

### U.S. Census Date Has Been Extended

A federal judge has ruled to extend the U.S. 2020 Census count through October 31<sup>st</sup>. Participating in the census is critical for states, as the number of representatives in the House of Representatives is based on the census and every year billions of dollars in federal funding that goes to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, and other resources are based on census data. Households which have not yet completed the census can visit <https://my2020census.gov/> or call 844-330-2020 to complete the census.

### Lost Wages Assistance Update

The federal government has approved the NYS DOL for a total of 6 weeks of Lost Wages Assistance (LWA). These include the benefit weeks ending August 2, August 9, August 16, August 23, August 30, and September 14. Payments for the first three weeks were released the week of September 14th. Payments for the second and final three weeks were released by Friday, September 25th. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program provides an additional \$300 in weekly benefits for Unemployment Insurance and PUA recipients. To qualify individuals must be eligible for NYS's Unemployment or PUA benefits. To learn more about the Lost Wages Assistance visit *Benefits Plus'* [COVID-19 Resources, Expansion of Unemployment Insurance](#).

#### Medicare News

##### Medicare Special Enrollment Period

- The 2020 annual enrollment period for Medicare runs from October 15th to December 7th.
- Medicare beneficiaries who need assistance can call 212-614-5310.

#### USDA Extends Free Meals for Kids Through December 31, 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will extend the summer meal program through December 31, 2020, allowing all children under 18, whether or not they are enrolled in school, to get meals. Three meals will be served – a breakfast and two lunches. Students or parents/guardians can pick up take-out meals at convenient sites. Other flexibilities were announced, [read more here](#),

### Absentee Balloting

Individuals must apply for an Absentee Ballot Application, which is available at <https://vote.nyc/sites/default/files/pdf/forms/absenteevoting/AbsenteeBallot-English.pdf>. Applications in additional languages are found at <https://vote.nyc/page/absentee-voting>. Submit the application by:

- E-Mail: [Apply4Absentee@boe.nyc](mailto:Apply4Absentee@boe.nyc)
- Fax: 212-487-5389
- Mail: to the local borough office, which can be found at <https://vote.nyc/page/contact-us>
- Call: 1-866-868-3692
- Online: <https://nycabsentee.com/>, this website can only be used by registered NYC voters to apply for an absentee ballot for the November 3, 2020 election.

If an individual is affected by COVID-19 and/or potential of contracting the virus, they should check the box for “Temporary Illness” on the application. The definition has been expanded to include “a risk of contracting or spreading a disease” such as COVID-19.

Individuals must submit the application by October 27, 2020. However, individuals may apply for an Absentee Ballot Application in-person at the Board of Elections (addresses are found at <https://vote.nyc/page/contact-us>) by November 2nd.

To learn more visit about absentee balloting and voting visit *Benefits Plus'* [COVID-19 Resources, Additional Resources](https://bplc.cssny.org/pbm/covid-19-resources/resources-for-covid-19-pandemic/absentee-voting) at <https://bplc.cssny.org/pbm/covid-19-resources/resources-for-covid-19-pandemic/absentee-voting>.

## SNAP Updates

### *New Income Guidelines and Increase in Benefit Amounts*

[Click here](#) for a full chart of the updated income guidelines for the SNAP program in NYS effective October 1, 2020. In addition, the maximum SNAP benefit amount, the shelter cap as well as the homeless deduction have increased, see these changes on our [SNAP Budget Worksheet](#).

Our free SNAP Calculator will be updated ASAP!

### *SNAP Interviews*

Initial eligibility interviews for new SNAP applications have resumed as of September 1, 2020. Currently, NYC HRA staff are contacting clients directly to complete the interviews. Beginning in October, HRA will resume On-Demand interviews for SNAP applications only. On-Demand is a service where clients call into at 718-SNAP-NOW, to complete their interview (rather than waiting for a call from HRA staff). The On-Demand service will not be available to those recertifying for SNAP, they will receive a call from HRA and should not use on-demand.

### *ABAWD Update*

The USDA has granted a State-wide waiver of the current ABAWD work requirements, which was to end September 30, 2020, but has been extended through September 30, 2021. This ensures that SNAP recipients are not subject to the ABAWD work requirements associated with receipt of SNAP benefits through September 30, 2021. Read more here <https://otda.ny.gov/policy/gis/2020/20DC082.pdf>.

---

## Social Security Online Hearings

In addition to telephone hearings, Social Security will now offer the opportunity for an online video hearing using the Microsoft Teams platform. This new free service will allow applicants and their representatives to participate in the hearing using a camera-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer.

This stable and secure online platform allows the Social Security judges to see and interact with applicants and their representatives just like an in-person hearing, while maintaining privacy of the claimant's information. Other hearing experts, such as medical or vocational experts, may participate as well.

Read more here: <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2020/#9-2020-1>

---

## HOUSING NEWS

### **CDC's Order: Temporary Halt in Residential Evictions to Prevent the Further Spread of COVID-19**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an agency order imposing a temporary nationwide moratorium on residential evictions for nonpayment of rent to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The moratorium is in effect from September 4th, 2020 through December 31st, 2020, unless the order is extended, changed, or terminated.

To be protected from evictions under the CDC order, each adult listed on the lease or rental agreement must declare in writing to the landlords that:

- They have attempted to obtain all available government assistance for rent, and
- They are unable to pay the full rent because of loss of income or extraordinary out-of-pocket medical expenses, and
- Extraordinary out-of-pocket medical expenses are unreimbursed medical expenses likely to exceed 7.5% of gross adjusted income for the year.
- They are attempting to make timely partial rent payments, and
- Annual income for calendar year 2020 is not expected to be more than \$99,000 if filing an individual tax return (\$198,000 if filing a joint tax return) OR they were not required to report any income in 2019 OR they received an Economic Impact Payment, and
- If evicted, the household would become homeless and need to move into a homeless shelter or into shared housing living in close quarters with other people.

**NOTE:** Tenants should consult with an attorney before submitting the declaration to their landlords.

Tenants in NYC with questions about how the CDC's guidance may affect them or how to prepare the required declaration can access free legal assistance through HRA's Office of Civil Justice by calling 311 and asking to be connected to the *City's Tenant Helpline*.

For a sample language that tenants can use to write their declaration: [Arabic](#) , [English](#), [Mandarin](#), [Spanish](#), [Vietnamese](#).

---

## NYCHA Application Renewals

Applicants for NYCHA housing submit an online application at <https://apply.nycha.info>, which once submitted is in effect for two years. Applicants must 'renew' their initial online application every two years if an initial eligibility interview is not scheduled within these two years, and must submit the renewal at least 30 days before the expiration date. Typically, NYCHA sends applicants a reminder via email of the approaching expiration, but even if not notified prospective tenants are still responsible for renewing their application to maintain their place on the preliminary waiting list.

In response to the state of emergency in the City due to COVID-19, **NYCHA will automatically renew all applications that expire before October 31, 2020, without need for any action by the applicant.** Additionally, NYCHA has agreed to reinstate all applications that may have been terminated for nonrenewal since March and restore their original application dates.

---

## SOCIAL SECURITY RETURN TO WORK PROVISIONS (Series)

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries face several challenges when returning to work. Professionals in the social services field who assist these beneficiaries can provide valuable knowledge and guidance these beneficiaries need to attain their goals. Learning the rules of Social Security's return to work procedures helps to prepare beneficiaries to make informed decisions as they return to work.

The Benefits Plus Learning Center is commencing a series of articles that will cover common issues SSI/SSDI beneficiaries face when returning to work and how professionals may best help them.

Social Security disability beneficiaries' limited cash benefits affect their quality of life, and we hope to highlight provisions the Social Security Administration has made available to beneficiaries who gain employment and ways to protect their benefits.

### *Asking the Right Questions*

When meeting with a beneficiary who returns to work, asking them targeted questions to determine the next best steps is a good place start, asking questions such as:

1. Are you receiving SSI/SSDI or both? These are very different programs and an assessment of their benefits will depend on whether they receive either or both!
2. Did you work prior to your current job? If so, gather more information about that income to determine how these past earnings impact their current situation.
3. When did you start to work? How many hours do you work? What is your hourly wage/salary? Who is your employer? What is your job title?
4. Have you reported your wages to the Social Security Administration? If so, when? If not, it is important to do so right away to avoid possible overpayments.
5. Have you heard of the Ticket to Work Program? Working with a Ticket to Work provider such as Vocational Rehabilitation or an Employment Network provides additional incentives to beneficiaries.

Next month we will elaborate on the first question and include the differences between SSI and SSDI benefits!

## **Benefits Plus Online**

### **Updated Benefit Tool: Public Charge**

[Click here](#) for the Learning Center's updated fact sheet regarding public charge.

### **Free COVID-19 Resources**

Benefits Plus Online is housing *COVID-19 Resources* category available at no cost to all professionals and clients seeking relevant and up-to-date information on COVID-19. This is the Community Service Society of New York's effort to support social service professionals who are working with vulnerable population groups during this emergency.

#### *COVID-19 Updates*

COVID-19 Resources, Expansion of Unemployment Insurance: Changes under COVID-19

- Updated [Lost Wages Assistance Program](#)

[COVID-19 Resources, Cash Benefits, Cash Assistance: Changes Under COVID-19](#)

- Updated time frame for conducting eligibility interviews via phone, as well as telephone screenings for drug and alcohol to December 31, 2020.
- Added income from the Lost Wages program is exempt for Cash Assistance

[COVID-19 Resources, Cash Benefits, Social Security Retirement, Disability, and SSI Benefits: Changes under COVID-19](#)

- Added income from the Lost Wages program is exempt for SSI

[COVID-19 Resources, Food Access and Programs, SNAP](#)

- Added income from the Lost Wages program is exempt for SNAP
- Added State-wide waiver of the ABAWD work requirements extending the waiver from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

Not a Benefits Plus Subscriber? Request a [free demo here](#).

## Community Resources/Events

### Volunteers for COVID-19 Vaccine

NYU Langone Health Center is recruiting adults age 18+ to participate in a COVID-19 vaccine trial, especially those who are more likely to be exposed and vulnerable, including people with underlying medical conditions, seniors, those who could be exposed in their workplace (including elder-care facility residents or workers, and jail or prison workers) and Black, Latinx and Native American adults.

Sign up at NYU Langone's online registry at <https://med.nyu.edu/centers-programs/vaccine/participate-a-covid-19-vaccine-clinical-trial>. For more information visit <https://coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org/>.

### Financial Advocacy Program – Volunteers Working Remotely to Help New Yorkers in Need

Would you like a highly trained financial coach or public benefit counselor placed with your agency to support your clients through remote service? CSS Financial Advocacy Program volunteers serve one day per week helping people overcome financial challenges. Learn more about the program on our website: <http://www.cssny.org/programs/entry/financial-advocacy-program>. If you are interested in this opportunity, contact Rebecca Haase at 212-614-5482 or [رهاase@cssny.org](mailto:رهاase@cssny.org).

Read a New York Times article highlighting the service of Financial Advocacy Program volunteers: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/06/neediest-cases/coptic-christians-faith-volunteerism.html>