



Public Benefit Response to COVID-19

Changes to SNAP Benefits

Applications for SNAP benefits are available online through CommonHelp at <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov> or by phone to (855) 635-4370.

For those who already have benefits, you may have received additional funds on your card.

In March and April 2020, Virginia will provide emergency SNAP benefits to all SNAP recipients that are not already receiving the maximum amount for their household size. This will happen automatically with no additional action needed by the recipient.

Household Size	Max Allotment
1	\$194
2	\$355
3	\$509
4	\$646
5	\$768
6	\$921
7	\$1,018
8	\$1,164
Each additional person	\$146

Recertification - The deadline to recertify your SNAP eligibility that was scheduled for March, April or May, 2020 will be extended by six months. DSS will send you a new date in the mail.

Changes to TANF Benefits

New Cash Assistance for Families with job loss or other COVID-19 impacts

Diversionsary Assistance - This is for families **not** currently receiving TANF. Diversionsary Assistance provides a one-time cash benefit to help families pay for emergency needs like food, housing, utility expenses, medical expenses or transportation. To qualify, there must be a loss of income, reduction of income, or delay in receiving income. The family must include a dependent child and meet income and other requirements.

TANF-Emergency Assistance - This is for families currently receiving TANF. Families receiving TANF may receive assistance of up to \$500 if they have experienced a fire or natural disaster. COVID-19 is considered a disaster. The family must include a dependent child and meet income and other requirements.

Application Process. To apply for Diversionsary Assistance or TANF-Emergency Assistance, complete an application online through CommonHelp at <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov>.

Applicants will be contacted by their local department of social services for a telephone interview. You should tell the worker that you would like to apply for Diversionsary Assistance or Emergency Assistance.

Operational Changes. Due to the State of Emergency, the agency has adopted the following changes to their standard procedures:

- DSS has the discretion to accept an applicant’s statements where it is not possible to obtain documents or third party verifications due to government and business closures.
- Students that do not attend school while the schools are shut down shall not be considered truant. While schools are closed, verification of enrollment may not be possible.
- Interviews will be conducted by telephone.
- DSS will not conduct VIEW (work requirement) initial assessments or assign participants to work activities unless they do not require face-to-face contact.
- No new VIEW sanctions until further notice, and DSS may lift existing sanctions once the minimum time has passed.

Recertification - The deadline to recertify your TANF eligibility that was scheduled for March, April or May, 2020 will be extended by six months. DSS will send you a new date in the mail.

Changes to Medicaid Benefits

Initial Applications. You can apply for Medicaid at any time at <https://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov>.

Renewals - Virginia's Medicaid program has extended renewals and redeterminations during this period. Participants who file an appeal during the public health emergency will automatically have coverage extended while waiting for the appeal.

To prevent current Medicaid enrollees from losing coverage, Virginia has made the following changes:

1) Coverage will **not** be cancelled when:

- A member ages out (19,21,26, and 65);
- A woman's 60-day postpartum period ends;
- A consumer does not return a renewal form or complete a verification request related to a renewal, and;
- A member becomes eligible for Medicare and is enrolled in a Medicaid category which does not allow members to be enrolled in both Medicaid and Medicare (such as Breast Cancer Prevention and Treatment and Expansion).

2) All June, July and August renewals will be delayed for ninety (90) days.

Coverage Changes All Medicaid and FAMIS copays have been eliminated. This means that you do not have to pay anything to see a doctor. You may also be able to fill a 90-day supply of many routine prescriptions. Check with your pharmacist or doctor.

Tip - Be sure to notify Medicaid if you have a loss or change in income. This will allow DMAS to determine if you are eligible for additional benefits, like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Appeal Process Changes If you need to file an appeal, you may submit your request to DMAS via e-mail at Appeals@DMAS.Virginia.gov. DMAS will conduct all State Fair Hearings by telephone, and will grant requests to reschedule hearings. It may take longer than usual for hearing decisions to be processed. However, Medicaid members will automatically keep health coverage while an appeal is pending with DMAS or with their managed care organization.

If you're facing financial trouble with benefits, medicaid, food stamps, or any other public benefits:

- Call Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society at 1-888-201-2772.
- Visit: <https://www.swvlegalaid.org/public-benefits> for more information on public benefits.
- Visit www.valegalaid.org for legal information for people struggling with public benefit issues and to locate the legal aid office that serves your area in Virginia.

This is general legal information, not legal advice about a specific case. If you have questions or want advice about your individual case, please contact legal aid at the phone number listed above.