

Onondaga County Assistance Programs.

Find how to get help from local charities and non-profit agencies. For example, the local community action agency, PEACE, Inc. - Peoples' Equal Action Community Effort, Inc., runs several programs for Syracuse and Onondaga County families. Find out more information on them, as well as who to contact below, along with details and information on other programs.

PEACE, Inc. - Peoples' Equal Action Community Effort, Inc.

Ph: (315) 470-3300

- **Debt elimination and credit repair** - Counselors will work one on one with consumers in order to help people with low to moderate income or who may be drowning in debt. They try to help them make educated decisions about their money and spending habits. Counselors can also help with credit repair, [reducing credit card debt](#), provide one-on-one budget counseling, and even advice on mortgage programs.
- **File income taxes** - Volunteers will work closely with and help people with low to moderate income receive the largest tax credits and refunds they are entitled to. Well trained volunteers will help them access all eligible tax credits as refunds are filed.
- **Employment skills** - Counselors from Peoples' Equal Action Community Effort, Inc can help people find a job. The Connect2Work program can help people learn how to interview well, provide computer skills and access to the Internet, help job candidates solve problems and improve communication skills. All of these services are provided in order to help people get back on their feet.
- **Weatherization Assistance** - The community action agency runs this federal government funded program. It is free to qualified families, and homeowners can save hundreds of dollars on their heating and utility bills every year. The program installs free energy conserving updates to people homes, such as insulation and new windows.
- **Food Aid** - Several food centers are located around Onondaga County that people can stop by at to receive free food and other household supplies.

Care and Share Program - American Red Cross. - Call 234-2202.

The energy assistance program offers home energy bill assistance to Syracuse and Onondaga County NY families who meet eligibility guidelines. The applicant must receive disability income or have a medical emergency and NOT eligible for HEAP or be at least 60 years of age or have someone living in your home who is at least 60 years of age. The program does pay for any kind of fuel and heating source, including gas, electric, wood, propane, coal, and even heating oil.

The organizations listed above can provide short term housing and/or rent assistance. However, if they do not have funding or are unable to meet your needs, find additional [rental assistance in Syracuse](#) and Onondaga County.

Food assistance

Three local charities and non-profits to turn to for free food include

- Dunbar Association (315.476.4269)
- Food Bank of Central New York (315) 437-1899)
- Huntington Family Centers (phone (315) 476-3157).

All of these agencies can help families and individuals in need of access to food and clothing. It will allow these people the ability to live with the highest degree of independence and self-sufficiency.

The following charities, non-profits, and churches in Syracuse and Onondaga County provide free food and/or meals.

- Assumption Church - This center provides bagged lunches twice a day. Syracuse, NY 473-9101
- Hopps Memorial CME Church Syracuse, NY 478-0191
- P.E.A.C.E., Inc. Eastside Family Resource Center 470-3325
- Rescue Mission Alliance Syracuse, NY 472-6251
- **St. Lucy's Church Pantry**
- Samaritan Center, Inc. Syracuse, NY 472-8156
- InterReligious Food Consortium - Emergency food supplies and groceries are available at agencies and churches. Callers will be connected with a food pantry in their neighborhood. 474-8855
- P.E.A.C.E., Inc. Eastside Family Resource Center 470-3325
- **St. Lucy's Church Pantry** 424-0023

Catholic Charities

1654 West Onondaga Street, Syracuse, NY 13204 –
Phone: 315.424.1800 Fax: 315.424.8262

Emergency Services - programs which help families and individuals address an immediate crisis through food vouchers, grant programs, money to pay bills and other financial assistance. In addition the program can help people develop new skills and resources to prevent its recurrence and help people get back on their feet.

Direct assistance is available for people in dire need, especially those struggling to find food, clothing, and housing.

- Eligibility: Limited to residents of Onondaga County with demonstrated need. There are limits on income and the number of times persons may be served.
- Information: Please call Mary Varik or Mary Jane Wood at 315-475-3807. Please be prepared to leave a message. Someone will call you back as soon as possible.
- Good to know: Some forms of assistance have specific restrictions. Catholic Charities may be able to connect people with other resources.

Salvation Army of Syracuse

677 South Salina Street
Syracuse, NY 13202
315.475.1688

Emergency and basic needs services - helps families and individuals who are faced with a crisis. It provides them with basic needs and access to assistance for such hardships as housing challenges, food aid, clothing, heating bills and the essentials of daily living. In addition, the program offers crisis intervention and information on other New York and Onondaga County programs.

FOOD PANTRY - 315.479.1157

The Food Pantry assists families and individuals by providing them with enough food for three days. Individuals and families may be served once per month or as the emergency coordinator deems appropriate. Pantry staff assists clients with applying for Food Stamps and/or WIC if they are eligible. Assistance is also provided for obtaining hygiene items, diapers and formula.

HOMELESS PREVENTION SERVICES - 315.479.1157

Homeless Prevention Services provides assistance for people facing in a housing crisis or facing eviction. The program includes short-term case management, housing location and counseling and referrals for housing related assistance.

HOMELESS RESOURCE SERVICES - 315.479.1349

Homeless Resource Services provide families with the flexible levels of service needed to access and secure community resources and to maintain permanent housing. Financial assistance is available for obtaining personal identification, prescriptions, bus tokens and other housing related needs not met by other programs in the community.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION (H.A.L.E.) -315.479.1307

H.A.L.E. is a program that helps homeless, non-disabled individuals and families who are employed at least part time. Financial assistance for housing related matters based on individual need and includes a housing subsidy. Clients are also provided with independent living skills training, housing location assistance and linkage to community resources.

CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH PLUS - 315.479.1136

This is a program to assist low-income individuals and families who are in need of public health insurance. Assistance is given with completing the application process for Medicaid and Child and Family Health Plus.

Rescue Mission Syracuse:

* Most services are for homeless individuals, more specifically men.

Clothing Outreach Information: Chris Hoffmeister Phone: 315-701-3862

Food Services Information: Dave Bachus Phone: 315-701-3896

Thrifty Shopper Syracuse (Valley)

436 West Seneca Turnpike

Syracuse, NY 13207-2643

315-492-0802

Free legal aid and assistance:

Several firms provide free legal programs. You can receive everything from help stopping a foreclosure, to assistance with debt collectors, family law, divorces, and learn how [attorneys can settle debt](#).

- Legal Services of CNY Syracuse, NY 13202 475-3127
- Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society Syracuse, NY 422-8191

Debt reduction and foreclosure prevention in Syracuse and Onondaga County:

- Consumer Credit Counseling - This non-profit credit counseling firm offers counseling, debt assistance programs, payment negotiation and alternatives to personal bankruptcy. 474-6026
- Cooperative Federal Credit Union - Access free, HUD approved foreclosure prevention, housing counseling, financial education, credit building and repair. 471-1116

ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

Onondaga County Office Building
Energy Assistance Unit - 7th Floor
600 S. State Street
Syracuse, NY 13202
Hours: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM (Monday-Friday)
Phone: (315) 435-8295

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), also known as LIHEAP, is a federally funded energy assistance program to help low-income families meet their home energy costs. The HEAP program consists of three components – Regular HEAP, Emergency HEAP and Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for the program is based on income (see income guidelines below) and housing situation. Individuals must either pay directly for heating costs or pay rent that includes heating costs. Individuals must be a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien to apply. HEAP money is limited. The HEAP year generally begins in October or November and closes when the program funding is exhausted, which can be as early as mid-March.

Regular HEAP

There are no resource eligibility criteria for Regular HEAP. Regular benefit amounts range from \$40 to \$700. Amounts depend on income, age of household members, energy costs and shelter situation. It is a one-time only benefit during the program year.

Emergency HEAP

Emergency benefits are available for persons who are eligible for HEAP and have an energy-related emergency such as a power shutoff, less than ¼ tank oil, kerosene or propane or have less than 10 days' supply of wood, pellets or coal. Applicant households may not have more than \$2000 in liquid resources (or \$3000 if the household contains a member age 60 or older). Emergency benefit amounts range from \$160 to \$700. Effective March 28, 2011, a second emergency benefit is available for households that have exhausted both regular and first emergency benefits and who are in a heat or heat-related crisis situation.

If you have already exhausted your regular HEAP benefit you may call the office at 435-8295 to apply for Emergency HEAP by phone.

Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement (HERR):

HERR benefits are available year round to help low income homeowners to repair or replace furnaces, boilers, and other direct heating components necessary to keep the home's primary heating source functional. Homeowners must reside in the home. For heating equipment repair a household may not have more than \$2000 in liquid resources (or \$3000 if the household contains a member age 60 or older). For heating equipment replacement \$3000 in liquid resources are exempt. The maximum heating equipment replacement amount is \$6,000.

2010– 2011 HEAP Guidelines

Total gross monthly household income must be at or below the following:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE INCOME LIMIT

- 1 \$2129
- 2 \$2784
- 3 \$3439
- 4 \$4094
- 5 \$4749
- 6 \$5404
- 7 \$5527
- 8 \$5650

How to Apply

Temporary Assistance and Food Stamps households generally receive their Regular HEAP grant automatically through their case. Payments to households that pay for heat separate from their rent are sent to the heating vendor. Payments to households that have their heat included in their rent are paid directly to the household. To apply for Emergency HEAP, Temporary Assistance and Food Stamp recipients must contact the call center at 435-2700. See Emergency HEAP above.

Where to Apply

Individuals under 60 may apply on the 7th floor County Office Building between the hours of 8:00 - 4:00, Monday – Friday. If there is NO emergency they may call and make an appointment by phone.

*Individuals that have received a benefit last season and do not have an emergency have mail-in rights and may call the office to have an application mailed.

*Individuals who do not have an emergency and do not have mail-in rights may be interviewed by phone. Please call 435-8295 for more information.

*If an individual cannot apply in person due to a handicap or because of his or her work schedule, a friend or relative may apply for them. The authorized representative must bring all necessary documents as well as a note from the individual they are applying for.

*Individuals 60 or over, disabled or in receipt of Code A SSI that do not have an emergency may contact the Office of Aging at (315) 435-2362 to apply by mail. All emergencies must apply in person. You must bring in your utility bill, proof of emergency, verification of tenant of record, proof of gross income for everyone in the household, ID for all household members and current resource documentation.

What to Expect

If you qualify your HEAP payment will be sent to your fuel/utility provider. It generally takes up to 3 months for the credit to appear on your bill.

After Hour Emergency

For after hour heating emergencies please call the Helpline at (315) 435-8300.

Helpful websites

- Prescreen yourself for HEAP and other benefits at www.mybenefits.ny.gov
- www.HeatSmartNY.org
- <http://www.getenergysmart.org/lowincome/EmPower.aspx>

HEAP Forms Available Online

Documentation Guide

Landlord Form

Self Employment Worksheet

Student Financial Worksheet

Temporary Assistance

Temporary Assistance (TA) offers temporary help for needy men, women and children. If you are unable to work, can't find a job, or your job does not pay enough to meet your basic living needs, TA may be able to help you with your basic need expenses, such as heat, rent etc.

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 2nd Floor
421 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, NY 13202
Hours: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM (Monday-Friday)
Phone: (315) 435-2700

Temporary Assistance is the term used in New York State for public assistance (welfare) programs. Temporary Assistance provides families and individuals with short-term help while they work toward self-sufficiency.

In New York State there are three financial assistance programs:

Family Assistance (FA)

This program provides money for families with children. Cash benefits are limited to five years in a recipient's lifetime. After five years a Family Assistance case may continue to receive benefits if an adult is disabled and cannot work or may be required to apply for assistance through the Safety Net category.

Safety Net Assistance (SNA)

This program provides money for basic living expenses for single adults and childless couples or families who have used up their 5-year limit of FA. Cash benefits are limited to two years including any cash benefits received through Family Assistance. After two years, the non-cash Safety Net Assistance voucher system provides benefits.

Emergency Temporary Assistance

An emergency is an urgent need or situation that has to be taken care of right away. Emergency Assistance for Families (EAF) and Emergency Safety Net Assistance (ESNA) provide assistance for crisis situations. Services such as prevention of evictions, moving expenses, utility shutoffs, help with food expenses and diversion payments to help individuals avoid the need for ongoing assistance are available.

Some examples of an emergency are:

- *You are homeless.
- *You have little or no food.
- *Your landlord has told you that you must move or has given you eviction papers
- *You do not have fuel for heating during cold weather.
- *Your utilities are shut-off or are about to be shut-off, or you have a 72-hour disconnect notice
- *You or someone in your family has been beaten, abused or threatened with violence by a husband, wife, partner or other member of the household.

*Note: for individuals not on Temporary Assistance the HEAP Unit on the 7th floor of the County Office Building handles fuel and utility emergencies.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for a Temporary Assistance benefit, individuals and families will be subject to income and resource tests. Benefit levels vary depending on household size, available income and expenses.

Resource Limit

Generally the amount of real and personal property, including liquid assets, which a household can own and still qualify for Temporary Assistance is \$2000. However, a household in which any member is age 60 or over can own up to \$3000 in resources. Resources that are exempt include: a home which is the usual residence of the household, basic maintenance items essential to day-to-day living, one burial plot per household member, and one funeral agreement per household member up to an equity value of \$1,500 per household member. There are special rules for automobiles though generally most of their value is exempt.

How to apply

You can apply for any of the Temporary Assistance programs in Temporary Assistance Intake located on the 2nd floor of the Civic Center, 421 Montgomery Street. Note: The one exception is the HEAP Unit on the 7th floor of the County Office Building handles fuel and utility emergencies.

When applying for Temporary Assistance someone in the “Intake” Unit will see you. Eligibility decisions depend on how quickly you complete your application requirements and which program you are applying for. Decisions can take from immediately for some emergencies to 45 days for Safety Net Assistance.

What to Expect

After you complete your application and turn it in, you will generally be seen first in a group setting. You will talk to an eligibility worker individually after the group. You may be given a follow-up appointment with a worker from our office. At this time, a number of questions may be asked of you, depending on your particular circumstances. Some general things you might expect are:

If you are a single parent, you may be required to have an interview with the Support Collection Unit. If, however, you or your child has been threatened or abused, or you fear for the life of you or your child, you do not have to cooperate with the Support Collection Unit. However, you must be able to prove your claim.

If you tell the worker that you have an alcohol or substance abuse problem, or the worker suspects that you might, you may be asked to see a substance abuse counselor. He/she will be able to help you get the treatment you need.

You will have the opportunity to complete a Domestic Violence Screening form, if you want to. You will also be provided with important information about obtaining Domestic Violence Services. If you tell your caseworker that you are a victim of domestic violence, he/she will give you the opportunity to talk with a domestic violence counselor.

You will be asked to have your picture and fingerprints taken. This is required by New York State law to avoid duplicate benefit payments.

It is also important to know that when you apply for Temporary Assistance, your application will also be considered for Medical Assistance and Food Stamp benefits as well if you are interested. You will find out if you are eligible for these programs, along with Temporary Assistance, within 30 days of the day your turn in your application.

If you are determined eligible, your Temporary Assistance case will then be sent to the "Undercare" Unit. Benefits may be issued as cash or in voucher form to your landlord or utility provider. Your cash benefits will be available at ATM machines in grocery stores. In order to access cash benefits, you will need a benefit card and a PIN number. Benefits over \$25.00 are issued semi-monthly. Voucher payments are sent directly to your landlord or your provider. [Click here to link to EBT Page](#)

Limits

For families with children, federal and state laws have changed. Assistance is now temporary and time-limited. Cash assistance will only be available for up to 60 months in a lifetime. Any month or part of a month, since December 1996, in which cash benefits were received, counts toward your time limit.

If you are on assistance and are employed and your cash grant is minimal, you may want to request that your case be closed and save a full month of assistance to be used at a later date when need may be greater. If you need a child care subsidy this can be guaranteed in this situation.

Temporary Assistance Forms Available Online