

Resources for People Considering Employment as a Certified Peer Worker: Public Benefits and the Transition to Employment Series

Topic: Understanding Temporary Assistance

About this Series:

This series is prepared by the NYSDOH AIDS Institute to provide general information about the impact of earning income as a New York State Certified Peer Worker on a person's eligibility for different public benefits. Each individual's circumstances are different and a number of factors may impact a person's eligibility for public benefits, including their: health status; number of dependents; income to be earned; type of income; other resources or benefits received; and other factors. Individuals should consult with the appropriate benefits program representative, or other expert about their situation, prior to making decisions about accepting reimbursement for work as a Peer Worker.

What is Temporary Assistance?

Temporary Assistance (TA) is temporary help for economically challenged adults and children. If you cannot find a job, are unable to work, or your job does not pay you enough, TA may be able to help you pay for your basic needs expenses. If you are a Peer Worker who has become unable to work, or who has a job which does not provide enough money, you may be eligible for TA.

What are the two major Temporary Assistance programs?

Family Assistance (FA) and Safety Net Assistance (SNA) are the two primary Temporary Assistance programs, described below.

Family Assistance (FA)

New York State Family Assistance (FA) provides cash assistance to eligible families that include a minor child living with a parent (including families who have both parents in the household) or a caretaker relative. FA operates under federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) guidelines. **Eligible adults are limited to receiving cash benefits for a total of 60 months in their lifetime, including months of TANF-funded assistance granted in other states.**

Adult and all members of the FA household are not eligible to receive additional FA benefits if this limit is reached. Each month that TANF-funded benefits are received is included in the 60 lifetime count. The months do not need to be consecutive.

The TANF program has an emphasis on work. Parents and other adult relatives who receive FA, and who are determined able to work must meet the terms of federal work requirements to receive FA benefits. These requirements, consistent with section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act, require a parent or caretaker who receives assistance under the program to engage in work (as defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (which do not have to be consecutive), whichever is earlier.

New York State's definition of these requirements is to require all individuals to be assessed and assigned to work, with certain limited exemptions from federally countable work activity requirements, provided that there is not an exemption from the 24 month work requirement.

As a Peer Worker, in order to get cash benefits, adult TANF recipients must participate in work activities, *with some limited exceptions*. Information regarding exemptions to work requirements can be found by visiting pages 1-3 of the TANF NYS Plan at <https://otda.ny.gov/policy/tanf/TANF2015-State-Plan.pdf>

Safety Net Assistance (SNA)

If you are a Peer Worker who is not eligible for other assistance programs, you may be eligible for Safety Net Assistance. SNA is for persons who have exceeded the 60-month limit on assistance, including: single adults, childless couples, children living apart from any adult relative, families of persons found to be abusing drugs or alcohol, families of persons refusing drug/alcohol screening, assessment, or treatment, and aliens who are eligible for temporary assistance, but who are not eligible for federal reimbursement.

Persons getting SNA, who are determined to be able to work, must comply with the work requirements described in pages 1-3 of the TANF New York State Plan at <https://otda.ny.gov/policy/tanf/TANF2015-State-Plan.pdf> to receive SNA benefits.

What counts as Emergency Assistance?

An emergency is an urgent situation or need that is necessary to be taken care of right away. Some examples of an emergency include, but are not limited to: when you are homeless; you have little or no food; you do not have fuel for heating in the cold weather period; your utilities are shut-off or are about to be shut-off, or you have a 72-hour disconnect notice; and/or if your landlord has told you that you must move or has given you eviction papers.

As a Peer Worker, if you and/or your family are going through an emergency situation, you may be eligible for Emergency Assistance. Some examples of Emergency Assistance include, but are not limited to: payment of shelter arrears (overdue/unpaid rent), payment of Domestic Violence Shelter costs; payment of overdue/unpaid utilities; payment of fuel and/or cost of fuel delivery; and. payment of Temporary Housing (Hotel/Motel) costs. Noncitizens who do not have documents that allow them to reside legally in the United States are only eligible for certain kinds of emergency benefits.

To receive Emergency Assistance Payments you **do not** have to be eligible for ongoing Temporary Assistance. Payments may be authorized when you have been determined to be eligible.

How Do I Apply for Temporary Assistance?

To find out if you are eligible to receive Temporary Assistance, including help with an emergency, you must file an application with your county Department of Social Services. If you live in one of the five boroughs of New York City, you must apply with your local Job Center.

To find the location of your local Department of Social Services, visit

<http://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/dss.asp> or call the toll-free OTDA Hotline at 1-800-342-3009

To find the location of your local Job Center, visit <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/locations/job-locations>

To learn more about the New York State Certified Peer Worker Initiative, call the HIV Education and Training Programs at 518-474-3045 or visit <https://www.hivtrainingny.org/Home/PeerCertification>

Before making any decisions about changing your employment status, contact your local Social Security Office and speak to a Claims Specialist about your specific circumstances.

