

Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs

This resource is adapted from *Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry*, published by the Education Justice Project. It covers:

- How to apply for government benefits to meet your basic needs
- Other places to go to meet your basic needs

Apply for Benefits

If you need help to meet your basic needs, go to a Department of Human Services (DHS) Family Community Resource Center. You can also visit a hospital, non-profit organization, church, or other service provider and ask for help applying for benefits.

To get these benefits, you'll have to meet certain qualifications. For some programs, you must be a certain age. For most, you must meet income requirements (not make a lot of money).

You can apply for these benefit programs by going to abe.illinois.gov or calling (800) 843-6154.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This used to be called food stamps. Each month, money is put onto a special debit card called a LINK card. You can use the card to buy food from most grocery stores.
- **Medicaid and All Kids.** Medicaid is a program for people who make little or no money. It helps people pay for medicine, hospital visits, doctor appointments, and more. All Kids is a similar program that helps pay for health care for children.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).** Provides money for families who need it.
- **Aid to the Aged Blind and Disabled Cash Assistance (AABD).** Provides money for people who have disabilities or who are blind.
- **Medicare Savings Program (MSP).** This program helps pay for the costs of Medicare for older people and people with disabilities.

Here are some more programs you may be able to use. People at the Department of Human Services Offices or at other places can help you apply.

- **The Illinois Rental Assistance Program** helps people who need help paying their rent each month. Call (866) 454-3571 for more information or visit <https://www.ihda.org/about-ihda/illinois-rental-payment-program/>
- **The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** helps people pay their utilities each month (gas, electricity). Call (877) 411-WARM (9276) or visit www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/UtilityBillAssistance to learn more.

- **Lifeline (Phone and Internet Program)** is a program you can use to help pay for either your phone or the internet. The program will give you up to \$9.25 for your bill. Learn more at lifelinesupport.org/.
- **The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** helps parents who have a job or who go to school. The program provides money for childcare. Learn more at dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30355.

Social Security Programs

The Social Security Administration has other benefit programs that you may be able to use. These include:

Social Security Retirement Benefits. These payments are for people older than 62. To get the money, you must have to have worked or paid Social Security taxes for at least 10 years. Learn more here:

- The SSA's Retirement Calculator estimates your personal retirement benefits. Visit: www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/estimator.html
- The When To Start Receiving Retirement Benefits fact sheet can help you understand how Social Security fits into your retirement decision: www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf
- The SSA Retirement Planner gives information about your Social Security retirement benefits under current law: www.socialsecurity.gov/retire

Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This program provides income payments to people over 65 and adults and children who have a disability. You may be eligible if you are over 65, or you are blind or disabled and have little or no income and resources. You must also be a US citizen or national. SSI gives people money every month to help with things like food, clothing, and housing. Unlike Social Security Retirement Benefits, SSI benefits are not based on your prior work or a family member's prior work history.

- For information about eligibility, visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-eligibility-ussi.htm>
- For information on SSI benefits after incarceration, visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/reentry/benefits.htm>

Medicare. This program provides health insurance to people older than 65 and people with a disability. See www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). This program gives money to adults and certain family members with disabilities. To use this program, you need to have worked for many years.

Note: Disability applications may be rejected at first. If you don't qualify, don't give up. Keep trying.

Learn more and apply at [ssa.gov](https://www.ssa.gov), or call (800) 722-1213 for help. Get in-person help by making an appointment with your local Social Security office. Go to <https://www.ssa.gov/locator>.

Benefits Checklist

Program	Description	Do I qualify?	Have I applied?
SNAP	Money for food, LINK card		
Medicaid	Healthcare help		
TANF	Money for needy families		
AABD	Money for blind/disabled		
Lifeline	Help with phone and internet payment		
Rental Assistance Program	Provides help with rent		
LIHEAP	Provides help with utility bills		
Medicare	Health insurance for seniors, people with disabilities		
SSI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
SSDI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
Social Security Retirement Benefits	Monthly payments for those who are retired		

Places to Go for Help

Note: You can always call 9-1-1 if you are having an emergency, or 2-1-1 (Illinois) or 3-1-1 (Chicago) to find services in your area. These numbers will help direct you to a place where you can go for help meeting your basic needs.

The table below lists a few more places you can go for help.

	Where to get help	Website or phone number
Food	Food pantries, soup kitchens	Find one at illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp
Healthcare and dental care	Community health clinics and dental clinics. Go to an emergency room if you have an emergency.	Find one at www.freeclinicdirectory.org/illinois_care.html Call 911 if you are having an emergency.
Substance use treatment	Support group, treatment programs	Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at (800) 662-4357. For a support group, go to aa.org (Alcoholics Anonymous) or na.org (Narcotics Anonymous).
Housing	Emergency housing, transitional housing	Go to https://www.hud.gov/findshelter/ or call 2-1-1 (Illinois) or 3-1-1 (Chicago).
Mental health (emergency)	Suicide and crisis lifeline , hospital emergency room	Call 9-8-8 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Call 9-1-1 if you are having an emergency.
Mental health (non-emergency)	Mental health clinics that offer free or low-cost services	Go to dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29763 or call the Illinois Warm Line at (866) 359-7953.