



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>.

Additionally, any of our courses can be customized and conducted for groups (typically 25+). If you are interested, please contact Leslie Bailey at lbailey@cssny.org for associated fees.

Continuing Education

Courses below are marked to identify whether they are approved for continuing education to the following disciplines in New York State:

- *Education Department's State Board for Social Work for LMSW/LCSW (#SW-0213) and LMHC (#MHC-0247).*
- *Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) (ETP-#1456) for CPP Initial/Renewal, CPS Initial/Renewal, CASAC Renewal.*



Benefits Plus Learning Center

Training Courses

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

I. Introduction to Government Benefit Programs

A. Benefits 101 – A Foundation in Public Benefits

This course offers a comprehensive introduction for those new to working with public benefits. It covers key aspects of public benefit and housing program design, including the differences between programs that require a work history and those based on income and resource criteria. Additionally, the course explains government eligibility terms and the impact of citizenship and immigration status on 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) who are new to the field of public benefits.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

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

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

Benefits Plus Online subscribers 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, and what programs program provide for 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.

Continuing Education:

- *Not approved for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

C. Overview of the Public Benefit System and an Introduction to Cash Programs

This introductory course looks at the public benefit system as a whole and reviews different categories of eligibility, income, immigration status, insurance-based benefits vs. needs-based benefits, and more.

In addition, we will introduce advocates to three major cash benefit programs:

- Cash Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Lastly, we will review free available resources online.

Case examples and best practices to bring back to the work setting are included throughout the course.

Target Audience: *Social service professionals and advocates new to the world of public benefits seeking a foundational understanding of the cash benefit system, as well as those who may need a refresher!*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

D. Overview of Public Health Insurance Programs

Learn the different types of health insurance programs available to New Yorkers. The class incorporates recent expansions to programs.

Programs included in this course are:

- Medicaid (MAGI & Non-MAGI), including a quick mention of the Spenddown program
- Essential Plan
- Child Health Plus
- 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!*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

E. Overview of Affordable Housing Options

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

F. Addressing Challenges in Cash Assistance & SNAP Programs - Advanced

The expansion of online applications and end of the public health emergency have created new barriers to accessing public benefits. While this training is not be able to address every barrier, we will look at some common issues within the Cash Assistance & SNAP programs such as: documentation, the interview process, and challenges with emergency assistance grants (one shot deals). We will cover how to assess a client's situation by gathering relevant information, developing a timeline, and determining the best plan of action. We will discuss strategies for resolving these common issues and provide guidance on effectively engaging with the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA). Additionally, participants will receive helpful resources, agency contacts, and a brief overview 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

II. Cash Benefits

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

Learn the differences and similarities between SSI and SSDI and how to identify which benefit an individual is receiving. Find out how the Social Security Administration (SSA) determines whether someone meets the criteria for adult disability, and the eligibility criteria for SSI and SSDI. We will also review key elements of the application process and discuss strategies to avoid delays.

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

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.5 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.5 clock hours for OASAS.*

B. Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work - Advanced

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.5 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

C. Cash Assistance for Beginners

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 guidelines.

In this course, we will simplify the eligibility rules and explain the structure of the CA grant, including the allocation for rent. We'll also cover citizenship and immigration criteria and teach you how to calculate a household's benefit amount (the standard of need) when there is income.

The focus of this course is on eligibility and determining the Cash Assistance grant.

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

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

D. **Cash Assistance Application Process – Advanced**

Once a client appears to meet the eligibility criteria for the Cash Assistance program, it's time to file the application!

This course will discuss the ways to apply for Cash Assistance in New York City and the different steps that are required, including the eligibility interview, child support requirements, eligibility verification (BEV), screening for substance abuse and domestic violence, and finally work rules.

We will cover the rules for each requirement and potential penalties for not complying. Lastly, we will discuss strategies and advocacy tips.

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

Target Audience: *Social service and legal professionals who understand the eligibility requirements for Cash Assistance and are looking for details in the application process.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

E. **Transitioning from Cash Assistance to Employment - Advanced**

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.

Additionally, understand what happens when families with children lose access to Cash Assistance, and how this affects 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

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

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

G. One Shot Deals: Obtaining Emergency Assistance

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 HRA defines an “emergency,” 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 experiencing a financial crisis.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

III. Food Programs

A. Checking Out the SNAP Program

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 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

B. Maximizing SNAP Benefits to Eligible Households - Advanced

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. There will be interactive case examples utilizing the SNAP budgeting worksheet for all case examples and Q&A.

Please note this course will NOT go into immigrants' eligibility for SNAP; this topic is covered in Checking Out the SNAP Program.

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 who assist families and individuals with limited income in navigating SNAP benefits.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

C. Fighting Hunger: Shopping for Food Programs

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 without documentation 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

IV. Health

A. Medicaid 101: MAGI and Non-MAGI Medicaid

Medicaid eligibility, budgeting, and application procedures vary based on household demographics. Learn who qualifies and how to apply through the NY State of Health/ Marketplace, as well as through the local Medicaid office. Discover the types of managed care plans Medicaid applicants and recipients must enroll in to access benefits.

Target Audience: *Health and social service professionals who work with individuals and families of all ages who may be eligible for Medicaid.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

B. Medicaid Spenddown - Advanced

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

C. Health Options for New Yorkers – Advanced

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.

Continuing Education:

- Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.
- Not approved for OASAS

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

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.

Continuing Education:

- Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.
- Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.

E. Coordination of Medicare and Medicaid – Advanced

Dual eligibles are those who have both Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Learn about how Medicare and Medicaid coverage work together, 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.

Continuing Education:

- Approved for 2.5 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.
- Approved for 2.5 clock hours for OASAS.

V. Housing

A. Nonpayment Eviction Cases & A Roadmap for Navigating NYC Housing Court

Non-attorney advocates can play an important role in helping residential tenants navigate housing court in NYC, especially in the wake of COVID-19. Learn about the current landscape of housing court, including how a landlord begins a nonpayment case, how a tenant answers a petition, and how parties appear for their court date. Discover defenses that tenants can use in their cases and the different outcomes of housing court. Finally, learn how a tenant can stop or delay an eviction, and the legal resources 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 in our post-pandemic era.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

B. NYC Housing for Vulnerable Populations: Supportive Housing & Rental Assistance Programs

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 the following rental assistance programs for the homeless and those at risk for homelessness: FHEPS, CityFHEPS, Pathway Home, SOTA, and the Enhanced One-Shot Deal.

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

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

C. Overview of NYCHA

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, 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

D. Combing Through NYCHA's Policies and Procedures

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

E. Overview of Section 8

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. In this course, we also cover how the Section 8 Subsidy and tenant's share of rent are calculated.

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

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 2.0 clock hours for OASAS.*

F. Cash Assistance Rental Subsidy Program: FHEPS - Advanced

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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

G. CityFHEPS Deconstructed

Though similar in names, CityFHEPS (City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement) and FHEPS (Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement) are different and separate subsidy programs that provide ongoing rental assistance to NYC households.

CityFHEPS is a rental subsidy for households who are at risk of homelessness, who are currently residing in a NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) or Human Resources Administration (HRA) shelter, or who are street homeless. In this course, we will cover CityFHEPS eligibility and the CityFHEPS benefit package, including how the CityFHEPS subsidy and rent share are calculated.

Please note, this course will not cover how to fill out a CityFHEPS application or the FHEPS program.

Target Audience: *Social service and legal professionals seeking an understanding of the CityFHEPS program.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 2.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Not approved for OASAS*

VI. Immigrants' Access

A. Immigrants' Access to Public Benefits and Housing Programs – Advanced

Public benefit and housing programs have different rules and guidelines on immigrants' eligibility; therefore, helping immigrants obtain these benefits can be a challenging and complicated task.

We will explain the meanings of “qualified aliens” and “Person Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL). 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

(We will not review the other eligibility criteria for the programs mentioned above.)

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 obtain a legal status in the U.S. or 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.*

Continuing Education:

- *Approved for 3.0 contact hours for Licensed Social Workers (LMSW/LCSW) & Licensed Mental Health Counselors.*
- *Approved for 3.0 clock hours for OASAS.*