



Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care

Ending Homelessness in Connecticut | Email: ctboscoc@gmail.com | Website: www.ctbos.org

CT BOS – Response to Provider Questions & Concerns on COVID-19

June 24, 2020

Please submit questions to ctboscoc@gmail.com.
The CT BOS team will answer questions as quickly as possible.

Items updated since June 10th are in *red text*.

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To access the Frequently Asked Questions provided by the State of Connecticut, go to:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/COVID-19-FAQs.pdf>

1. Can homeless service programs continue to operate under Governor Lamont’s “Stay Safe, Stay Home” executive order?

Yes. Providers of basic necessities to economically disadvantaged populations, including food banks, homeless shelters and other critical human services agencies providing direct care or support are defined under the order as “essential businesses.” The order directs all businesses and nonprofit entities in the State of Connecticut to utilize, to the maximum extent possible, any telecommuting or work from home procedures that they can safely employ.

2. Must we continue to meet all CoC requirements, even when doing so would require face-to-face interactions or divert attention from life-saving COVID-19 containment and mitigation efforts?

On multiple recent national calls, Norm Suchar (Director, HUD SNAPS Office) repeatedly emphasized that **all projects should make COVID-19 response their top priority**. HUD is actively working to find opportunities to ease regulatory burdens and will strongly consider the crisis in future monitoring.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, on 5/22/20 HUD released a new memorandum authorizing additional waivers for the Continuum of Care (CoC), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and HOPWA programs. This new memorandum authorizes additional waiver flexibilities beyond those included in the 3/31/20 HUD memorandum. On 5/28/20 CT BOS released an updated memorandum providing a summary of all ESG and CoC waivers from both HUD memos, and information about how to use the waivers.

CT BOS strongly encourage all CT BOS CoC & DOH ESG funded provider agencies to carefully review the information contained in this memo. Please use the available flexibility to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate assistance to eligible households, particularly those most vulnerable to exposure to and/or serious complications from COVID-19.

CoC and ESG grant recipients who wish to use the available waiver authority must adopt associated policies. CT BOS has developed an [Updated Sample Emergency Policy](#) for Emergency Operation of Homeless Assistance Programs in the Event of Public Health Emergencies that agencies can use for this purpose.

If your agency has a CoC grant agreement directly with HUD, you must submit a notification to HUD that you will be using the flexibility provided by the waivers and specify the waivers you will be implementing. This includes both the original waivers and those that are newly available. CT BOS has updated its [waiver notification template](#) to include the new waivers.

HUD approval is not necessary – only notification. Providers can proceed to use the available waivers two calendar days after the grant recipient submits the notification to HUD. **Please also submit to ctboscoc@gmail.com a copy of all waiver notifications submitted by your agency to HUD.**

Norm Suchar has recommended, if your project needs to deviate from usual practices in order to ensure focus on critical COVID-19 related activities, that you make a brief note explaining the rationale in your project files, so that it is documented for the purposes of future monitoring.

In some cases, a CoC grant agreement amendment may be helpful. See #4 for information on obtaining an amendment. For guidance on contract amendments specific to your project, please contact the CTBOS team at ctboscoc@gmail.com.

HUD CoC regulations **do not require face-to-face case management**. Guidance on how to reduce risks when face-to-face interaction is unavoidable is available from a number of sources including:

<https://www.csh.org/2020/03/csh-covid-19-supportive-housing-community-platform/>
www.usich.gov/covid-19.

[CDC COVID 19– homelessness landing page](#)

3. During the CoC HQS inspection waiver period, if someone exits a CoC program before the date of the required HQS re-inspection, do we have to go back and re-inspect in person?

For any CoC scattered-site project, assuming no household members remain in the unit and no CoC funds are being expended¹ on the unit, then no re-inspection is

¹ If a CoC Rental Assistance (RA) Unit is vacated before lease expiration, RA may continue for a maximum of 30 days from the end of the month in which the unit was vacated, unless occupied by another eligible person. Brief periods of stays in institutions, not to exceed 90 days for each occurrence, are not considered vacancies.

required. Unit turnover in a congregate project requires an initial inspection, before assistance is initiated for the new household. During the waiver period this could be done virtually.

4. What should we do if a shelter or housing client refuses to wear a mask or comply with other measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 (e.g., wear gloves, wash hands, remain 6 feet apart from others, vacate an area to enable cleaning)?

[CT Department of Public Health Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employers](#) indicate that employees and customers should be required to wear a mask and practice social distancing while in the workplace and that employers should clean the work environment at regular and appropriate intervals². CT Department of Housing and CT BOS team consulted with the CT Fair Housing Center and currently available guidance from the CDC, OSHA, and CT DPH. As new information about COVID-19 emerges, guidance is updated regularly, and homeless service agencies should check back frequently and adjust approaches as necessary in response to changing guidance.

When a client struggles to follow measures to reduce transmission:

- Focus on education so people understand the reasons for precautions. Be sure that you have fully **explained the reasons** for the requirements and the risks associated with not following the requirements so that the person can make an informed decision.
- Emphasize that wearing a mask helps prevent the wearer from transmitting the novel coronavirus so it **helps others**. Many people are motivated to do things when they think it will help other people.
- Whenever possible be sure that the information has been provided in **various formats**, including through infographics and by multiple people, including peers. Try having someone with strong rapport speak with the client privately. Here are some sources for infographics: [CDC](#), [World Health Organization](#), [National Healthcare for the Homeless Council](#)
- Remember that the fear, stress and anxiety associated with COVID-19 related risks and the uncertainty and disruption of changed routines and lack of control, is upsetting for everyone and can be especially triggering for trauma survivors. Helping people to understand their options, make informed decisions, and exercise as much control over their choices and environments as possible are essential components of **trauma-informed care**.
- Frame discussions about non-adherence in a matter-of-fact, nonjudgmental way that provides the person with choices and helps them to **evaluate the likely outcomes of each choice**.

² Cleaning Guidance is included in these documents: [CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#), [OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

- Staff who are concerned for their own safety may have trouble maintaining a matter-of-fact, non-confrontational tone. Developing a short (not more than 30 second) script for all staff to consistently deliver each time someone doesn't adhere to the requirements, can make it easier to stay calm and reduce the likelihood that some individuals feel targeted. Such a script, when consistently delivered, can help establish the desired behavior as a **group norm**. More information is [here](#).
- Use **incentives** to encourage the desired behavior. This can include acknowledging people who are kind to others and taking precautions, recognizing small steps toward adherence, offering gift cards, etc.
- Ask about what the person is **trying to accomplish**. For example, removing a mask may help someone to reduce anxiety or being close to someone might be an effort to feel recognized or heard.
- Help the person to explore **safer alternatives** to achieving the same goal and provide opportunities to meet the identified need (e.g., safer ways to socialize, or the ability to go outside when a mask is triggering anxiety).
- **Acknowledge** efforts to keep others safe. Talk about how uncomfortable the precautions can be and strategize ways to make it more comfortable (e.g., areas where masks can be removed, customizing masks to make them more personal and to reduce feelings of invisibility).
- Be mindful of how upsetting **disruptions to routine** can be and find opportunities to maintain the structures people are used to or to adopt new structures. For example, continue pursuing plans to get housing and income, provide a new predictable schedule for things like meals, recreation, meetings with staff, and cleaning.
- Provide **opportunities to stay connected** safely (e.g., distanced bingo with prizes, using a computer to connect with a sponsor, a smoking area demarcated with appropriate distances).
- **Elicit ideas** for what will make adherence easier from everyone in the community (e.g., clients and staff in different roles). Encourage everyone to **support** each other and find opportunities for people to offer their expertise and help others.
- Ask what the person **thinks will happen** if they do not adhere to the requirement. Some people may believe that they will get a hotel room or housing. Explain the criteria and the process for accessing these resources and help people to take the steps needed to get housed.
- Use **negative consequences only when you have exhausted other strategies** and only when there is a significant, imminent threat to health and safety. Consider other rules that clients have to follow and consequences for violating them. The rules that would be most relevant are the ones that are designed to keep people safe like not bringing in weapons or drugs. Use the consequences for those kinds of violations as a guide for how to respond with consistency in your program. Whenever possible, avoid discharging people from the facility, as doing so significantly increases risks for the person and the broader community. First, consider less extreme consequences that directly address the problem and reduce risks, e.g., losing privileges for common areas.
- Be mindful that certain guidance (e.g., wearing a mask) is [contraindicated for some people](#).

- Be sure that you have made all reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. This may include things like providing the information in a different way, assigning a staff person to provide repeated, gentle reminders, or accommodating the person in an area of the facility where non-adherence presents fewer risks to others.

When conflicts arise due to cleaning protocols:

- Consider alternatives that reduce disruption to the typical schedule. For example, clean common areas before people awake or after they go to bed. Offer coffee in the lobby, or outside on nice days when you must clean.
- Establish a consistent, predictable cleaning schedule.
- If the cleaning must occur at a time that is disruptive to usual routines, provide activities (e.g., games) or incentives (e.g., snacks) to make it more palatable.

5. Is there funding available to cover the expenses provider agencies incur related to COVID-19?

USICH compiled this resource: [Federal Programs that Support Individuals Experiencing Homelessness](#) to:

- Identify forms of federal assistance that can provide additional support to agencies/organizations addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Provide a listing of federal programs in a [funding matrix](#) that may be utilized to help federal, state, and local funding to meet short- and long-term needs. Additional guidance is forthcoming to support funding coordination and braiding.

Information on ESG and CoC eligible costs related to COVID-19 is available at:

- [Using CoC Program Funds for Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response](#)
- [Eligible ESG Costs for Infectious Disease Preparedness](#)

A HUD FAQ on using CoC funds on the project administration budget line item for COVID-19 related staff training is here:

- [FAQ: Can CoC project administrative funds be used to train recipient staff to safely deliver assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic?](#)

A HUD FAQ on using ESG funds for **COVID-19 related staff training** is here:

- [FAQ: Can ESG funds be used to train staff on how to deliver services during the COVID-19 pandemic, including how to recognize symptoms, how to protect](#)

[recipient staff from infection, and how to protect against spreading the virus while providing assistance?](#)

The HUD CT Field Office has advised that HUD regulations (2CFR200.430) allow grantees to pay more than normal staff pay rates (e.g., **overtime, hazard pay**) in certain circumstances as long as the grantees policies and procedures allow for it. If grantees do not have this provision within their policies and procedures at the current time, they can develop them. Agencies wishing to exercise this option should forward your relevant policies and procedures to the Harford CPD Office. They will review them and, if all is in order, approve them as special disaster policies and procedures.

CT BOS has developed a [Sample Policy](#) for Emergency Operation of Homeless Assistance Programs in the Event of Public Health Emergencies. Agencies wishing to use CoC funds to offer hazard pay should adopt a similar policy.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established the [COVID-19 Telehealth Program](#), which makes \$200 million in CARES Act funding available to eligible nonprofit and public health care providers to provide telehealth services to patients in their homes or mobile locations. Funds are available to reimburse eligible expenses for devices, telecommunications and information services. CSH prepared a summary including instructions on how to apply for funds: [FCC COVID-19 Telehealth Program Overview for Supportive Housing Providers](#)

Federal CARES ACT

The CARES ACT passed on 3/27/20. Available details are as follows:

- \$4 Billion for **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)** for coronavirus prevention, preparation and response:
 - HUD has released the first wave of funding to ESG recipients.
 - HUD is required to release the second wave of funding by 6/27/20, but is working to release much more quickly.
 - Can be used to cover costs incurred prior to enactment of the Act
 - All match and planning requirements waived
 - Allowable uses include, Rapid Rehousing, hotel/motels for people at risk of infection, symptomatic, and/or COVID 19+
 - Waives cap on amount used for shelter, habitability, and environmental review requirements
 - Provides HUD with broad waiver authority
 - HUD is required to sustain a focus on Housing First practices for activities supported with these funds

- **Coronavirus Relief Fund:**

- \$150 billion for a Coronavirus Relief Fund with only a general description provided in the Act so far.
- Payments to be made to States, Tribal governments, and unit of local government to cover costs that:
 - Are necessary expenditures incurred due to COVID-19 public health emergency;
 - Were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of the date of the Act for the State of government;
 - And were/are incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020.

On a 3/27/20 webinar, HUD emphasized the **significant scope** of this additional funding. As a point of comparison, the 2009 HPRP fund allocation was 1.5B nationally. HUD encouraged immediate planning by projects and system leaders to significantly **ramp up capacity in RRH projects to expend new funds**.

The bill also includes \$20 billion set aside for Veterans. Please be sure to connect Veterans to your local VA Medical Center to access all resources available to them. This will help to ensure that the other available funds can be accessed by non-Veterans.

For more information about individual checks and expanded unemployment benefits now available under the CARES Act see #14.

FEMA Funds

The CARES Act includes \$30 billion in additional funds for FEMA’s Disaster Relief Fund. CT was declared a major disaster area on 3/29/20, which enables access to these funds. Many COVID-19 related expenses are FEMA eligible. Maximizing the use of FEMA funding will reduce reliance on other sources and will help to ensure that people experiencing homelessness can access as much assistance as possible. Information about expenses eligible for FEMA assistance is below:

- [FEMA Public Assistance - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Eligible Emergency Protective Measures](#)
- [FEMA COVID-19 Feeding Guidelines](#)
- [FEMA COVID-19 Sheltering Guidelines](#)

CTBOS will circulate other potential funding resources as they become available.

6. Is there a way to expedite CoC grant amendments during the crisis?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) has developed an expedited process for amending CoC Program recipient grant agreements.

Recipients who need grant agreement amendments to provide housing, services, or other necessities to support eligible clients can submit an amendment request using the process outlined on this page:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/covid-19-grant-agreement-amendments/>

Recipients must include documentation in their project files that supports the request for the grant agreement amendment. Recipients may extend their project's operating year to fully utilize awarded funds. The latest end date allowed for 2018 grants is 12/31/20. This permanently changes the grant's operating start date. Budget amendments in the first year of a CoC award are also allowed.

A shift of more than 10 percent from one approved eligible activity to another eligible activity is considered a significant change and requires a grant agreement amendment from HUD. A shift of less than 10 percent of CoC Program funds from one approved activity to another over the term of the grant does not require HUD approval. However, you must notify the field office of these changes in order to update the budget in LOCCS. Recipients and subrecipients must fully document minor changes to an approved grant or project in their records. If you are a subrecipient of CoC funds, please coordinate with the grant recipient prior to making any changes.

DMHAS Funds

For DMHAS projects, agency directors have been contacted by DMHAS regarding agency supply needs and/or requested programmatic changes during the COVID-19 emergency. Please reach out to your agency leadership regarding any supplies you may need or any programmatic changes that you'd like to request.

DMHAS is issuing frequent Provider Updates available at

<https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Newsorthy/News-Items/DMHAS-Response-to-COVID-19#provider>

Agencies that may be interested in exploring how **EHAF funds** might be used differently in light of the crisis should contact Alice Minervino at DMHAS (alice.minervino@ct.gov; 860.418.6942).

7. How can we obtain supplies needed to reduce COVID-19 risks?

In some cases, purchasing such supplies is an eligible CoC or ESG expense -see #3.

CT DOH has requested that all supply requests from programs they fund be centralized through your CAN lead. CAN leads are responsible for collecting and referring requests to

DOH. On a recent national call, HUD SNAPS staff indicated that the recommended path to secure necessary protective, hygiene, cleaning and other supplies is through your local county and, as necessary, state departments of health and that those agencies are coordinating requests to the federal government. CCEH has posted a map of local health departments and districts at <https://cceh.org/2020/03/20/11330/> in CT. USICH has posted a directory of health departments that includes contact information at <https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory>

CCEH received a donation of cloth face masks from United Healthcare and Corporation for Supportive House. If your agency would like to receive a shipment of masks, please let CCEH know by filling out [this form](#).

8. What changes have been made to help prevent evictions, foreclosures, rent/mortgage late fees and utility shut-offs?

Executive Order No. 7X was issued by Governor Lamont in April and provides protections for renters. **However, the provision that prevented landlords from initiating an eviction process expires on July 1st**. The order also included a 60-day grace period to pay April and May rent, but no such grace period applies for June rent and beyond.

Under the Order, if the security deposit paid was more than 1 month's rent, renters can apply the amount above 1 month's rent to their April, May, or June rent. Renters must request to do so from the landlord in writing and inform the landlord of financial hardship related to COVID-19.

CCEH has partnered with the CT Fair Housing Center, Connecticut Legal Services, and CT Department of Housing to provide you with an "Update on the Status of Evictions in Connecticut During the COVID-19 Crisis". This webinar will be held on Thursday, June 25th from 2:30pm-3:30pm, and will discuss the end of Governor Lamont's **Executive Order 7x** as it relates to Protections for Residential Renters Impacted by COVID-19.

[**Register Here**](#)

See the link below for information on the CT **moratorium on utility shut-offs**:

<https://uwc.211ct.org/utility-shut-offs/>

The federal CARES Act imposes a 120-day moratorium on tenant evictions, filings, and late fees for almost all affordable housing properties. The moratorium took effect on March 27, 2020

Programs covered by the moratorium include, but are not limited to: the CoC, HOPWA, low-income housing tax credit, public housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 2020 supportive housing for the elderly, Section 811 supportive housing for people with disabilities and HOPWA programs.

UNDER THE FEDERAL MORATORIUM Providers/Landlords in covered programs cannot:

- File a new eviction action, issue a vacate notice, or terminate assistance for nonpayment
- Charge fees/penalties for nonpayment of rent or nonpayment of fees/penalties
- Issue a notice to vacate for nonpayment of rent/fees/penalties
- Require a tenant to vacate due to unpaid rent or fees without 30-day notice

The earliest an eviction for nonpayment could be filed is late August 2020.

More information is available at:

- [How Does the Federal CARES Act Eviction Moratorium Impact the ESG and CoC Programs? FAQs and Flyer](#)

For current information on the status of efforts to prevent homelessness through moratoriums on evictions, foreclosures and late fees, you can also visit www.ctfairhousing.org. Information about fair housing protections for people infected with or perceived as being infected with COVID-19 is also available at that link.

Information on this topic is also available in the Frequently Asked Questions provided by the State of Connecticut: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/COVID-19-FAQs.pdf>

9. How can we help clients to obtain and maintain benefits if offices are closed?

Though CT DSS has suspended in-person visits to field offices as a protective measure for customers and staff, they are continuing to provide services. Customers can access benefit and application information 24/7 at www.connect.ct.gov and www.ct.gov/dss/apply; or 1-855-6-CONNECT; Information on ways to contact DSS online, by phone, by mail and at office dropboxes is at www.ct.gov/dss/fieldoffices

To access information on current benefits, go online through your [My Account](#) or call the DSS Benefits Center at 1-855-626-6632.

The Social Security Administration has also suspended in-person services. SSA is providing limited, critical services via phone, mail, and online. For information about what types of services the SSA is currently providing on-line and by phone and how to access those services go to: <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/>

10. How can we verify participant income for the purposes of CoC program rent calculation if we are unable to obtain source documentation?

The information in #7 above suggests that, despite office closures, there remain means to access documentation of benefit income. Though, this process is very likely now more difficult than ever – and perhaps in practice, at times, these alternatives may be extremely slow or non-functioning.

HUD CoC Program rules allow flexibility when source documentation of income is not available. Providers should follow this order of priority when documenting income.

1. source documents for the assets held by the program participant and income received before the date of the evaluation (e.g., most recent wage statements for a minimum of a one month period, unemployment compensation statement, public benefits statements, bank statement)[24 CFR 578.103(a)(6)(ii)];
2. if source documents were unavailable, a written statement by the relevant third party or the written certification by the recipient's intake staff of the oral verification by the relevant third party of the income the program participant received over the most recent 3-month period; 24 CFR 578.103(a)(6)(iii)];
3. or if source documents and third-party verification were unavailable, the written certification by the program participant of the amount of income that the program participant was reasonably expected to receive over the 3-month period following the evaluation? 24 CFR 578.103(a)(6)(iv)

If you are using option #3, you should document attempts to obtain source and third-party evidence.

11. How will CANs continue to operate during the crisis?

CT DOH has issued a Memorandum entitled "Changes to CAN appointments for COVID-19 to support ongoing effectiveness of CAN operations. That memo is available at: <https://cceh.org/2020/03/20/11330/>. As always, if you have any immediate concerns, regarding CAN operations, please contact either Kara Capobianco (kara.capobianco@ct.gov) or Leigh Shields-Church (leigh.shields-church@ct.gov).

12. Since libraries and other places where homeless people often go during the day are closed, what alternative resources exist.

CTDOH has asked shelters to remain open 24/7 in order to alleviate the need for day centers & prevent people from being on the street during the day. Though many are doing this, the practice varies from region to region.

13. How can we access phones/minutes for participants to enable us to keep in touch remotely?

CSH recently hosted a webinar on the [SafeLink Phone Program](#). CT BOS has posted [slides](#) from that webinar and an [FAQ on Safelink](#).

Under certain conditions, CoC Program funds can also be used to pay for phones so that program participants can receive supportive services - see the FAQ we published by HUD on 4/16 for details: <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/3709/may-recipients-and-subrecipients-of-coc-program-funds-purchase-cell-phones/>

Assurance Wireless (Virgin Mobile's version of Safelink) is giving all of their customers unlimited minutes and texts from now through 5/20 as well as 6 GB of data for free.

TracFone/Straighttalk (Walmart's minute plan): Partnering with Safelink Wireless to enroll clients in free minutes, assistance with bill pay, waiving reactivation fees, setting clients up with data and texting packages. Can visit safelinkwireless.com/enrollment or contact 1800 723 3546 for details.

Verizon: suspending late fees/re-connection fees, bill assistance, and getting extra minutes with proof of poverty, unemployment due to COVID. Best way is to assist clients, as needed, to apply online through the account.

AT&T: free/reduced cost wifi/hotspots through your phone, unlimited data for all existing clients, and providing services at \$10 per month for families with no income, low income, or financial strain due to COVID. Will extend the \$10 per month plan after COVID crisis. Online is the most efficient way to apply due to the high number of callers (per info on website).

Cricket: dial 611 to enroll in any COVID relief programs. Waiving re-connection fees, and all service fees on payments. Can use Bridge Pay to pay current bills in future months, over a longer period of time, and/or smaller payments per billing cycle. Includes minute plans. To

call 611 you must call off of the Cricket issued phone, if someone else is calling for the client the number is 1 800 274 2538.

14. How can our program access Narcan?

Please contact Brenda Earle at DMHAS brenda.earle@ct.gov for any Narcan needs.

15. What changes should projects consider to visitor policies?

CSH released guidance on COVID-19 related adjustments to visitor policies for supportive housing developments. That guidance is available at CSH's Supportive Housing community platform. That platform also includes other resources and guidance related to the COVID 19 crisis (<https://www.csh.org/2020/03/csh-covid-19-supportive-housing-community-platform/>).

16. How can providers help to ensure that all clients promptly receive new benefits to which they are entitled under the CARES Act?

The CARES Act expands unemployment insurance and provides checks of up to \$1,200 for single taxpayers, \$2,400 for married joint filers, and \$500 for each dependent child. These benefits can help many people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness to access or retain housing or meet other basic needs.

Information related to the process that will be used to distribute CARES Act checks continues to emerge. Currently available information can be found at: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus>

You can help clients to [Check your payment status](#).

Most eligible U.S. taxpayers will automatically receive their Economic Impact Payments including:

- Individuals who filed a federal income tax for 2018 or 2019
- Individuals who receive Social Security retirement, survivors, or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits
- Individuals who receive Veterans Administration benefits
- Individuals who receive Railroad Retirement benefits

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is [now available online and by phone with Virtual VITA](#). Virtual VITA, an IRS-approved program, can help obtain federal stimulus checks. VITA advises

that, if you have not already received your federal stimulus check payment, act now in order to meet the **July 15th tax filing deadline.**

Virtual VITA can assist you with:

- free federal and state tax preparation;
- free filing to receive the federal stimulus checks (also called Economic Impact Payments, or EIP) provided by Congress to help families and individuals during this pandemic; and
- free filing for the temporary federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) for those who cannot get state unemployment benefits.

It is important to know that receiving the Economic Impact Payments will not affect eligibility for DSS food, cash, or medical benefits.

People who did not file a 2018 and/or 2019 tax return can use the link below to submit banking or address information to which they can receive their economic stimulus payment. This link is just for non-filers. Please check this same site periodically for an additional link for those who may need to update their banking or address information.

- [Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info Here](#)

To Receive \$500/child Economic Impact Payment:

- SSDI, SSI or VA benefit recipient with qualifying children under 17, who didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019, **must submit** to the non-filers portal above .
- The Deadline for SSDI recipients was 5/5/20. The deadline for SSI recipients was 4/22.
- For recipients who missed the deadline, \$500 per eligible child will be paid with a return filing for tax year 2020.

Here's a flier you may want to distribute: [Stimulus Flyer for Clients who are Homeless – How to get the money!](#)

Information about COVID-19 related unemployment benefits is available from the CT Department of Labor at this link: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/DOLCOVIDFAQ.PDF>

17. What resources are available for undocumented immigrants?

On 5/1/20 a representative of the CT Department of Social Services presented information about benefits available during the COVID-19 crisis. This included benefits available to undocumented immigrants. For more information, you can watch the [meeting recording](#).

USCIS implemented the Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds final rule nationwide <https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/public-charge>

National Domestic Workers Alliance Relief Efforts

<https://domesticworkers.org/?fbclid=IwAR0dni3UgcCbjrBGbCYWJdSYBoI15mgHOroFcpz7QdRwcd-cKScjL81MGdc>

Immigrants Rising Resource Guide (California based, but includes some national resources)
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PxLuuH0-hwHXftUXuEi52Q1qWUDegN8_11L4ullFwzk/edit

Education benefits and relief for undocumented immigrants
<https://www.undocuscholars.com/>

FreeLance Artists Relief
<https://covid19freelanceartistresource.wordpress.com/>

Bartender Emergency Relief
<https://www.usbgfoundation.org/beap>

CT CORE is building and facilitating a mutual aid/ community support network throughout Connecticut to ensure that folks in the community can request support or offer support and talents to those who can use them.
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSee9balhH7IglyvLdkBtlrMSK9>

18. Can CoC grantees sign HUD contract documents electronically?

HUD's Community Planning and Development (CPD) is instituting a policy to permit both CPD directors and grantees to electronically execute grant agreements and other documents, including:

- Authority to Use Grant Funds (AUGF)-7015.6
- LOCCS-signed vouchers, Official Address Change Form-27056, Banking Direct Deposit form-1199-A
- Continuum of Care (CoC) grant agreements
- Closeout agreements
- Grantee execution of all grant agreement (both formula and CoC).

Grantees will have the option to either scan and upload the signed document or sign electronically. For scanned documents, grantees will be responsible for maintaining documentation of the "wet signature."

CPD also now has an electronic process with electronic signatures for ELOCCs. Please let your CPD Representative from the HUD CT Field Office know.

19. Can projects get oral consent from participants in lieu of signing documents?

During their COVID-19 Office hours, HUD SNAPS staff have indicated that when obtaining a written signature from a CoC program participant is not safe or feasible, projects should use electronic signatures, if possible. If that is not possible, projects may document participant verbal consent and obtain a signature at a later date.

