



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Department of Human Services Reminds Pennsylvanians Help is Available Through Public Assistance, Emotional Support Resources

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Human Services today reminded Pennsylvanians that help is available for those who need it during the winter months and year-round, including resources to help pay rent and utility bills, provide food for their families, or get health coverage or help for mental health and emotional issues they may face through the holiday season.

“The holidays are a joyous time, but they can also be a stressful time for those who are worried about not being able to pay their bills, go to the doctor, or put food on the table,” said Acting Secretary Snead. “It is important for Pennsylvanians who may be experiencing hard times to know that they are not alone, and help is available through a variety of state and federal resources. DHS is here to help, and I urge anyone who needs it to contact us and find out if they are eligible for heating assistance, food assistance, rental and utility payment assistance, and much more.”

The following programs are available to help Pennsylvanians:

- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** provides assistance to renters and homeowners by helping eligible individuals and families with low incomes to pay their heating bills. The 2021-2022 LIHEAP season has been extended for this year and is open to cover expenses from October 18, 2021, to May 6, 2022.

Thanks to additional funds from the American Rescue Plan, Pennsylvanians will receive more funds this year to help them cover heating utility costs. LIHEAP cash grants range from \$500-\$1,500 and LIHEAP crisis grants were increased to \$1,200 for this season. LIHEAP is distributed directly to a household's utility company or home heating fuel provider. Assistance does not have to be repaid.

- **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** is available in all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties to help eligible tenants receive up to 18 months of assistance for overdue or upcoming rental and utility payments. Either tenants or landlords can apply for this assistance, but a tenant does not need a landlord's permission to apply and use ERAP funds. This program is an opportunity to help ease circumstances for both parties, so landlords and tenants are strongly encouraged to work cooperatively to secure this stabilizing assistance. ERAP is overseen by DHS at the state level but administered locally by county and municipal partners. Pennsylvanians can learn how to apply in their county of residence online at www.dhs.pa.gov/erap.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** formerly known as food stamps, helps Pennsylvanians by providing money each month for groceries. SNAP is our country's most important and most impactful anti-hunger program. For every meal provided by a Feeding Pennsylvania food bank, SNAP provides nine.

SNAP's critical role in helping low-income individuals and families goes beyond dollars to support Pennsylvanians in need. SNAP also supports businesses in the communities where recipients live and shop. According to [research by the USDA](#), during an economic downturn, a \$1 billion increase in SNAP benefits could increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as \$1.54 billion – stabilizing a critical segment of the economy and supporting approximately 13,560 jobs, including farmers and other agriculture workers.

- **Medical Assistance** and the **Children's Health Insurance Program** help Pennsylvanians access quality, affordable health coverage, ensuring that they do not have to forego necessary routine, preventive, or critical physical and mental health care due to being uninsured, especially during cold and flu season or during the ongoing pandemic.

Pennsylvanians who have lost health coverage or are currently uninsured and need coverage for themselves or their children may qualify for coverage through Medical Assistance or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medical Assistance and CHIP provide coverage for routine and emergency health services, tests and screenings, and prescriptions, and COVID-19 testing and treatment are covered by both Medical Assistance and CHIP. Medical Assistance and CHIP enroll individuals throughout the year and do not have a limited or special enrollment period, so people needing health coverage can apply for these programs at any time. There are income limits for Medical Assistance, but all children qualify for comprehensive health, vision, and dental coverage through CHIP regardless of their parents' income as long as they do not qualify for Medical Assistance.

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** is a cash assistance program for low-income families with dependent children or people who are pregnant. TANF is designed to help families meet essential needs while connecting parents to employment, training, and education programs that can help the family improve their circumstances and move out of poverty.

Applications for LIHEAP, SNAP, Medical Assistance, CHIP, TANF, and other public assistance programs can be submitted online at www.compass.state.pa.us. SNAP and Medicaid applications are accepted by phone by calling the Consumer Service Center at 1-866-550-4355. On-site [County Assistance Office](#) (CAO) services are available if clients cannot access online services or need assistance that cannot be accessed through the COMPASS website, the myCOMPASS PA mobile app, or by calling the Customer Service Centers at 215-560-7226 for Philadelphia clients or 1-877-395-8930 for clients in all other counties.

All Pennsylvanians experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic, a lost job, or a change in income are strongly encouraged to apply and see if they qualify for assistance with food, health care, and other essential needs.

"In addition to meeting our basic needs like food and shelter, sometimes we need emotional and mental health support, too. This time of year is often about gathering together, but there are those of us who still may be separated from loved ones, whose celebrations may not look the

same as they did a few years ago, or who are grieving the loss of loved ones or the changes to our lives that have been happening for almost two years,” said Acting Secretary Snead. “You do not have to go through these feelings alone. If you or a loved one need someone to talk to, we can help.”

Mental Health resources are available 24/7 through Pennsylvania’s Support and Referral Helpline by calling 1-855-284-2494, or for TTY, dialing 724-631-5600. The helpline is staffed by skilled and compassionate caseworkers who will be available to counsel struggling Pennsylvanians and refer them to resources in their community that can further help to meet individual needs. Help is also available via text through the Crisis Text Line by texting PA to 741-741.

To learn more about all DHS programs, visit dhs.pa.gov.

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