

Do You Get \$205 a Month From Welfare?

You Will Lose Your Cash Assistance Starting August 1.

Pennsylvania's new state budget *ends* the General Assistance program. General Assistance is cash welfare for people without minor children.

You will lose your cash assistance on August 1 if:

- You are not caring for a child, *and*
- You get \$102.50 from welfare two times a month.

If you are caring for a child, your cash assistance is probably safe.

Almost everyone who is currently getting General Assistance will lose their cash assistance on August 1 – even if they are disabled and can't work.

Be sure to let the welfare office know if:

- You are pregnant, OR
- You are caring for a child, OR
- You are getting benefits for a child, OR
- You are blind.

Most people in these groups can *keep* their cash assistance.

If you lose your cash assistance, you can still get food stamps. If you have no income, you should get \$200 a month in food stamps.

You should also keep your Medical Assistance. Be sure to get your doctor to complete the welfare office's medical form (called the Employability Assessment Form), whenever the welfare office needs it.

If the welfare office makes a mistake, *appeal* and get help. The back of this page tells you how to appeal.

Appealing Welfare Notices is Easy!

On the back of your welfare notice, you will see a section that looks like this:

IF YOU WISH TO APPEAL, PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE BOTTOM PORTION OF THIS FORM

Please check the box next to the type of hearing you want:

- I want a Telephone Hearing. I and my witnesses and anyone helping me will be at this phone number: _____
- I want a Telephone Hearing. I and my witnesses and anyone helping me will be at the County Assistance Office (CAO).
- 1. I want a Face-to-Face Hearing. I and my witnesses and anyone helping me will be in the hearing room with the Hearing Official and the caseworker and CAO staff.
- I want a Face-to-Face Hearing. I and my witnesses and anyone helping me will be in the hearing room with the Judge. The caseworker and other staff will be on the phone from the CAO.

For the Hearing:

- 2. Please check if you need free special help because of a hearing impairment or other disability. Describe the kind of help you need: _____
- 3. Please check if you need a free interpreter. What language? _____

I AM FILING THIS APPEAL BECAUSE: (Attach more pages if you need to.)

- I am pregnant
- I am caring for a child
- I am blind or have very poor vision
- Other (describe the reason for your appeal):

- 4. _____
Your Signature Address Telephone No. Date
- 5. _____
Your Representative's Signature Address Telephone No. Date

Helpful hints about filling out the appeal form:

1. You have the right to have a face-to-face hearing or a telephone hearing. We always recommend that people ask for a face-to-face hearing.
2. If you need special help because of a disability, be sure to check this box.
3. If you need an interpreter, be sure to check this box and write your language on the line. The welfare office will provide a free interpreter.
4. Make sure that you sign your name and write your address, phone number, and the date on this line.
5. If someone is helping you with your appeal, they can put their information on the second line.

Make a copy of your appeal for your records. Then, drop off the appeal at your welfare office and be sure to get a receipt. If you cannot get to your welfare office, send your appeal by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Even if you don't get a notice, you can still appeal. Simply write your appeal on a blank piece of paper.

If you need legal assistance, please call

Community Legal Services' Welfare Law Line at (215) 227-6485

Appeal first, then call for help!

Questions and Answers About the Ending of General Assistance (GA)

1. Will my cash assistance end?

It depends.

- If you are caring for a child who is related to you, your cash assistance should not end. You are not getting General Assistance.
- If you are *not* caring for a child, and your only income is \$205 a month from welfare, you are getting General Assistance. Your cash assistance will end August 1, 2012.

2. When will my cash assistance end?

August 1, 2012. The Department of Public Welfare will send out notices to General Assistance recipients in the first week of July. The final two GA payments will be issued in July. No GA will be paid in August or after that.

3. Is there anything I can do to keep my cash assistance?

A few people who receive General Assistance may be able to qualify for another kind of cash assistance. You should be able to keep your cash assistance if:

- You are pregnant; or
- You are caring for a child; or
- You are blind.

If you are in one of these groups, be sure to *appeal* the cutoff and tell the welfare office why. You should also call Community Legal Services at (215) 227-6485. If you are not in one of these groups, your General Assistance will end on August 1.

4. I'm getting GA for a child in my care. Is that GA being cut off too?

Maybe, but you should appeal and explain why. A child can still get cash assistance if he or she is living with a relative. You do not need to prove the relationship. Also, a child who was receiving cash assistance who moves in with a non-relative during a family crisis can keep his or her cash assistance.

5. Will I lose my food stamps?

No. You can still get food stamps. If you have no income, you should get the maximum amount, which is \$200 a month for a single person.

6. Will I lose my Medical Assistance?

No. Your Medical Assistance should continue just the same. If you are disabled, you will have to ask your doctor to fill out a form about your disability.

7. What can I do to get some income if I cannot work?

Apply for SSI, and stick with it. If you have a long-term serious disability, apply for SSI with the Social Security Administration. You can start the application by

calling (800) 772-1213. If they turn you down, be sure to appeal. This process can take 18 months or more, so start now.

8. Will I need to work to receive Medical Assistance?

No. People who have disabilities do not need to work to get MA. Some parents of minor children, who do not have disabilities and who have been getting MA without prescription drug coverage, will need to work 25 hours/week to continue to get MA.

9. Why is my General Assistance ending?

The Governor and elected officials in Harrisburg say that General Assistance needed to be ended to balance the state's budget. The GA program cost \$150 million out of the state's \$27.65 billion budget -- about half of 1%.

10. What should I do if the welfare office has made a mistake in my case?

- If you think you should still get cash assistance (because you are pregnant, blind, or living with children, or caring for a child who is not a relative), you should *appeal* the cutoff notice. Appeal right away.
- You should also appeal if you have a problem getting \$200 in food stamps or if your Medical Assistance is cut off. Appeal right away.
- **Appealing is easy.** Fill out the form on the back of the notice. Give it to the welfare office. Keep a copy and get a receipt.

11. How can I go to the doctor, or get my medicines, if I have no money for my co-pays? By law, doctors and pharmacists may not deny you medical care if you cannot afford to pay the Medical Assistance co-payment. They must still treat you or give you your medicines. The doctor or pharmacist can bill you later for the co-pay. If the pharmacist or doctor still insists on the co-pay up front, call your MA managed care plan [Keystone Mercy, for example] and complain. If you use the ACCESS card, call the Medical Assistance Call Center at (800) 537-8862, option 2, to complain.

12. Where can I get help?

You can get help with welfare rights at:

Community Legal Services

or

Philadelphia Legal Assistance

3638 N. Broad St. [at Erie]

42 S. 15th St.

In person, Mon., Wed., or Fri.

In person, Mon. or Wed., 9:00 – 11:30

between 9:00 and noon.

By phone, Tues. or Thurs. 9:30 - noon

(215) 227-2400

(215) 981-3800

Or for advice over the phone, call the Welfare Law Line at (215) 227-6485.





COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA



Losing Cash Assistance? Are you disabled? Apply for SSI !!

You may be able to get SSI if you are low income and:

- have a permanent disability that stops you from working, or
- are 65 or older or are blind.

You can be disabled because of **mental health** or **physical health** problems (or both) if they will stop you from working for at least 12 months.

How can I apply for SSI? How long does it take?

You can apply for SSI by calling **1-800-772-1213** or by going to your local Social Security Office. SSI benefits can only start after the date of your application, so **start your case as soon as possible.**

The first decision in your case should take 3 to 6 months. If you are denied the first time, appeal! It may take as long as 1½ to 2 years before you get a “final” decision in your case.

What questions will Social Security ask me when I apply?

Social Security will ask you: 1) why you can't work, and 2) what problems you have every day as a result of your disability.

Even if it is embarrassing or upsetting, it is important to tell them ALL the things it hard for you to do because of your medical problems.

They will also ask about your doctors and all of the medical treatment you have gotten in the last few years. Information from your medical providers is what will help you prove your case.

It is very important to tell Social Security the names of all of the doctors, hospitals, psychiatrists, physical therapists and mental health centers where you have been treated.

If you have learning problems or were in special classes in school, you should also tell Social Security about this.

What should I bring with me when I apply?

Do some homework to put yourself in the best position when you go in to Social Security. When you apply, try and bring:

- ✓ a list of your doctors, therapists and psychiatrists and their phone numbers and addresses
– business cards from your doctors are great;

- ✓ a list of all the medications you take (your drug store might be able to print a list for you) or the bottles of medication;
- ✓ dates when you have been in the hospital and/or the Emergency Room over the past 5 years and which hospital..

* If you don't have some or all of this information, you can still apply! *

How else can I help my SSI case?

Go to your doctors **regularly** and follow your doctors' advice.

Be sure to talk to your **doctors** about **all** of the medical problems you are having. If you do not talk to your doctors about your problems, they cannot help you.

If you have medical problems that you are not seeing a doctor about, go to the doctor. If you feel depressed or anxious, get treatment for those conditions.

If your doctor or the Social Security office wants you to go to a special doctor or get special tests, do what they ask as soon as possible.

Can I get SSI based on my addiction?

You cannot get SSI if the reason you are disabled is because of current drug or alcohol use.

You can get SSI even if you are currently using drugs or alcohol if you are disabled by some other physical or mental problem.

You can also get SSI if the reason you are disabled is because of the permanent effects of past drug use (such as brain damage caused by long term drug use or cirrhosis caused by alcohol), as long as the disability will not go away if you are not drinking or using drugs.

It is always better for you and your SSI case for you to remain sober.

Can I get SSI if I have a criminal record?

Yes. You can get SSI even if you have a criminal record, including most kinds of warrants. You cannot get SSI while you are incarcerated.

What if Social Security turns me down?

If you are turned down, **appeal your case!!!** If you appeal, get a lawyer as soon as possible.

Do not give up!!!