The Community Service Society’s Benefit Plus Learning Center equips social service professionals through its high-quality training courses to effectively help their clients’ access and navigate public benefit/housing programs. This catalogue provides a listing and description of the Learning Center’s courses.

Professionals learn how to navigate the government system and gain practical knowledge to help their clients cut through government red tape. Participants interact with expert instructors, learn best practices, engage in hands-on exercises, and network with other social service professionals.

All participants receive a Participant Guide and an Appendix to use during the session, as well as in their client work. These tools include making it practical exercises, advocacy tips, listings of local government offices and valuable resources, samples of pertinent government agency notices, and more.

Courses are held throughout the year at the Community Service Society (633 Third Avenue, 10th floor) for a fee of $75 per person for half day (3-hour) workshops, and $125 per person for full day courses. There are discounts for early bird and group registration. Go to https://bplc.cssny.org/home/training for the current schedule.

These courses can also be conducted on-site at your agency’s location. Please contact Leslie Molina at 212-614-5444 or lmolina@cssny.org for associated fees.

The Community Service Society of New York, Benefits Plus Learning Center is recognized by the New York State Education Department’s State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #SW-0213.
# Benefits Plus Learning Center

## Courses

**Note:** All courses are approved for continuing education credit for licensed social workers in NYS.

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An agenda of each course is available upon request.
Send an e-mail to Imolina@cssny.org.
Course Topics

I. Introduction to Government Benefit Programs

A. Public Benefit Access: An Introduction to Public Benefits and Advocacy (6 hours)

Designed for advocates who want to learn how to help clients access government benefit programs, this day long course lays out the groundwork of the public benefit system. The course includes the basics of qualifying factors used in public benefit programs, as well as useful terms, such as insurance vs. needs-based benefits, financial criteria, qualified aliens and more.

We introduce participants to five major public benefit programs, different resources available on the Internet, including government manuals, online calculators, housing resources, documentation guides, and more. Participants will learn how to prepare a case for advocacy, such as developing a timeline, gathering documents to support client’s case, as well as effective advocacy tactics, including developing a plan of action, using the chain of command, and more. Participants will have the opportunity to put into practice what they learn through making it practical exercises.

Target Audience: Social service professionals new to the world of public benefits, as well as for those who may need a refresher!

B. Unraveling the Complexity of the Public Benefit System (3.5 hours)

An introductory course on the public benefit system, which introduces the advocate to eight major benefit programs: Cash Assistance, SSI, Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, the Essential Plan, Child Health Plus, and SNAP benefits. We will review the basics of eligibility and application, as well as discuss key concepts such as income, immigration status, insurance-based benefits vs. needs-based benefits, dual eligibility and more. You will discover available resources on the Internet, including government resources, legal services and various web-based calculators and online tools. Best practices to bring back to the work setting are included throughout the course.

Target Audience: Social service professionals new to the world of public benefits, as well as for those who may need a refresher!

II. Advocacy

A. Learning the Ropes of Welfare Advocacy for Non-Attorneys (3 hours)

Gain the tools and knowledge to ensure clients receive the benefits they are entitled through this course. Learn how to assess a client’s situation by gathering relevant information, developing a timeline and determining the best plan of action. Discover how to resolve common problems, such as improper notification, missed appointments, lost documentation, etc. This course will introduce you to several welfare lawsuits that will help your clients find relief while the Courts decide challenges brought by welfare attorneys. Included are helpful resources, agency contacts, and a brief description of the fair hearing process.

Target Audience: Social service professionals seeking to learn advocacy strategies for Cash Assistance and SNAP applicants/recipient.
III. Cash Benefits

A. The Nuts and Bolts of SSI and SSDI (3.5 hours)

Learn the similarities & differences between Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and how to identify which benefit an individual is receiving. Find out how SSA determines whether someone meets the criteria for disability, including SSA’s 5 Step Sequential Evaluation. And learn who qualifies for SSI and SSDI, how a person can receive both benefits concurrently, and how to apply, including strategies to avoid delays when applying.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals seeking to help unravel SSI and SSDI benefits for their clients.

B. Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work - Part I (3 hours)

Individuals with disabilities may want to return to work but need to know how earnings will impact their benefits. Find out how an SSI or SSDI beneficiary’s benefit is affected when returning to work, including SSI budgeting, SSI’s break-even point, what happens when an SSDI beneficiary enters and ends a trial work period, a description of the extended period of eligibility. Included is description of Ticket to Work Provisions, as well as beneficiary support services. The Nuts and Bolts of SSI and SSDI is a required prerequisite.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who want to learn how to help SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who return to work.

C. Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work - Part II (3 hours)

Discover how Social Security’s return to work rules impact concurrent beneficiaries (receive both SSI and SSDI.) Learn how a continuing disability review (CDR) impacts a beneficiary’s ongoing entitlement to benefits even as s/he engages in work. Find about health benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid for the dually eligible and the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Working People with Disabilities. Learn about expedited reinstatement and SSI and SSDI beneficiary may access this benefit. Part I of this training is a required prerequisite.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who want to learn how to help SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who return to work.

D. Making the Most of Social Security Benefits for Retirees, Spouses, Widow(er)s and Children (3.5 hours)

Learn about Social Security benefits for retirees, spouses, widow(er)s, and children, including the Disabled Adult Child (DAC) benefit. Find out about early, full and late retirement benefits, family maximum rules, factors that affect dependent/survivor benefits, and strategies for spouses and divorced spouses when collecting benefits. Learn about applying for benefits, payment of benefits and withdrawing an application. Discover how retirement benefits coordinate with Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Target Audience: Social service professionals who want to learn how to help RSI beneficiaries maximize their benefits.
E. Social Security Cash Benefits: Social Security Retirement & Disability Benefits & SSI (3 hours)

Discover the differences between Social Security’s three cash benefits: Retirement Insurance Benefits, Disability Insurance benefits, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI.) Learn what it means to be insured under the Social Security program vs. the SSI program. Find out the different application procedures for the benefits, how the benefits coordinate with one another, and how a person qualifies for each benefit. And receive a general overview of return to work rules for each benefit.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who need a grounding in the basics of Social Security’s cash benefit programs.

F. Cash Assistance for Beginners - Part I (3 hours)

Find out about the Cash Assistance (CA) program for low-income families, singles, and childless couples. Part 1 covers the two programs available under the Cash Assistance program (Family Assistance & Safety Net Assistance), who is included in the household size, who qualifies, how the CA grant is structured, how to calculate a household’s standard of need, and how clients access the benefit.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who assist families and individuals with limited income.

G. Cash Assistance for Beginners - Part II (3 hours)

Discover how you can prepare your clients for the Cash Assistance application process and learn how to navigate the various appointments applicants are required to attend. Strategies and techniques for effective advocacy practices when clients experience common barriers in applying for Cash Assistance will be included. Learn about program requirements such as the work rules, child support, substance requirements, finger imaging and domestic violence rules. Learn about recertification procedures as well. We strongly encourage participants take Part I of this course before Part II.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who assist families and individuals with limited income.

H. Cash Assistance for Working Families (3 hours)

Find out what happens when families on Cash Assistance find paid employment and what happens to their cash grant. Learn about reporting requirements, how earnings are budgeted, and overpayment procedures. Discover what happens to their Medicaid, childcare and SNAP benefits when they are no longer eligible for Cash Assistance. We will cover how these transitional benefits work, who qualifies and how to apply as a family transition to work. Cash Assistance for Beginners Part I is a required prerequisite.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who want to help Cash Assistance recipients who return to work.
I. How Cash Assistance Interacts with SSI, Interim Assistance, Earnings & Child Support (3 hours)

Learn about the Cash Assistance standard of need and how other sources of income can impact the Cash Assistance grant. Find out what happens to the Cash Assistance grant when a family member returns to work, what happens when a family member has SSI, or child support. Also learn about Interim Assistance for those individuals receiving Cash Assistance while applying for SSI and what happens when they receive a retroactive SSI benefit. Lump sum payments and unearned income is also covered.  

**Cash Assistance for Beginners – Part I is a required prerequisite.**

**Target Audience:** Social Service and legal professionals who work with families or individuals who have other sources of income.

J. Accessing Cash Assistance for Young Adults (3 hours)

Find out what how the Human Resource Administration (HRA) handles a Cash Assistance case when a young adult is living with his/her parents/guardian, when she is pregnant, and when s/he moves out of the household. Learn about the work rules and education requirements. Also included are strategies and techniques you can use to advocate effectively when your clients experience common challenges, such as when a young person applies for Cash Assistance and s/he is told s/he cannot apply.  

**Cash Assistance for Beginners – Part I is a required prerequisite.**

**Target Audience:** Social service and legal professionals who work with youth under 24 who have basic knowledge of Cash Assistance eligibility.

K. One Shot Deals: Obtaining Emergency Assistance (3 hours)

Learn about the types of emergency assistance available to low-income families and individuals, as well as SSI recipients, with a focus on those households who are not receiving Cash Assistance. Discover how an “emergency” is defined, who qualifies for emergency assistance and when it is appropriate to request an “exception to policy”. Learn when recipients are required to repay these grants, as well as how often they can receive them. Find out how to apply for emergency assistance and how to create a compelling case when requesting shelter arrears.

**Target Audience:** Social service professionals assisting low income families and individuals with a financial crisis.

IV. Food Programs

A. Checking Out the SNAP Program (3 hours)

Find out who qualifies for SNAP benefits, and learn the budgeting procedures for the elderly, the disabled, as well as for working families with childcare costs. Learn which households are eligible for expedited processing, how to use our free Benefits Plus’s SNAP Calculator to determine whether a household is receiving the right amount of SNAP benefits, including steps to take to correct the budget when incorrectly calculated. Find out how to apply for SNAP benefits through the mail, fax or online.

**Target Audience:** Social service and legal professionals assisting families and individuals with limited income navigate SNAP benefits.

B. Fighting Hunger: Shopping for Food Programs (3 hours)
There are several food programs and food policies which make access to food and meals easier for New Yorkers to help fight hunger. Learn about free meals or access to free or low-cost food for seniors, individuals with disabilities, families, as well as students! Find out who qualifies, including whether individuals who are undocumented can apply, and how to access these benefits. This training covers basic eligibility for SNAP and maximizing the SNAP benefit, the NYS Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP), WIC benefits, Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and more.

**Target Audience:** Social service professionals working with low-income households in need of food assistance.

### V. Health Programs

#### A. Medicaid for the Disabled, Aged and Blind Populations (3 hours)

Find out how to navigate the Medicaid program for the disabled, aged and blind populations. This course will cover a brief description of how Medicaid changed after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, who qualifies for Medicaid as a disabled, aged or blind individual, accessing Medicaid through managed care and special managed care provisions for the dually eligible, where and how to apply, as well as transitioning from the NY State of Health Marketplace to the local Medicaid office when recipients are no longer eligible through the Marketplace.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals who work with the disabled, blind or aged populations and want to understand how Medicaid works for those who do not access Medicaid through the NY State of Health Marketplace.

#### B. The Medicaid Managed Care Maze (3 hours)

Most Medicaid applicants/recipients are required to enroll into managed care to access care, therefore it is critical to know how the managed care system works. This course will include an overview of mainstream managed care plans, selecting and enrolling in a plan, and switching to another plan. We will also cover special needs plans as well as managed long-term care (MLTC) plans, who is required to enroll in MLTC plans, and the steps to enroll in a MLTC, as well as how spenddown participants are handled.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals who are looking for an introduction to the different kinds of managed care plans under Medicaid and how they work.

#### C. Navigating Medicaid Spenddown for Your Clients (3 hours)

Discover how the spenddown program works and who can access it. Figure out how to calculate the spenddown amount, how applicants and recipients can use paid and unpaid medical bills, and retroactive assistance at application. Find out about the pay-in system, how to get hospital services, where to apply for the spenddown, and more. A Basic Knowledge of Medicaid is Required.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals seeking an understanding of Spenddown and how to best help clients maximize the benefit.
D. **Medicaid Home Care (3 hours)**

Discover the different types of home care the Medicaid program offers, who is eligible for personal care services, how to access services through managed care plans, and the assessment tools used in the process. Also learn about challenges clients face when accessing personal care services they need. The session will include how to file grievances and complaints and the new appeal procedures under managed care.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals who want to learn how to navigate the home care system on behalf of their Medicaid clients.

E. **Healthy NY: An Introduction to Health Options for NYS Residents (3.5 hours)**

Learn about the different type of health programs and resources for the low-income, disabled, aged and immigrants. Included is an overview of the following health benefits: the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid for MAGI and Non-MAGI populations, Medicare, the Medicare Savings Program, the Essential Plan, and Child Health Plus. Find out who qualifies, how to apply and how the benefits coordinate with one another. Also included is a review of health care terms & definitions, and a brief overview of H+H Options, the new NYC Care Plan, Community Health Centers, and more.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals who are looking for an introduction to health options for NYS residents.

F. **Health Programs for Individuals with Disabilities (3 hours) – COMING SOON**

Find out about different health benefits for the individuals with disabilities. Included benefits are Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities, Medicare, and Medicaid 1619(b), who qualifies, how they coordinate, and how to apply.

**Target Audience:** Health and social service professionals who are looking for an introduction to the different kinds of health programs for individuals with disabilities.

VI. **Housing**

A. **Housing Court: Nonpayment Proceedings (3 hours)**

Non-attorney advocates can play an important role in helping tenants avoid dangerous pitfalls of Housing Court. This course covers how NYC housing court works and how you can navigate housing court on behalf of households facing an eviction. Learn the ways to answer a petition for non-payment, what types of defenses a tenant can employ and how to implement them, and the various outcomes that may result. Learn what a stipulation is and how to negotiate the best possible outcome. Finally, discover what will happen when a judge signs an eviction order and how to delay or stop an eviction.

**Target Audience:** Non-attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to the housing court process.
B. **Road Map to Affordable Housing Options (3.5 hours)**

Learn about the different types of affordable and subsidized housing options available to low- and moderate-income households. Included is a brief overview of public housing and Section 8, information on supportive housing, rent supplements for the homeless and those at risk for homelessness, the Rent Freeze Programs (SCRIE and DRIE), as well as housing resources for vulnerable population groups such as the formerly incarcerated, seniors, individuals with disabilities, domestic violence, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and veterans.

**Target Audience:** Housing and social service professionals who assist low income household seeking affordable housing options.

C. **Navigating Public Housing – Part I (3 hours)**

Discover NYCHA’s eligibility guidelines and the process of obtaining a public housing apartment in NYC. Learn who qualifies for public housing, how to apply for public housing, what are priority codes and how they work, NYCHA’s screening process, and, finally, the apartment offer. Also discussed are how NYCHA rent levels are set for different types of households and a basic overview of the NYCHA lease and residents’ obligations.

**Target Audience:** Non-Attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to public housing.

D. **Navigating Public Housing – Part 2 (3 hours) – NEW**

A brief review of qualifying, applying, and maintaining public housing in NYC. Learn about NYCHA tenants’ rights, how NYCHA calculates rent levels, and what tenants can do when rent amounts are calculated incorrectly. Discover NYCHA’s policies and procedures for adding or removing family members, the Family Re-entry Program, succession rights, and how to transfer. Also included are NYCHA grievance procedures, requesting repairs and strategies when repairs are not done.

**Target Audience:** Non-Attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to public housing.

VII. **Immigrants**

A. **The World of Immigrants’ Eligibility for Public Benefits (3 hours)**

Public benefit programs have different rules and guidelines on immigrants’ eligibility for public benefits; therefore, helping immigrants obtain these benefits can be a challenging and complicated task. During this course you will learn which immigrants are “qualified aliens”, “individuals who are lawfully present”, or PRUCOL and which of these immigrants are eligible for public benefits. You will also discover which qualified aliens are eligible for major needs-based benefit programs, including SSI, Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid. Learn how the Essential Plan, will cover some immigrants previously covered by Medicaid. We will also learn how to use our Immigrants’ Eligibility Chart to determine an immigrant’s eligibility for 27 different benefit programs. **This course will not discuss how an immigrant can naturalize or become legal in the U.S.**

**Target Audience:** Social service and legal professionals who work with immigrants and who assist them with applying for benefits.
B. Rights, Benefits & Services for Individuals without Documentation (3.5 hours)

Individuals who are undocumented have limited government help available to them. Discover available resources they may be entitled to, including health programs, food programs, housing programs. Learn about their U.S. constitutional rights, how employment laws protect them, education rights, and how to use an ITIN. Learn about community-based resources for the undocumented, such as banking, child and adult preventive services, language access, and more. This course will not discuss how an immigrant can naturalize or become legal in the U.S.

Target Audience: Social service and legal professionals who work with individuals who are undocumented and who are residing in the U.S.