

Through its high-quality training courses, the Community Service Society's Benefit Plus Learning Center equips social service professionals 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.

Participants receive materials to use during the course session, as well as in their client work. These course materials include making it practical exercises, case examples, advocacy tips, listings of local government offices and valuable resources, samples of pertinent government agency notices, and more.

These courses can be conducted via webinar or in-person*.

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

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.

Please contact Leslie Bailey at 212-614-5444 or lbailey@cssny.org for associated fees.

**In-person trainings are currently unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Benefits Plus Learning Center

Training Courses

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

Click on course titles for descriptions.

Webinar Courses

All webinar courses are offered on the “Go to Webinar” platform ([click here for a Go To Webinar preview](#)).

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In-Person Courses

In-person courses* can take place at your agency location or at the Community Service Society (633 Third Avenue, 10th floor, New York, NY).

**In-person trainings are currently unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If interested in any of the in-person courses, contact Leslie Bailey (212-614-5444 or lbailey@cssny.org) to discuss webinar options.*

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***An agenda of each course is available upon request.
Send an e-mail to lbailey@cssny.org.***

Webinar Course Topics

All webinar courses are offered on the “Go to Webinar” platform ([click here for a Go To Webinar preview](#)). Participants are able to download a PowerPoint slide deck to use during the session, as well as in their client work.

I. Cash Benefits

A. An Overview of Cash Benefit Programs

Number of Hours: 2.0

An introductory course on the public benefit system, which introduces the advocate to three major cash benefit programs:

- Cash Assistance,
- SSI, and
- Social Security Disability Insurance.

Learn the basics of eligibility for each benefit, as well as key concepts such as income, immigration status, insurance-based benefits vs. needs-based benefits, and more. Discover available resources on the Internet, including government resources, legal services and various web-based calculators and online tools. Case examples and 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!*

B. The Nuts and Bolts of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) & Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Benefits

Number of Hours: 2.5

Learn the differences and similarities between SSI and SSDI and how to identify which benefit an individual is receiving. Find out how SSA determines whether someone meets the criteria for adult disability, including SSA’s 5 Step Sequential Evaluation to determine disability, and strategies to avoid delays for disability applicants. Learn who qualifies for SSI and SSDI, how a person can receive both benefits concurrently, how to apply, and information on presumptive disability and compassionate allowances.

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

C. Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work

Number of Hours: 2.5

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, as well as an 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.*

D. Cash Assistance for Beginners

Number of Hours: 2.0

Find out about the Cash Assistance (CA) program for low-income families, singles, and childless couples. In this course learn about the two programs available in NYS 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 to determine the amount of Cash Assistance a household is eligible for when there is earned or unearned income in the household.

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

E. One Shot Deals: Obtaining Emergency Assistance

Number of Hours: 2.0

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.*

II. Food Programs

A. Checking Out the SNAP Program

Number of Hours: 2.0

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, and 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

Number of Hours: 2.0

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 access to free/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.*

III. Housing

A. Eviction Moratoriums & Housing Court for NYC Residential Tenants

Number of Hours: 2.0

Non-attorney advocates can play an important role in helping residential tenants navigate housing court in the era of COVID-19. Learn about which eviction moratoriums are in place, who they cover, and when they will expire. Learn the current process of how a landlord begins a nonpayment case, how a tenant answers a petition, and how parties appear for their court date. Finally, learn about legal resources for residential tenants offered by the city and community-based organizations.

Target Audience: *Non-attorney housing and social service providers seeking an understanding of the current housing court process as a result of COVID-19.*

B. Affordable Housing Options

Number of Hours: 2.0

Find out about the different types of subsidized housing options available to low- and moderate-income households. Discover resources on the Internet for locating affordable housing options, such as, NYC Housing Connect, NYS Affordable Housing Search Tool, NYS Housing Finance Agency, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and more.

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

C. Supportive Housing & NYC Rental Subsidies

Number of Hours: 2.0

Find out about the different types of supportive housing options available to low-income households with individuals who are disabled, have history of homelessness, and/or mental health conditions. Learn about rent subsidy programs for the homeless and those at risk for homelessness (FHEPS, CITYFHEPS, and more).

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

D. Combing Through NYCHA's Policies and Procedures

Number of Hours: 2.0

Learn how NYCHA calculates rent levels, and what tenants can do when rent amounts are calculated incorrectly. Familiarize yourself with NYCHA's policies and procedures for adding or removing family members (including the Family Re-entry Program), succession rights, and how to transfer to another apartment. Find out which NYCHA actions a resident can grieve, and the grievance procedure.

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

E. Overview of Section 8

Number of Hours: 2.0

Learn about the two programs the comprise the Section 8 Housing Program, Tenant Based Voucher (TBV) and Project Based Voucher (PBV), who qualifies, and how to apply. Find out how rent is calculated and how income is treated when certain households begin earning additional income, with the Earned Income Disallowance and Family Self-Sufficiency program.

Target Audience: *Non-Attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to the Section 8 housing program.*

In-Person* Course Topics

Participants receive a *Participant Guide* and an *Appendix* to use during the session, as well as in their client work.

**In-person trainings are currently unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If interested in any of the in-person courses, contact Leslie Bailey (212-614-5444 or lbailey@cssny.org) to discuss webinar options.*

I. Introduction to Government Benefit Programs

A. Public Benefit Access: An Introduction to Public Benefits and Advocacy

Number of Hours: 6.0

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. Learn the basics: qualifying factors used in public benefit programs, useful terms, such as insurance vs. needs-based benefits, financial criteria, and immigrants qualifying for benefits.

The training introduces participants to five major public benefit programs, 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

Number of Hours: 3.5

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. Learn about the basics of eligibility and application for each benefit, as well as key concepts such as income, immigration status, insurance-based benefits vs. needs-based benefits, dual eligibility and more. Discover available resources on the Internet, including government resources, legal services and various web-based calculators and online tools. Case examples and 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

Number of Hours: 3.0

Learn the rights and responsibilities of applicants/recipients, how to assess a client's situation by gathering relevant information, developing a timeline and determining the best plan of action. Discover strategies to address common problems, such as improper notification, missed appointments, lost documentation, etc. Find out about 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/recipients.*

III. Cash Benefits

A. The Nuts and Bolts of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) & Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Benefits

Number of Hours: 3.0

Learn the differences and similarities between SSI and SSDI and how to identify which benefit an individual is receiving. Find out how SSA determines whether someone meets the criteria for adult disability, including SSA's 5 Step Sequential Evaluation to determine disability, and strategies to avoid delays for disability applicants. Learn who qualifies for SSI and SSDI, how a person can receive both benefits concurrently, how to apply, and information on presumptive disability and compassionate allowances.

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

Number of Hours: 3.0

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, as well as an 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. Cash Assistance for Beginners – Part I

Number of Hours: 3.0

Find out about the Cash Assistance (CA) program for low-income families, singles, and childless couples. In Part 1 learn about the two programs available in NYS 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 to determine the amount of Cash Assistance a household is eligible for when there is earned or unearned income in the household.

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

D. Cash Assistance for Beginners – Part II

Number of Hours: 3.0

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. Discover strategies and techniques for effective advocacy practices when clients experience common barriers in applying for Cash Assistance. Learn about program requirements such as the work rules, child support, substance requirements, 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.*

E. Cash Assistance for Working Families

Number of Hours: 3.0

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. Gain knowledge of the transitional benefits available to beneficiaries who lose CA due to work, who qualifies and how to apply. **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.*

F. Cash Assistance & Other Sources of Income: Earnings, SSI, Child/Spousal Support and Interim Assistance

Number of Hours: 3.0

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, child or spousal support. And learn about Interim Assistance for those individuals receiving

Cash Assistance when also applying for SSI and what happens when they receive a retroactive SSI benefit. **Cash Assistance for Beginners is a required prerequisite.**

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

G. Accessing Cash Assistance for Young Adults

Number of Hours: 3.0

Find out 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 who must be included on a case, as well as the work rules and education requirements for young adults. Discover strategies and techniques 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.*

H. One Shot Deals: Obtaining Emergency Assistance

Number of Hours: 3.0

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

Number of Hours: 3.0

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, and 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

Number of Hours: 3.0

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 access to free/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. Housing Programs

A. Housing Court: Nonpayment Proceedings

Number of Hours: 3.0

Non-attorney advocates can play an important role in helping tenants avoid dangerous pitfalls of Housing Court. Learn how NYC housing court works and how to help households facing an eviction navigate housing court. Learn how a landlord begins a nonpayment case, the ways to answer a nonpayment petitions, what types of defenses a tenant can employ and how to implement them, and the various outcomes that may result. Find out what a stipulation is and how to negotiate the best possible outcome. Finally, discover what happens 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

Number of Hours: 3.5

Find out about the different types of affordable, subsidized, and supportive housing options available to low- and moderate-income households and individuals with disabilities, including a brief overview of public housing and Section 8. Discover resources on the Internet for locating affordable housing options. Learn about rent subsidy programs for the homeless and those at risk for homelessness (FHEPS, CITYFHEPS, and more), as well as the Rent Freeze Programs (SCRIE and DRIE). Lastly, find about 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

Number of Hours: 3.0

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 II

Number of Hours: 3.0

Learn about NYCHA tenants' rights, how NYCHA calculates rent levels, and what tenants can do when rent amounts are calculated incorrectly. Learn how residents request repairs and strategies to take when repairs are not done. Discover NYCHA's policies and procedures for adding or removing family members, the Family Re-entry Program, succession rights, and how to transfer to another apartment. Find out when residents can grieve a NYCHA action and the grievance procedures.

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