

**Benefits Plus**  
**Learning Center**  
Solving the Public Benefit Puzzle



# RESOURCES & REFERRALS

for New Yorkers with  
Disabilities



# Overview

1. Rights & Accommodations
2. Advocacy
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6. Healthcare

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8. Assistive Devices & Services
9. Children and Teens
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# Note

Programs specify qualifying conditions in their eligibility guidelines. Additionally, definitions of disability vary by program and in legislation.



# **Rights & Accommodations**



# Rights

“Pursuant to the American with Disabilities Act and the New York State and New York City Human Rights Laws, ***individuals with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations necessary to enable them to participate in programs, services and activities.***” —NYC Law Department

***“Our city is at its best when it draws on the abilities of all its residents.*** Providing reasonable accommodations and creating accessible spaces also benefits all New Yorkers [...]” —NYC Commission on Human Rights

# Rights

- **Federal**
  - **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**: Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in federally-funded programs and activities. (Promotes equal access.)
  - **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1975)**: This federal law requires schools to provide children with disabilities with special education services through high school or until they turn 21 (whichever comes first).
  - **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**: Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.
- **New York State Human Rights Law**: Prohibits discrimination based on “age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, marital status or disability” in housing, education, employment, credit, and access to public accommodations.
- **New York City Human Rights Law**: Prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s disability in a variety of settings (at work, in public spaces, and in homes) and advances equal and independent access.

Learn more: OPWDD – [Milestones in the Disability Rights Movement](#)

# Accommodations

**Key points from the NYC Commission on Human Rights Fact Sheet (available in multiple languages):**

- **Housing providers, employers, and business owners are required to provide accommodations to facilitate equal use and rights for people with disabilities**—this may require policy changes and/or adjustments to physical spaces. They generally must cover the cost unless it causes an “undue hardship.”
- **Service animals can accompany owners in public spaces** without bearing visible proof or documentation regarding their function.

# Accommodations

**Requesting a reasonable accommodation from HRA:** Request an accommodation at any HRA location, via OneNumber, or through any HRA program/service. A request can also be made to the Office of Constituent Affairs by email, mail, or fax.

Assistance **requesting a reasonable accommodation from a landlord:** The Human Rights Commission's Project Equal Access helps tenants with disabilities and landlords find common ground on reasonable accommodation requests. If needed, the case can be referred to the Law Enforcement Bureau and a formal complaint can be made.

**Disclosing a disability and requesting an accommodation in the workplace:** The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) offers a helpful guide. JAN is a service of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy/ODEP.



# Advocacy



# Advocacy Assistance

## LEGAL

### Disability Rights NY

Provides legal and advocacy services to people with disabilities; protects civil and legal rights; identifies rights violations.

### Mobilization for Justice

Helps address legal issues related to disability rights. Assists with Access-a-Ride enrollment, housing, and medical issues.

## SHELTER RESIDENTS

### Coalition for the Homeless

Has a crisis intervention hotline to assist people in shelters with reasonable accommodations from city and state agencies; addresses questions; assists with securing permanent supportive housing (Keys Program).

## ADULTS/ ALL AGES

### Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY)

Offers benefits counseling, independent living skills training, advocacy, education, transition from nursing homes, and employment assistance.

## FAMILIES & YOUTH

### IncludeNYC

Helps families with children and youth with disabilities through education, skill-building, system and service navigation, and advocacy (individual and systemic).

## STUDENTS

### Advocates for Children

Helps families learn about special education evaluations, IEPs, Section 504, impartial hearings, and assistive technology.

# Submitting a Complaint

NYC COMMISSION  
ON HUMAN RIGHTS

For **violations of NYC Human Rights Law** – manages complaints of discrimination at home, at work, in school, and in public places.

NYS DIVISION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS

For **violations of NYS Human Rights Law** – manages complaints of discrimination at home, at work, in school, and in public places.

MTA

**MTA transportation complaints** regarding various modes of transportation.

INDEPENDENT  
CONSUMER  
ADVOCACY  
NETWORK (ICAN).

New York State Ombudsprogram for **people with Medicaid who need long term care or behavioral health services.**

# Submitting a Complaint

OMBUDSMAN  
PROGRAM OF THE  
NY OFFICE FOR THE  
AGING

Addresses concerns about health, safety, welfare, human and civil rights of **people living in nursing homes and adult care facilities.**

INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES OMBUDSPROGRAM (IDDO)

Operates a helpline for questions or service issues related to the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (**OPWDD**).

OFFICE OF DISABILITY AFFAIRS

Manages **HRA disability-related** discrimination complaints.

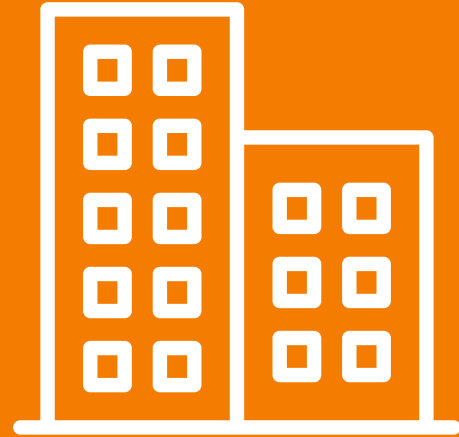
NYS JUSTICE CENTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Operates the Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR), a confidential, toll-free hotline to report alleged abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of **people with special needs.**



# **Housing & Utilities**





# Housing Resources

**Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program (DRIE)**: Freezes rent in affordable housing for eligible individuals.

**One-Shot Deals for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients - Emergency Assistance to Adults (EAA)**: OSDs for housing arrears do not require repayment for SSI recipients.

NYS **Council on Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiatives**: Independent living housing resources.

**Affordable Housing Lottery**: HPD and HDC's affordable housing projects designate 7% of units for applicants with disabilities.

**Housing Ambassadors**: CBOs that help people apply for affordable housing (some specialize in helping people with disabilities).

**Center for Independence for the Disabled NY**: Helps people with disabilities understand how to search for housing.

**Fair Housing Justice Center - Adele Friedman Housing Accessibility Fund**: Home modification assistance program.

**Rental Assistance and Home Modification Resources**: NYC and NYS list

## **GUIDES:**

NYC MOPD Access Housing Guide (2020): Housing access guide for people with disabilities.

NYC HPD Affordable Housing Guide for Applicants with Disabilities (2022): Housing guide for people with disabilities.

New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation Housing Resource Guide (2025) for People with I/DD



# Utility Assistance

**Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**: Helps low-income households pay the cost of heating and cooling their homes. The household must include a child under 6, a person 60 or older, or a person who is permanently disabled.

**Energy Share** (administered by HeartShare): Assists low-income customers facing a ConEd utility shutoff. Customers qualify for up to \$300 toward their energy bills annually. Heartshare also offers National Grid grants.

**Energy Affordability Program (EAP)**: Monthly energy bill discounts from electric and gas utility companies for low-income customers.

**One-Shot Deals for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients**: Emergency Assistance to Adults (EAA): OSDs for utility arrears do not require repayment for SSI recipients.

**Catholic Charities**: May be able to provide utility assistance.

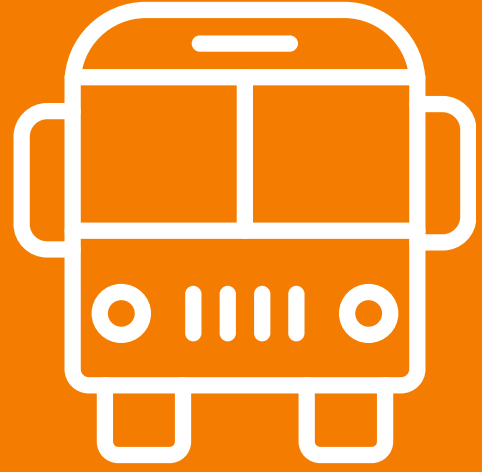


**Note: There are protections from utility shutoffs for households in which members have a serious medical condition or are using life sustaining equipment.** For elderly, blind, and disabled customers, utility companies must make special efforts to contact residents to determine ways to avoid health and safety issues. [Learn more](#) about the regulation.



# Transportation





# Transportation

## **Reduced Fare Program on Subways, Buses, Trains**

Reduced fares for people 65+ and those with disabilities on NYC subways and buses, and LIRR and MetroNorth trains. List of [ADA accessible NYC Transit, LIRR, and Metro North stations](#). Check for elevator and escalator [status](#) updates.

## **MetroNorth and LIRR Care Programs**

Call in advance of trips if assistance is needed to get on and off trains.

## **Project CART - NY Foundation for Senior Citizens**

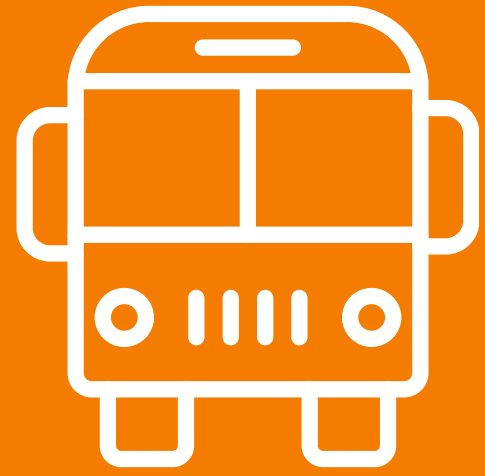
Shuttle services for adults age 60+ (can accommodate wheelchairs) in Manhattan Community Districts 1-8. \$1 suggested donation per ride.

## **Access-A-Ride shared ride program**

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Paratransit Service provides public transportation via a range of vehicles for the same fare as public transit and is available 24/7 throughout the year. One guest can accompany on each trip. It is possible to link a Fair Fares account to Access-A-Ride account to get 50% off AAR trips. [Paratransit enrollment and appeal guide](#).

## **NYC Ferry**

Ferry Discount Program offers a reduced fare program for people with disabilities.



# Transportation

## Parking Permit

NY State and City off-street parking space permits for people with disabilities

## Medicaid Transportation

Transportation to and from non-emergency medical appointments.

## Individual Disability Exemption Plan

Provides an exemption from the Congestion Relief Zone toll.

## Special Transportation for Students

Based on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), students can receive transportation accommodations, such as paraprofessionals on bus, interpreter, service animal, car seats

**Transportation Rights:** This Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS) video clarifies the rights of people with disabilities on public transportation.



**Food**



# Home-Delivered Food for Eligible Medicaid Recipients

**Enhanced Health-Related Social Needs Services** (NYHER 1115 Waiver Amendment, effective until March 31, 2027): **Provide medically-tailored home-delivered meals, food boxes, nutrition vouchers, and pantry stocking.** Social Care Network Navigators, hospitals, Federally-Qualified Health Center providers, behavioral health providers, health-related social needs service providers, Health Homes (groups of providers that coordinate care), etc. can screen for eligibility.

Medicaid Member Eligibility (qualifying conditions):

- Substance use disorder and/or serious mental illness
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Pregnant or postpartum individuals
- Recently released from incarceration and have chronic health condition(s)
- Children under 18 with select chronic health conditions
- Frequent health care users (e.g., emergency room and hospital stays)
- Enrolled in a Health Home



# Congregate Meals

## NYC DOE Summer Meals Program

In addition to serving people 18 and younger, the program is also **open to people with disabilities of any age who are in a special education program.**

Does not require ID or an application.

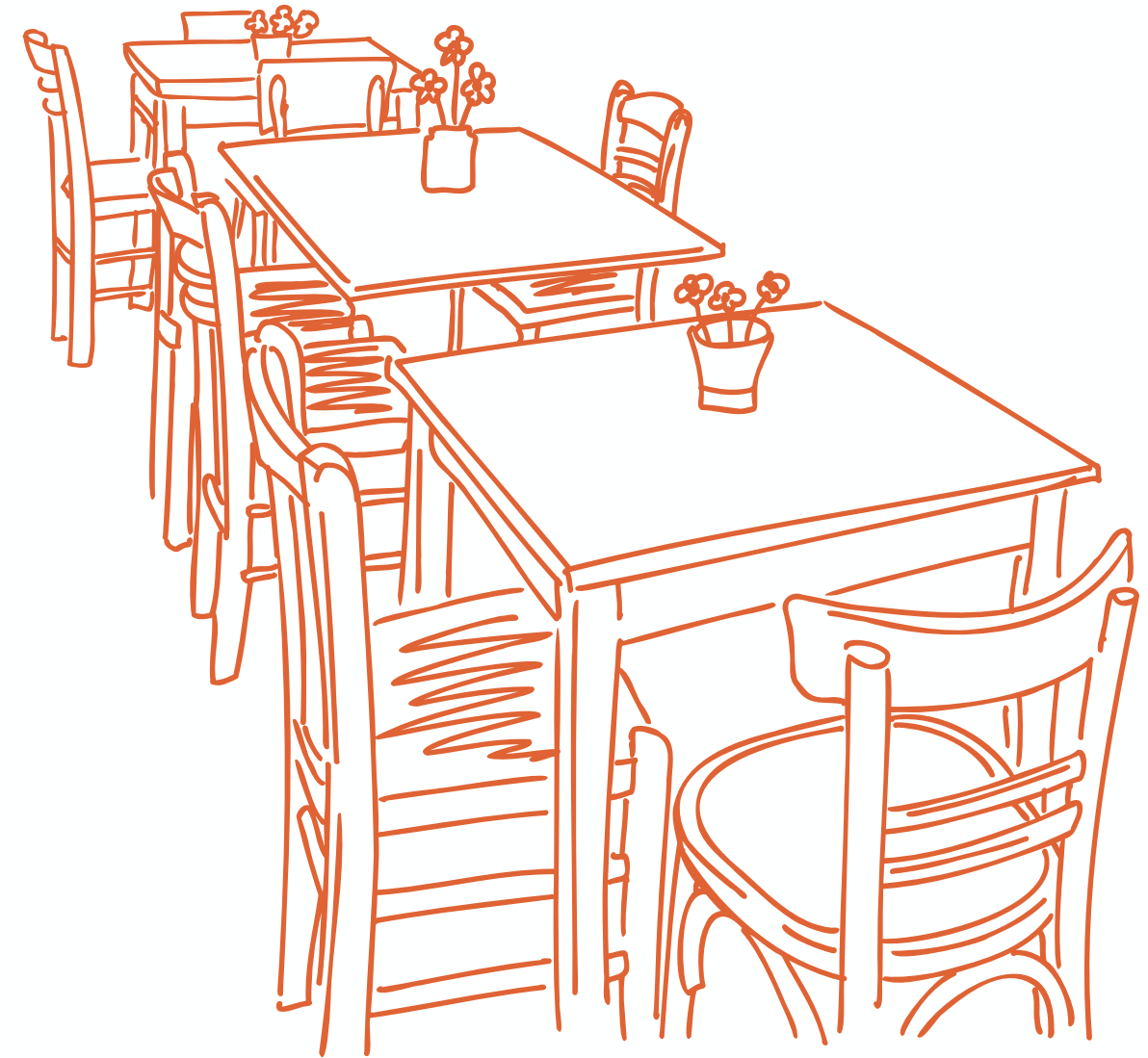
## Food Services at Older Adult Centers (OACs)

Free and open to all 60 and older. OACs provide meals that are nutritious and culturally aligned. **If a person with a disability younger than 60 is living with the older adult, they may join the older adult for meals.** When a community dining site is open in a housing complex for older adults (primarily), people with disabilities who live there may get meals, as well.

May offer some or all of the below. Look up individual OAC offerings:

- Congregate breakfast
- Congregate lunch
- Congregate dinner
- Grab-and-go meals
- Home-delivered meals

Transportation services may include pick up and drop off to the OAC.



# Home-Delivered Meals

## **Citymeals on Wheels Home-Delivered Meals**

- Age 60 or older; and
- Physically and/or mentally disabled and in need of assistance; and
- Unable to prepare nutritious meals or no one can do so for them; and
- Able to live safely at home if services are provided. There are no immigration or financial requirements.

## **God's Love We Deliver**

Medically-tailored home-delivered meals.

- Adults & children living with a chronic or life-altering illness (including ALS and Parkinson's disease) who have difficulty cooking and shopping for food.
- U.S. Military servicemembers with a chronic disease, severe illness, mental health condition and/or substance use challenge



# Transporting Groceries

## **Helping Hands for the Disabled**

Offers assistance obtaining food from pantries. Membership open to people 18 or older with documented disabilities that are considered significant. Members submit a copy of their Access-A-Ride card, certificate of blindness, or a letter from their doctor. Annual dues: \$20. Special Food Pantry: 718-606-9712 for members to ask that a volunteer picks up food from a local pantry or takes the client to the pantry. They will need to provide the pantry name, address, and phone number, and determine what documents are needed for pantry eligibility.

## **Invisible Hands Commonpoint Queens**

Grocery shopping and delivery assistance from volunteers for those who are elderly, immunocompromised, sick, or unable to shop for food. Does not deliver to hospitals or shelters. Clients can arrange payment or indicate inability to pay to determine if support is possible.

## **River Fund Homebound Independence Program** (Queens)

Offers bi-weekly grocery delivery to elderly and disabled individuals. Annual assessment and enrollment.

## **Holy Cross Brooklyn Outreach Center** (Brooklyn)

Delivers groceries and homemade food to older adults, people with disabilities, and families living below the Federal Poverty Level.





# Healthcare





# Healthcare Support

## **Facilitated Enrollment for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled Program (FE-ABD)**

**FE-ABD:** New York State-sponsored public health insurance application assistance program for people who are aged, blind or disabled. Educates and assists New Yorkers with enrolling in, and using, public health insurance programs.

**Community Health Advocates (CHA)**: Helps New Yorkers navigate the complex health care system (public or private coverage). CHA helps consumers find and navigate health coverage or access free or low-cost, solve billing issues, understand health care reform and their health care rights.

**Independent Consumer Advocacy Network (ICAN)**: New York State Ombudsprogram for people with Medicaid who need long term care or behavioral health services. Assists with enrolling in, and using, managed care plans that cover long term care or behavioral health services.

**Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP)**: Assists NYC residents with health care access and insurance needs (Medicaid, Medicare, Essential Plan, Child Health Plus, commercial, or employer-based insurance). Explains complex coverage rules, helps appeal insurance denials for care, and resolve cost of care issues.

*These programs are led by the Community Service Society.*



# Finances



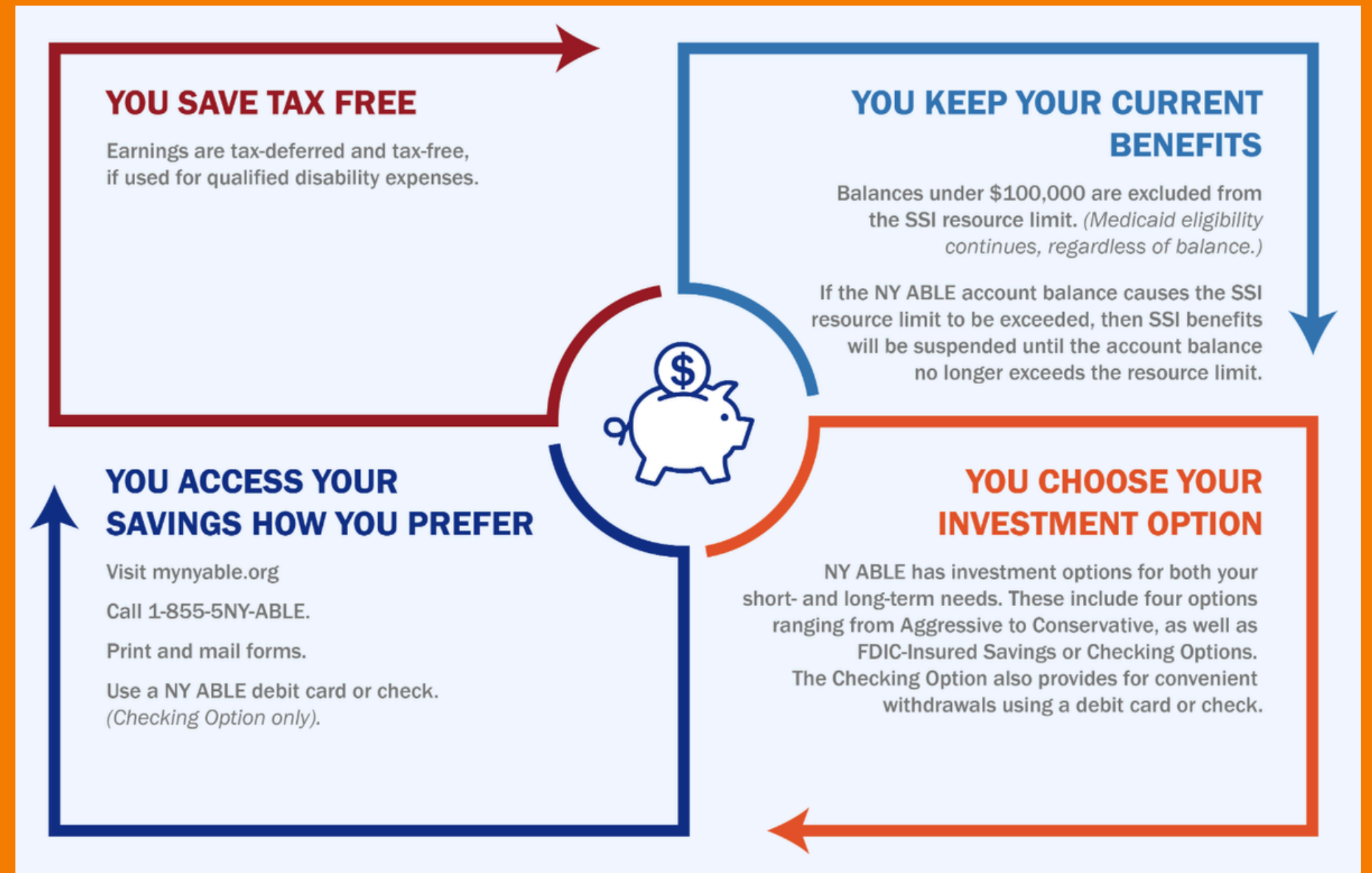
# NY ABLE Program

People with disabilities can save for disability-related costs without risking the loss of SSI or Medicaid benefits. Balances under \$100,000 are excluded from the SSI resource limit. Medicaid and SSDI eligibility are not affected by the balance.

*\*Please note: Some services incur fees, and for those who choose to invest, risk is involved.*

## Qualified Expenses:

- Education
- Housing
- Transportation
- Employment training and support
- Assistive technology and related services
- Personal support services
- Health
- Prevention and wellness
- Financial management and administrative services
- Legal fees
- Expenses for ABLE account oversight and monitoring
- Funeral and burial



Source: <https://www.mynyable.org/home/what-is-ny-able/able-basics.html>

\*More information: 855-5NY-ABLE (855-569-2253), Disclosure Booklet and Participation Agreement

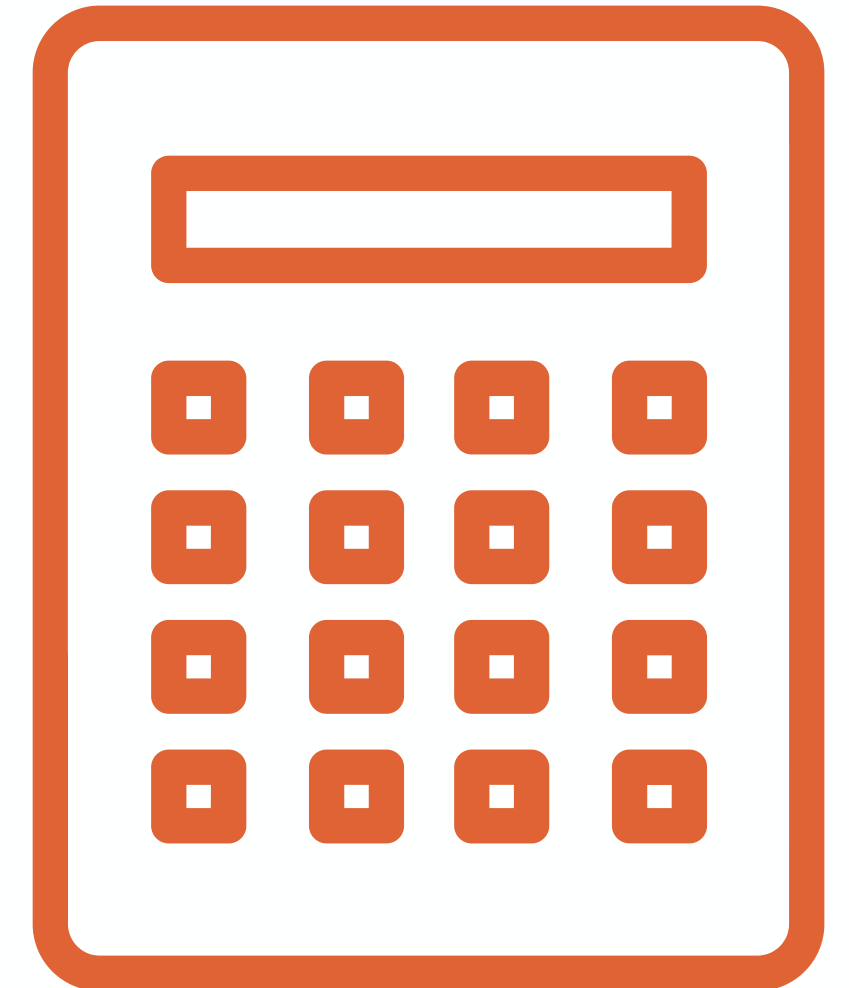
# Income Supports

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**: Federal program that provides monthly payments to older adults and people with a qualifying disability whose income and resources are very limited.

**Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**: Federal program that provides monthly payments to people who cannot work due to a long-term disability. Recipients must have a sufficient work history and a qualifying disability.

**Programs for Veterans with Disabilities**: There are various forms of compensation and discounts through federal and state programs.

**NYC Financial Empowerment Centers**: Personalized, free financial guidance that includes disability benefits, budgeting, saving, etc.



# Employment Support

**NYC At Work:** Employment program that connects people with disabilities to jobs and internships with public and private sector partners.

**NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD):** Provides Employment Path, Prevocational Services, Employment Training and Supportive Employment services.

**New York State Department of Labor (DOL) Career Services:** Career services for people with disabilities (career centers, resource coordinators, etc.).

**AHRC NYC's Employment Preparation Programs:** Provides internships or community work experiences for people with disabilities. This is a collaboration with the New York State Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Service – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB).



# Employment Support

**ACCESS-VR**: Vocational rehabilitation services to secure employment and support independent living for people with disabilities (except legal blindness, as the NYS Commission for the Blind offers support).

**Best Buddies Job Program**: Employment and leadership development program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Helps secure job placements.

**Job PATH NYC**: Helps people with autism and other developmental disabilities find jobs, live in their own homes and become involved in community life.



**Scholarships for CUNY  
students with disabilities**

**Scholarships for students  
with developmental  
disabilities**

**NYSILC – Pat Figueroa  
Scholarship for adults 18 to  
28 with disabilities who  
demonstrate leadership  
potential**

***Additional scholarships can be  
searched for based on type of  
disability.***





# **Assistive Devices & Services**



# Assistive Devices & Services

Individuals with Medicaid or other forms of health insurance may be able to get coverage for the assistive devices they need for activities of daily life. **Here are some additional referrals that include essential devices as well as those for recreational purposes:**

**Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID)**: Federally-funded program that provides a range of assistive technology (eating, bathing, and mobility equipment, communication devices, etc.). Provides device loans and hands-on training.

**NYC Public Schools**: Assistive technology requests can be made to help children communicate, participate in programs, and do schoolwork

## **National Federation of the Blind**

- Free white canes every 6 months; Early Explorers - Cane Travel Skills program for kids.
- Free slate and stylus (Braille-writing device)

## **Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library**

- Technology workshops
- Braille books and free Refreshable Braille Displays (Braille E-readers)
- Audiobook recording; Bookshare app to read books aloud

**Wheeling Forward**: Provides custom power and manual wheelchairs; offers adaptive sports experiences (skate, surf, water skiing). (Also supports nursing home transition, provides advocacy, and offers CUNY scholarships.)

**McLindon Family Foundation** - Adaptive bikes for children and young adults with special needs (including Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, Batten Disease, Charge Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Hydrocephalus, Autism, and more).

**Achilles**: Free weekly adaptive cycling program in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens (5/25-early November). Tandem bike or hand-cycle bikes can be reserved and guides are available to assist. Grant listing for adaptive running and travel equipment available.



# Children & Teens





# Support and Care Coordination

**Home & Community Care:** Families with children with disabilities who have Medicaid can connect with a Health Home Care Management agency (HHCM) to see if they are eligible for Children's Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). The program provides a comprehensive care plan (includes medical, behavioral health, community and social services at home and in the community).

**The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) program at NYC**

**Department of Health:** Offers a personalized list of health and community resources and follow-up. The program also assists eligible families with medical bills for children (birth to 21) with severe chronic illnesses and/or physical disabilities. Services are offered in the client's preferred language and there are no immigration status requirements.

**SKIP of New York:** SKIP helps medically fragile and/or developmentally disabled children transition (through connection to services and equipment) from hospitals and institutions to stay at home with their families; enrollment typically takes 12 to 18 months.

**New Alternatives for Children:** Provides integrated health and social services via intense case management for children with disabilities.

**NYS OCFS HEARS Family Line (Help, Empower, Advocate, Reassure and Support):** Contact the HEARS warmline to receive a tailored list of community resources for low-income families. Flyer available in multiple languages.

**NYS Help Hub for Families:** Helps caretakers for newborns through 22-year-olds find health, education, human services, and disability information.

**American Society for Deaf Children:** Offers resources, mentoring, and advocacy in support of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth; promotes language/communication access.



# Educational and Enrichment Programs

**Reduced-Fee Tickets to Museums:** Several museums offer discounted tickets for people with disabilities.

**Best Buddies:** One-to-one friendship program for children in elementary, middle, and high school to connect with peers in New York. Pairs individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

**Braille Reading Pals Club:** Children who are blind learn how to read through using Braille. Includes a plush pal, book, worksheets, and more.

**Achilles Kids:** Program to run, walk, or cycle in NYC parks. Serves children with the following conditions: blindness or low vision; cognitive, developmental, and intellectual disabilities; limb difference; muscular dystrophy; cerebral palsy; spinal cord injuries; traumatic brain injuries.

View the most recent **Include NYC Fair partner listing** to view a **wide variety of programs** (camps, recreational activities, dance programs, music programs, art programs, etc.).



**All Ages**





# Programs and Services

**Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)**: Coordinates a wide range of services through a network of nonprofits for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities (including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, Prader-Willi syndrome and other neurological impairments). Connect with the regional Front Door Office to receive supports ([guide](#) available in multiple languages).

**NY Connects**: Information about long-term services and supports (personal care services, education and counseling, behavioral health, developmental supports, health and wellness) for people of all ages with any type of disability in a variety of settings (also supports caregivers). Directory available and program staff can provide referrals for individuals, families, caregivers, and professionals. Provides full enrollment and recertification support for HRA and SSA-administered programs **(including SSI and SSDI)**. **This is a long-term resource to individuals; cases can remain open.**

**Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc.**: Founded and led by people with developmental disabilities. Empowers people with developmental disabilities to engage in self- and systems-advocacy. Offers rights resources, transportation trainings, and more.

**New York State Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Office Resources**: Provides information on a range of services and programs (ASL interpreters, educational programs, hearing aid programs).



# Programs and Services

**ADAPT Community Network:** ADAPT provides programs and services (related to technology, housing, work, health, education, etc.) for people with disabilities.

**AHRC NYC:** Advocates for people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities. Provides a range of services (day services, in-home supports, etc.)

**Advocacy Organizations:** City listing of advocacy organizations that focus on the rights of people with disabilities.

**Canine Companions:** Service dogs can assist people of all ages with tasks of daily living. Applicants must be 18 or older.

**HRA and DHS American Sign Language (ASL) Services:** Individuals within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community can reach out to the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to connect to services and get information. There is a video calling system that those who use ASL can utilize.



# Caregivers





# Supports

**NY Foundation for Senior Citizens Respite Care**: Program for NYC caregivers of people over 60 who don't have Medicaid coverage.

**NYC Aging - Caregiver Programs**: Assists caregivers of older adults via a wide range of supports (counseling, respite, support groups, etc.). For more information, call 212-AGING-NYC (212-244-6469), view the **Services Finder**, and check out the **list** of neighborhood programs.

**New York State's Kinship Navigator**: Learn more about the services that are available to people (not parents) who support children in need of care. Provides information on financial assistance, legal referrals, etc.

**NYS Respite and Caregiving Coalition**: Offers respite resources including a Respite Voucher Program giving family caregivers up to \$600 in reimbursement for respite services. Open to caregivers of adults and children with a long-term chronic condition. (NYS Caregiver Guide)

**VISIONS**: Free caregiver support services for those who provide unpaid care to blind or visually-impaired individuals 60 years old or older. Offer counseling, support groups, and respite services.

**YAI**: In-home and on-site respite services for caregivers for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)

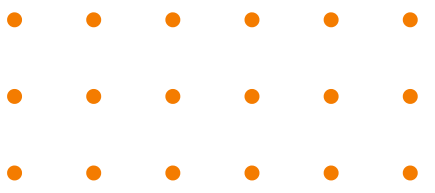
**Parent to Parent**: Offers a one-to-one match of an experienced parent with a referred parent; provides emotional support, information, and resources.

**Paid Caretaking via the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP)**: While a parent cannot be a paid caregiver to their child under age 21 through CDPAP, another family member can.



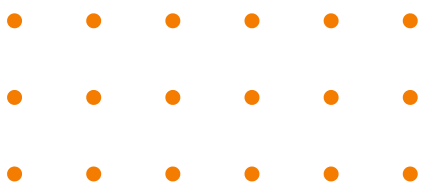
# **Other Resources & Services**





**CUNY**

Every CUNY campus has an Office of Disability Services, that provides reasonable accommodations and support services for students with disabilities.



# Library Resources for People with Disabilities

- [New York Public Library](#)
- [Queens Public Library](#)
- [Brooklyn Public Library](#)

**Thank You**