vendor. The card lock feature will roll out in multiple phases over the course of the next three months as described below.

The locking feature cannot prevent card information from being skimmed if a household's card is used on a compromised device. However, if a card remains locked, remote fraudulent use of stolen information would be greatly restricted, limiting vulnerability to theft only at the time during which a household's card is unlocked for purchasing.

While card locking cannot completely prevent theft of information via skimming devices or other fraudulent methods, households whose EBT cards remain locked when not in use have a significantly lower chance of having their benefits stolen.

*Implementation:*

*Phase 1:* As of February 20, 2024, households will have the ability to lock and unlock their cards via the *ConnectEBT* mobile application (available on the: **Google Play Store** and **Apple App Store**). Cardholders must have a *ConnectEBT* account. If they have not already created an account, they can set one up using the mobile app. The cardholder must have activated their EBT card to access the lock/unlock feature. On the *ConnectEBT* mobile app home screen, a radio button will allow the cardholder to lock or unlock the card with one click. During this initial phase of the card lock rollout, the only option available to households will be to completely lock the card, preventing purchases, balance inquiries and most other transactions until the card is unlocked. Cardholders will receive an email immediately upon locking or unlocking their card, confirming the action they took.

Phase 1 will also allow cardholders to call the *ConnectEBT* helpline at **1-888-328-6399** to check the lock/unlock status and speak to a representative to unlock the card (only the unlock function is available through the helpline).

*Phase 2:* The complete card lock functionality will be expanded to the web-based *ConnectEBT* New York EBT client portal. In addition to the *ConnectEBT* mobile application, households will have the ability to perform the same locking and unlocking functions via their internet browser at

[www.connectebt.com/nvebtclient/](http://www.connectebt.com/nvebtclient/). Phase 2 is expected to be completed within three months of phase 1 and we will provide notification when it becomes available.

*Phase 3:* An additional, and separate, locking feature to both the mobile application and the web-based client portal will be available, allowing households the option to lock their card for out-of-state transactions. Selecting this option will block all out-of-state transactions but continue to allow in-state transactions. Phase 3 is also expected to be completed within three months of phase 1.

### *New Cards*

When a new card is ordered, the system does not retain the locked status of the previous card and all new cards are issued unlocked regardless of whether the prior card was locked or not. Therefore, if the cardholder would like the new card locked, they must lock it. Households should be encouraged to lock their new cards immediately after selecting a Personal Identification Number (PIN). The EBT card carrier, included in new card mailings, will contain information about the card lock feature.

### *Transaction Types*

The most common transactions that are rejected when a card is locked include: all purchases, balance inquiries, ATM withdrawals (TA cash benefits) and in-person returns/credits that require a card to be swiped.

The most common transactions that are still allowable when a card is locked include: returns/credits made online, and changes to an existing PIN.

### *Outreach*

**The OTDA website** includes information on the card lock feature. OTDA will also release an outreach flyer on their website instructing cardholders how to use the new card lock feature. Later this Spring, OTDA plans to notify households about this feature using text messages. Districts are encouraged to supplement this outreach with their own activities.

## **January 2024 Social Security (RSDI/SSI) COLA Increases**

Effective January 1, 2024 the federal cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for Title II Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI) Social Security benefits and Title XVI Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits was set at 3.2%. Recipients of RSDI and SSI will now have this increased benefit budgeted against their Cash Assistance and/or SNAP benefits.

## **New Health Insurance Option for Undocumented Immigrants Aged 65 and Over**

As of January 1, 2024, there is a new option for health insurance available for undocumented immigrants who are age 65 and older. The new insurance is through Medicaid Managed Care plans, with a carved-out Fee-for-Service pharmacy benefit and offers a more comprehensive benefit package for this population. Previously, undocumented immigrants aged 65 and older qualified for Emergency Medicaid. The new insurance adds preventive and primary care benefits, including routine doctor visits, recommended screenings, lab tests, wellness services, prescription drugs and supplies, and more. Visit [NY State of Health](#) to learn more.

## **One-Time Six-Month Earned Income Disregard (EID)**

The State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-24 New York State Budget established a new disregard on all earned income that a CA participant gets from participation in a qualified work activity or training program, provided the individual's overall income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for their household size. This disregard does not apply to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

The SFY 2023-24 State Budget will also disregard all earned income of a CA participant following a new job for a maximum of six consecutive months, once per lifetime, provided that the individual's overall income does not exceed 200% of the FPL for their household size. Following the six-month period, regular budgeting of income for purposes of CA eligibility would apply. This disregard does not apply to SNAP benefits.

The application of the EID will be determined by staff after a CA participant has submitted income from a qualifying work activity or new employment and the gross household income remains under 200% of the household's FPL. This would be triggered by case recertification or

following the submission of a case change. Clients are not able to request the disregard as it will be triggered and assessed based on changes reported to the Agency.

### **HRA Concourse Benefit Access Center and SNAP Center Announcements**

Effective Friday, February 16, 2024, HRA ended operations at the Concourse SNAP Center located at 1365 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452 and relocated the Benefits Access Center to 845 Barretto Street, Bronx, NY 10474. Operations began at the new Barretto location on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Regular operating hours will be from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

We encourage clients to avoid unnecessary trips to our offices by using our remote or online services through **ACCESS HRA** to complete and submit Cash Assistance (CA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Emergency Assistance (EA), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Fair Fares NYC, and Medicaid (MA) applications and recertifications, CityFHEPS renewals and submit supporting documentation, manage their case, and receive case information.

Those unable to utilize online services may submit completed SNAP and CA applications, as well as supporting documentation, using self-service drop boxes at all BACs and SNAP Centers, or self-service PC banks and scanners, which are available at all HRA BACs and SNAP Centers. HRA staff are on site to help clients use self-service scanners and computers to submit forms, and to answer questions and accept paper forms.

### **New Child Support Application**

The NYC Office of Child Support Service (OCSS) has implemented a new child support application: **Child Support Enrollment Form (LDSS-5258)**. This form replaces the three prior forms:

- LDSS-5145 (Cash Assistance Referral Form)
- LDSS-5143 (Non-cash Assistance Application Form), and
- LDSS-4882 (Medicaid Referral Form).

Please use the **new form** when enrolling for child support services.

## **Child Support Pay It Off Program 2024**

OCSS announced that **Pay It Off** is currently being offered from March 1-15 this year. This time-limited program could help noncustodial parents lower the amount of permanently assigned child support debt they owe to the New York City Department of Social Services (NYC DSS) twice as fast. If they sign up for the Arrears Credit Program (ACP) while participating in Pay It Off, they can receive a sign-up bonus of up to \$2,500. Furthermore, if noncustodial parents pay the principle of a money judgement, all interest associated with the money judgment will be erased! More than 4,000 noncustodial parents have participated in a past Pay It Off (PIO) program. The average debt reduction was \$4,822 per case. Learn more at <https://nyc.gov/hra/ocss>.

## **IDNYC Service Update**

As of January 29, 2024, DSS/HRA moved to an appointment-only model across all 10 of IDNYC's enrollment sites. Click [here](#) for **IDNYC Enrollment Center** locations.

Appointments for in-person enrollment are released each week on Friday afternoons for the following Monday through Friday and can be booked by visiting the **IDNYC Online Portal**. If clients are not able to book an appointment, we ask they check back as availability changes daily. Visit [nyc.gov/idnyc](https://nyc.gov/idnyc) to learn more.

*As a reminder:*

- IDNYC **does not** provide work authorization
- IDNYC **does not** impact immigration status

It is important that this information is shared with applicants before making an appointment.

### *Document Guidance*

An applicant must present four (4) total points of documents:

- Three (3) points of documents proving identity *and*
- One (1) point of documents proving NYC residency (A “Care Of” letter will suffice for 1 point of NYC residency housed in NYC agencies).
  - IDNYC cards with a Care Of address **MAY NOT** be used as proof of address.

If the IDNYC application is **approved** a card will be mailed within 10-14 business days to the address provided on the Care Of/Residency Verification Letter.

Clients **cannot use** IDNYC to:

- 1) drive;
- 2) 2) purchase alcohol or tobacco, or
- 3) 3) travel by plane or across land or sea borders

**Asylum Seekers may provide other documents to prove identity:**

- Notice to Appear form I-862
- Alien Booking Record form I-385
- Order to Release on Recognizance form I-220A
- Order of Supervision form I-220B
- Copy of Foreign Passport\*
- Copy of Foreign Birth Certificate\*

\*These must be accompanied by an ICE form before they can be accepted.

Please refer to the IDNYC **Document Calculator** for additional information.

### **2023-24 Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**

**The 2023-2024 Emergency HEAP benefit component opened on January 2, 2024.** Applications will be accepted through close of business on Friday, March 15, 2024, or until funding allocated to this component is exhausted, whichever comes first.

Emergency benefits are available to assist eligible households with a heating emergency or a heat-related domestic emergency. Only one Emergency benefit of each type is available per HEAP household for the 2023-2024 program year. Regular component benefits, if available, must be utilized first to resolve heating emergencies for eligible households. Temporary relocation for housing emergencies and propane tank deposits to obtain new propane vendors are also available under the Emergency benefit component.

To apply for an **Emergency HEAP** benefit, applicants can call **718-557-1399** or visit a **HEAP office**.



**Note: Emergency HEAP benefit applicants will not be able to apply on ACCESS HRA.**

For more information, including detailed eligibility requirements, click [here](#).

### **Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Waiver Extension**

The USDA granted an extension of the statewide waiver of the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements through February 28, 2025. The waiver was previously set to expire on February 29, 2024.

Therefore, ABAWD clients will continue to not be subject to the ABAWD requirements through February 28, 2025.

### **Using the DSS OneNumber Self-Service Feature**

The DSS OneNumber (formerly Infoline) offers a quick way for clients to get accurate information about their case without waiting to speak with a DSS OneNumber agent. Clients can use the DSS OneNumber self-service feature to hear automated case information and request certain forms for some of the Agency's largest benefit programs, including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Cash Assistance, Medicaid, HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program), and HASA (HIV/AIDS Services Administration).

It is important to note that clients can also use [ACCESS HRA](#) to apply for some HRA benefits, submit documents for their application, manage their case, and much more! Read the [ACCESS HRA Users Guide](#) for more information.

### **DSS Office of Community Outreach Trainings & Event Requests**

#### **Trainings**

The DSS Office of Community Outreach (OCO) offers trainings and presentations to community-based organizations, elected officials and their staff, and other municipal agencies. These trainings are conducted multiple times per month and allow for flexible scheduling. The OCO currently offers the following trainings:

- ACCESS HRA General Overview Webinar
- ACCESS HRA Provider Portal Webinar

- ACCESS HRA Benefit Application Webinar
- CityFHEPS Program Overview and Renewal Application Webinar
- DSS Overview Webinar
- EBT Skimming and Replacement Benefits Webinar
- Fair Fares Program Overview and Application Webinar
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Webinar
- Medicaid and Medicare Savings Program Overview and Application Webinar

Click [here](#) to view training descriptions and register for an upcoming session.

Organizations interested in requesting any of the trainings listed above specifically for their staff (10 or more) should complete and submit the **DSS Training Request Form**. The DSS Outreach unit will follow-up with organizations to confirm their training requests on a first come, first serve basis. Contact [\*\*DSSOutreach@dss.nyc.gov\*\*](mailto:DSSOutreach@dss.nyc.gov) with any questions about training or issues submitting the form.

### **Community Partner Event Requests**

The DSS OCO welcomes requests to participate in events hosted by community partner organizations. Please complete and submit the **Community Partner Event Attendance Request Form** to request DSS presence at your event and the Outreach Events unit will follow-up on a first come, first serve basis to arrange for DSS representation.

Contact [\*\*OutreachEvents@dss.nyc.gov\*\*](mailto:OutreachEvents@dss.nyc.gov) if you have any questions or encounter issues submitting the form.