



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 government benefit and housing programs. This catalog provides a listing and description of the Learning Center's courses.



Our courses range from basic to advanced. Basic courses provide a foundation to understanding the topic area and cover eligibility criteria. Advanced courses aim to provide additional rules of the program, as well as details on navigating the program. Advanced courses are labeled below.

Accessing Courses

Professionals can register and attend select courses during our quarterly training series here:

<https://bplc.cssny.org/home/training>.

Alternatively, any of our course can be scheduled at any time, customized, and conducted for large groups (25-30 people). If you are interested, please contact Leslie Bailey at lbailey@cssny.org for associated fees.

Continuing Education

Our courses are approved for continuing education to the following disciplines in New York State:

- **Licensed Social Workers:** 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.
- **Licensed Mental Health Counselors:** Community Service Society of New York, Benefits Plus Learning Center is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Mental Health Practitioners as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed mental health counselors #MHC-0247.

**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

Currently, all courses are offered via webinar on the “Go to Webinar” platform ([click here for a Go To Webinar preview](#)). Our courses range from basic to advanced topic areas. Customization is available.

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

Training Courses

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

I. Introduction to Government Benefit Programs

A. Benefits 101

Contact Hours: 2.0

This course provides a foundation for individuals working with public benefits for the first time. We discuss elements essential to understanding public benefit and housing programs, including programs that require a work history vs. programs that have income and resource requirements, discussing eligibility terms the government uses and how citizenship/immigration factors into benefit eligibility.

We will look at how to conduct a benefit screening for families and individuals, define what constitutes a household, and review the BPLC Benefit Tools website to access free advocacy and resource materials. Case examples and best practices to bring back to the work setting are included throughout the course. **Note: The course's focus is to introduce concepts; we do not cover all eligibility criteria of programs.**

Target Audience: Social service professionals (which include intake workers, community health workers or volunteers) with little to no understanding of public benefit programs.

B. Benefits 201 - Roadmap to Accessing Programs and Services*

**This course is specifically designed for subscribers to [Benefits Plus Online](#).*

As a subscriber you have access to over 80 federal, state, and local benefit programs. These programs have different eligibility criteria, different rules about what income counts, and different immigration criteria. In this course, users will learn about all the programs contained in Benefits Plus Online, what programs provide immediate assistance in emergency situations, what programs provide an ongoing need. We will explore housing subsidies available and show where that information can be found and discuss what “disabled” means in the world of public benefits. Lastly, users will learn how to use special features search as our main search feature and our new Population Search and more.

Target Audience: *Benefits Plus Online* users who have recently established an account or users who need a refresher and learn about new features.

C. An Overview of Cash Benefit Programs

Contact Hours: 2.0

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

- Cash Assistance
- SSI
- Social Security Disability Insurance

Learn the basics of eligibility & application for each benefit, as well as key concepts. We will review categories of eligibility, 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!*

D. Overview of Public Health Insurance Programs

Contact Hours: 2.0

Learn the different types of health insurance programs available to New Yorkers. The class will incorporate recent expansions to programs, expected changes to the programs, and what your clients should expect as the public health emergency “unwinds.”

Programs included in this course are:

- Medicaid (MAGI & Non-MAGI), including a quick mention of the Spenddown program
- Essential Plan
- Child Health Plus
- Qualified Health Plans (QHP)
- Medicare

We will review health insurance terminology and discuss the eligibility criteria for each program, as well as where to apply. Also included are health coverage options for those who are uninsured or underinsured.

Target Audience: *Social service professionals looking to learn about public health insurance options for low-income households and for those who may need a refresher!*

E. Overview of Affordable Housing Options

Contact 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 households seeking affordable housing options.*

F. The Basics of Welfare Advocacy for Non-Attorneys

Contact Hours: 2.0

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. Included are helpful resources, agency contacts, and a brief description of the fair hearing process.

Note: The course will focus on Cash Assistance and SNAP advocacy.

Target Audience: *Social service professionals seeking to learn advocacy strategies for Cash Assistance and SNAP applicants/recipients.*

II. Cash Benefits

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

Contact 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, and the eligibility criteria for SSI and SSDI. We will review elements in the application process and discuss strategies to avoid delays in the application process.

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 - Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.5

This advanced course will cover 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 a brief description of Ticket to Work Provisions.

Eligibility and application for SSI/SSDI is NOT included in this course. **The Nuts and Bolts of SSI and SSDI is a recommended prerequisite.**

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

C. Cash Assistance for Beginners

Contact Hours: 2.0

The Cash Assistance (CA) program is an income support program of last resort for many low-income families and individuals in need. There are complicated rules to determine who is included as part of a household and how much income will count towards eligibility. We will simplify these eligibility rules for beginners and also cover how the CA grant is structured and how much is allocated for rent, immigration criteria, and how to calculate a household's benefit amount (the standard of need) when there is income.

In addition, NYS implemented several changes to the CA program including setting a maximum waiting period of 30 days for all applications, the elimination of the 185%

Standard of Need eligibility test and Federal Poverty Level test, changes in the earned income disregard, changes in resource limits and more!

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

D. Cash Assistance for Working Households - Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Find out what happens when households on Cash Assistance find paid employment and what happens to their cash grant. Learn about reporting requirements, how earnings are budgeted, and overpayment procedures.

Learn what happens when families with children lose access to Cash Assistance and what happens to their Medicaid, childcare, and SNAP benefits.

Eligibility and application for Cash Assistance is NOT included in this course. **Cash Assistance for Beginners is a recommended prerequisite.**

Target Audience: *Social service and legal professionals with knowledge of Cash Assistance who want to help Cash Assistance recipients who return to work.*

E. Accessing Cash Assistance for Young Adults (under 21) – Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Find out how the Human Resource Administration (HRA) handles a Cash Assistance case when a young adult is living with their parents/guardian, when one is pregnant, and when they move 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 they are told they cannot apply. **Cash Assistance for Beginners is a recommended prerequisite.**

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

F. One Shot Deals: Obtaining Emergency Assistance

Contact 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.*

III. Food Programs

A. Checking Out the SNAP Program

Contact 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. Maximizing SNAP Benefits to Eligible Households - Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Federal legislation passed at the end of 2022 forced every state to end the supplemental benefits that were issued monthly to aid New Yorkers in the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. This course takes a closer look at the SNAP budgeting process and how to maximize benefits for older adults and those on disability benefits. We will also cover immigrant budgeting when there are members who meet the SNAP requirement and those who do not. *Please note this course will NOT go into immigrant's eligibility for SNAP, for that information see Checking Out the SNAP Program.* We will have interactive case examples and use a SNAP budgeting worksheet for all case examples and Q&A.

This is an advanced course, eligibility and application for SNAP is NOT covered. **Checking Out the SNAP Program is a recommended prerequisite.**

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

C. Fighting Hunger: Shopping for Food Programs

Contact 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.*

IV. Health

A. Medicaid 101: MAGI and Non-MAGI Medicaid

Contact Hours: 2.0

Medicaid has two sets of eligibility guidelines, budgeting income and application procedures depending on the household's demographics. Learn who qualifies and how to apply on the NY State of Health Marketplace, as well as who qualifies and how to apply at the local Medicaid office. Find out which type of managed care plans Medicaid applicants/recipients must enroll in to access Medicaid benefits.

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. Medicaid Spenddown - Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Learn how the Medicaid Spenddown program works, who is eligible, how to calculate the spenddown amount, and how to apply for and renew Medicaid spenddown. Learn how applicants can use retroactive medical bills when first applying, whether they are paid bills or unpaid bills. Also covered is how to access hospital services while on spenddown.

Eligibility and application for Medicaid is NOT included in this course. **Medicaid 101 is a recommended prerequisite.**

Target Audience: *Health and social service professionals seeking an understanding of Spenddown and how to best help clients maximize the benefit.*

C. Health Options for New Yorkers – Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Learn about additional health coverage options available to those with higher incomes and certain individuals in New York who do not qualify for needs-based health programs. The following program will be covered:

- Qualified Health Plans (QHP)
- Health Options for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Health programs for the uninsured, including H+H Options and NYC Care

We will discuss eligibility criteria including household size and immigrants' eligibility, as well as enrollment. In addition, we will discuss how these benefits coordinate with other coverage.

Target Audience: *Health and social service professionals seeking other health coverage options for clients with higher incomes and those who are working with people living with HIV/AIDS.*

D. The A, B, C's and D's of Medicare

Contact Hours: 2.0

Medicare Part A, Part B, Part D – and what's Part C? It is important to have a basic understanding of Medicare to better assist Medicare beneficiaries. This course will cover the different parts of Medicare, as well as choices in the Medicare program – Original Medicare or Medicare Advantage – and the pros and cons of each. We will discuss the Medicare enrollment periods, and how and when to make plan changes. Finally, we will learn about the cost structure for Medicare-covered services, and programs to assist with these costs.

Target Audience: *Health and social service professionals seeking a basic overview of Medicare and how to best help clients maximize the benefit.*

E. Coordination of Medicare and Medicaid – Advanced

Contact Hours: 2.0

Dual eligibles are those who have both Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Learn about how Medicare and Medicaid coverage work together, as well as instances when they do not, and coverage options for “dual eligibles.” Covered in this course is a brief overview of Medicare and Medicaid, how dual eligibles can access their health coverage – managed care/fee-for-service. We will also discuss other benefits afforded to dual eligibles including the Medicare Savings Program and Extra Help.

Eligibility and application for Medicare/Medicaid is NOT included in this course. **Medicaid 101 and The A, B, C and D's of Medicare is a recommended prerequisite.**

Target Audience: *Health and social service professionals with knowledge of Medicaid and Medicare who want to know how best to assist those who are dually eligible maximize their health coverage.*

V. Housing

A. Housing Court: Nonpayment Eviction Cases & Remaining Tenant Protections

Contact 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 protections 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. Supportive Housing & NYC Rental Assistance Programs

Contact 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 rental assistance 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 households seeking affordable housing options.*

C. Overview of NYCHA

Contact Hours: 2.0

Learn about NYC's Public Housing program under the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). 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.

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

D. Combing Through NYCHA's Policies and Procedures

Contact 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 for family members leaving prison or jail), 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

Contact Hours: 2.0

Learn about the two programs that 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.*

F. Coordination Between Cash Assistance and the FHEPS Program - Advanced
Contact Hours: 2.0

The Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (FHEPS) is a rental subsidy for families with children in NYC who are on Cash Assistance (CA). In this course, we will briefly review key elements of the CA program, including how household size is determined and how income is calculated. We will cover FHEPS eligibility and the FHEPS benefit package, including how the FHEPS subsidy and rent share are calculated.

Please note, this course will not cover how to fill out a FHEPS application or all eligibility factors of the Cash Assistance program. **Cash Assistance for Beginners is a recommended prerequisite for all eligibility factors of the Cash Assistance program.**

Target Audience: *Social service and legal professionals with knowledge of Cash Assistance who want to help Cash Assistance recipients understand the FHEPS program.*

VI. Immigrants' Access

A. Immigrants' Access to Public Benefits and Housing Programs – Advanced
Contact Hours: 3.0

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.

We will explain what “qualified aliens” and “Person Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL) are. We will cover the immigration criteria for:

- Cash Assistance
- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Essential Plan
- Child Health Plus
- Medicare
- Federal Housing Programs
- NYS and NYC Housing Lotteries
- NYC Rental Assistance Programs and Shelter System

(Programs mentioned above have other eligibility criteria which we will not review in this course.)

We will introduce several tools to help in identifying programs for immigrants with a certain status, as well as immigrants without documentation.

This course will not discuss how an immigrant can naturalize or become legal in the U.S. or how one can obtain any of the statuses that will be discussed.

Target Audience: *Social service and legal professionals who work with immigrants and who assist them with applying for benefits.*