



## Public Assistance Programs and COVID-19

### How have public assistance programs changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Through executive orders issued by the governor, the state has made some changes that apply across multiple public assistance programs. For example, [Executive Order 7I \(§ 1\)](#) authorizes the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner to suspend or extend timeframes for public assistance eligibility redeterminations, to the extent federal law allows. [Executive Order 7CC \(§ 3\)](#) excludes certain federal stimulus payments from calculations used to determine public assistance eligibility, thereby ensuring that stimulus payments do not render a household ineligible for need-based assistance. [Executive Order 7E \(§§ 4 & 5\)](#) authorizes DSS to (1) temporary suspend recoupment of non-fraudulent overpayment of public assistance program benefits (to the extent permitted by federal law) and (2) suspend in-person fair hearing requirements.

Other changes are program-specific. The table on the following page describes changes to the largest programs (Medicaid, SNAP, and Temporary Family Assistance). With regard to health programs, DSS has also:

- suspended medical and pharmacy copayments in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP, known in Connecticut as HUSKY B);
- changed certain policies related to prescription refills, allowing for more early refills and extending refill periods for HUSKY Health programs (e.g., Medicaid and CHIP); and
- adopted broader standards for evaluating income for eligibility purposes for HUSKY A, B, and D.

#### Public Assistance Defined

Public assistance does not have a standard legal definition. It can be defined broadly or narrowly to include DSS programs or programs administered by other state agencies, nonprofits, or other entities. Different programs may serve different purposes.

#### CASH

TFA,  
State Administered  
General  
Assistance,  
Refugee Cash  
Assistance,  
State Supplement  
Program

#### FOOD

SNAP,  
free and reduced-  
price school  
lunches, food  
banks, and  
pantries

#### MEDICAL

Medicaid  
(in Connecticut,  
HUSKY A, C, and  
D), CHIP (HUSKY  
B),  
Medicare Savings  
Program

Program and Description	Examples of COVID-19 Changes	2020 Enrollment Changes (February to September)
<p><b>Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)</b> is Connecticut’s cash assistance program for low-income families, funded through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.</p>	<p><a href="#">Executive Order 7B (§ 5)</a> authorizes DSS to waive certain employment-related requirements for applicants and consider COVID-19 effects as good cause when assessing TFA participant compliance with work requirements.</p> <p><a href="#">Executive Order 7N (§ 6)</a> excludes TFA benefits received during the declared COVID-19 emergency from the state’s statutory 21-month limit.</p>	
<p><b>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</b> is a federally funded, state administered program that provides electronic benefit transfer (EBT) funds to low-income households for food purchases.</p>	<p>Work requirements, typically applicable to certain adult SNAP recipients without dependents, are currently suspended. DSS distributed emergency allotments (additional benefits for those who receive less than the maximum amount) each month since March. The department also extended various eligibility periods, allowing households that would otherwise have to renew benefits to continue receiving them.</p>	
<p><b>Medicaid</b> (provided in Connecticut as part of HUSKY Health) provides health coverage to low-income families and individuals through joint state and federal funding.</p>	<p>Connecticut expanded Medicaid coverage by creating two new limited benefits programs to provide coverage for COVID-19 testing and testing-related provider visits for (1) uninsured state residents and (2) certain non-citizens ineligible for full Medicaid coverage.</p>	

**Learn More**

“Changes to SNAP Benefits due to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” [OLR Report 2020-R-0106](#)

“COVID-19 Executive Orders Affecting Health and Human Services,” [OLR Report 2020-R-0110](#)

