

# CHAPTER 9 GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." ~ Thomas Edison

**F**ederal and state assistance programs are generally designed to assist people who need a job, housing, public assistance, and other services. Each program has different standards for participation with low income being the most common requirement. There are no government assistance programs exclusively for ex-offenders.

## GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

### BENEFITS.GOV

<http://www.benefits.gov>

Benefits.gov was launched in an effort to provide citizens with easy, online access to government benefit and assistance programs.

The site's core function is the eligibility prescreening questionnaire or "Benefit Finder." Answers to the questionnaire are used to evaluate a visitor's situation and compare it with the eligibility criteria for more than 1,000 federally-funded benefit and assistance programs representing 17 partner agencies. Each program description provides citizens with the next steps to apply for any benefit program of interest.

Benefits.gov is unable to respond to specific scenarios or provide personalized advice. For additional government information, individuals are encouraged to call USA.gov's National Contact Center at 800.333.4636, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm (EST), to speak with an information specialist, or visit them online at <http://www.usa.gov>.

### CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE

<http://www.cfda.gov>

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance is a government-wide compendium of federal programs, projects, services, and activities that provide assistance or benefits to the American public. It contains financial and non-financial programs administered by departments and agencies of the federal government.

As a basic reference source of federal programs, the primary purpose of the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance is to assist users in identifying programs that meet specific objectives of the potential applicant, and to obtain general information on federal assistance programs.

The U.S. Government Printing Office prints and sells copies of the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance to interested parties. For purchasing information, contact them at 866.512.1800. You may also use the U.S. Government Printing Office's online bookstore at <http://www.bookstore.gpo.gov>.

#### National Contact:

U.S. Government Printing Office  
P.O. Box 979050  
St. Louis, MO 63197  
P: 202.512.1800

#### Additional Resources:

Government Services Administration, *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*  
[http://www.cfda.gov/downloads/CFDA\\_2016.pdf](http://www.cfda.gov/downloads/CFDA_2016.pdf)

## GOVERNMENT-FUNDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

Administered and coordinated at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a federal assistance program that provides financial assistance and services to low-income individuals and families with children under the age of 18 who meet specific program eligibility requirements.



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Eligible individuals and families are provided with supportive services including assistance with work and training related expenses, transportation, and childcare when needed. Financial assistance is provided on a rotating basis for families with children until they are able to support themselves. Recipients of aid are required to pursue employment, training and/or education that will lead to employment, participate in volunteer community service, or provide child care services to other program participants.

The Diversion Program within Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is designed to eliminate barriers to employment such as providing financial and direct assistance with car repairs, work clothing, or tools in an effort to ensure employability.

Individuals who have been convicted of a drug offense after January 1, 1989 and those currently on parole or probation are not eligible for assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. In addition, a conviction of Welfare fraud automatically results in a life-time denial of assistance.

Individuals who believe they may be eligible for services through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are encouraged to contact their local American Job Center for additional information and eligibility requirements.

**National Contact:**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201  
P: 877.696.6775

### **EMERGENCY RELIEF**

There have been many changes in the welfare system and the availability of welfare from the federal government is severely limited. Emergency Relief programs are cash and in-kind assistance programs financed and administered entirely by the state, county, or locality in which they operate. Emergency Relief programs are likely to serve disabled, elderly, and otherwise unemployable individuals and children or families with children. There are no national laws that require state governments to provide Emergency Relief or to establish uniform rules across the state if Emergency Relief is provided. Individuals who believe they may be eligible for Emergency Relief are encouraged to contact their local American Job Center for additional information and eligibility requirements.

## **HUMAN SERVICE INFORMATION & REFERRAL**

### **2-1-1 | UNITED WAY**

<http://www.211us.org>

2-1-1 is the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human service information and referral. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. 2-1-1 makes it possible for people to navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs.

Every hour of every day, hundreds of people need human services – they are looking for training, employment, food pantries, help for an aging parent, addiction prevention programs for their teenage children, affordable housing options, support groups and ways of becoming part of their community. 2-1-1 allows people to give help and to get help.

As of February 2016, 2-1-1 serves over 283 million Americans (90.6% of the entire population) covering all 50 states including Washington, DC and Puerto Rico (39 states plus Washington, DC and Puerto Rico enjoy 100% coverage). (1) As of August 2012, more than 19 million Canadians – more than 56% of the population – have access to 2-1-1 services.

For additional information about the services offered by 2-1-1, please dial 211 from any telephone or visit them online at <http://www.211us.org>.

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1. Coverage is defined as populations with landline telephone access to 2-1-1 dialing codes.

**Additional Resources:**

United Way | 2-1-1, *Nationwide Program Coverage & Status Website*  
<http://www.211us.org/status.htm>

United Way | 2-1-1, *Reentry Webpage*  
<http://www.211.org/services/reentry>

**UNITED WAY OF AMERICA**

<http://www.unitedway.org>

Through a network of volunteers and local charities, United Way organizations throughout America help meet the health and human care needs of millions of people. The United Way system includes over 1,900 community-based organizations. United Way volunteers raise funds that are used for human services ranging from disaster relief, emergency food and shelter, crisis intervention, and physical rehabilitation and youth development.

**National Contact:**

United Way of America  
 701 North Fairfax Street  
 Alexandria, VA 22314  
 P: 703.836.7112

**SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS****U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>

The U.S. Social Security Administration oversees a number of benefit programs, including retirement benefits, disability benefits, dependents benefits, and survivors benefits.

**SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS**

Social Security Disability benefits can be paid only to people who have recently worked and paid Social Security taxes, and who are unable to work because of a serious medical condition that is expected to last for at least a year or result in death. The fact that an individual is a recent parolee or is unemployed does not automatically qualify as a disability.

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME BENEFITS**

Supplemental Security Income benefits can be paid to people who are 65 or older or blind or disabled and who have low income and limited resources. No Supplemental Security Income benefits are payable for any months that an individual resides in prison.

**SOCIAL SECURITY RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

Social Security Retirement benefits can be paid only to people who are 62 or older. Generally, an individual must have worked and paid taxes into Social Security for 10 years to be eligible.

**TICKET TO WORK PROGRAM**

The Ticket to Work Program is administered under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999 and provides an opportunity for people who receive Social Security Disability benefits to work. It provides training and employment opportunities for disabled individuals while allowing them to continue to receive social security benefits. To learn more about programs and eligibility requirements, go to <http://www.tickettowork.com>.

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits are not payable for the months that an individual is confined to a jail, prison, or certain other public institution for the commission of a crime. In addition, individuals are not automatically eligible for Social Security Disability or Social Security Income benefits when they are released.

**National Contact:**

U.S. Social Security Administration  
Office of Public Inquiries  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Washington, DC 21235  
P: 800.772.1213

**Additional Resources:**

U.S. Social Security Administration, A “Snapshot”  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10006.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *Understanding the Benefits*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10024.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *How You Earn Credits*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10072.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *How Work Affects Your Benefits*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10069.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *Your Ticket to Work: What You Need to Know to Keep it Working for You*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10062.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *What Prisoners Need To Know*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10133.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *Entering the Community after Incarceration – How We Can Help*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10504.pdf>

U.S. Social Security Administration, *How to Correct Your Social Security Earnings Statement*  
<http://ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10081.pdf>