COVID-19 Public Benefits Updates & Guidance

Date: Revised 4-7-2020

DPSS Benefits in Los Angeles County

DPSS administers the following benefits programs: GR (General Relief), CalWORKs, CalFresh, IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services), Medi-Cal, CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants), and Refugee Cash Assistance.

1. All DPSS offices are closed to the public. Staff are available by phone.

2. No terminations or reductions of DPSS benefits in March, April or May. If you are currently receiving CalWORKs, CalFresh, GR (General Relief), Refugee Cash Assistance, or CAPI, your benefits will continue at the same level for March, April and May 2020.

3. Re-certifications and reporting requirements are postponed for all programs. You do not have to submit a SAR-7 (semi-annual report), QR-7 (quarterly report), or recertification packets in March, April or May 2020. IHSS Reassessments are suspended for 90 days. Recertification packets originally due these months have been postponed as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recertification Originally Due:</th>
<th>Now Due:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2020</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2020</td>
<td>November 2020</td>
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4. **Work Requirements for GR and CalWORKs are waived for March-May 2020.** GR and CalWORKs recipients do not need to participate in work requirements for these three months.

5. **Applications for benefits may be made online or by phone and there are no in-person interview or wet signature requirements.**

All in person interview and signature requirements are currently waived. Most document requirements (such as for proof of income, bank account, etc.) will be obtained by affidavit if proof cannot be otherwise obtained.

There are a few ways to apply:

- Apply by phone by calling the Customer Service Center at 1-866-613-3777.
- Apply online for benefits at YourBenefitsNow.
  Go to DPSS Website ([http://www.dpss.lacounty.gov/](http://www.dpss.lacounty.gov/))
  Click on the YBN logo.
- Apply online for CalFresh (food stamps) at ([GetCalFresh.org](http://GetCalFresh.org))
- Apply online for Medi-Cal at Covered California website at [www.healthforcalifornia.org](http://www.healthforcalifornia.org).

6. **DPSS will mail EBT cards and if an individual has an “immediate need” should have their applications processed within one day.**

7. **Applicants experiencing homelessness can pick up their EBT (electronic benefit transfer) card through a designated system but no system yet for picking up their mail.**

Applicants experiencing homelessness without a mailing address can pick up their EBT card at designated times at their DPSS office. DPSS will verify applicant through a closed glass window/door and handed over with minimal contact.

DPSS has not announced a system for recipients experiencing homelessness who receive their mail at a DPSS office to be able to pick it up. New applicants are informed they cannot use the DPSS office as their mailing address.
Updates on the Social Security Administration

SSA administers the following benefits programs: SSI (Supplemental Security Income), SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), and SSA Retirement.

1. Offices are Closed.
All Social Security offices are closed to the public. Staff are available by phone. We have tested it and most offices can be reached easily by phone.

Individuals should call the SSA office for their zip code. They should avoid calling the national 1-800 as it has been overloaded with calls and the wait times are very long. **It is not particularly easy to find the local office number, so please help callers by looking it up for them.**

You can help someone find the phone number for their SSA office using the following steps:

- Go to [https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp](https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp)
- Enter zip code where individual lives here:

  ![Find the Office for this ZIP Code.](https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp)

- When the office information appears you find the local office number down at the bottom where the red circle is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Security Office Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address:</strong> 215 N SOTO STREET</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOS ANGELES, CA 90033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong> 1-860-772-1213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TTY:</strong> 1-800-325-0778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours:</strong> Monday Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday Closed</td>
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<td>Wednesday Closed</td>
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<td>Thursday Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday 12:00 AM - 12:01 AM</td>
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<td>Sunday Closed</td>
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**Office Closings and Emergencies**

All local Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020. This decision protects the population we serve, older Americans, people with underlying medical conditions, and our employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. For limited service, please contact the office directly at 866-964-1775.

Last updated 4/7/2020
2. **Social Security and SSI benefits will be issued as normal while the offices are closed.** Recipients will receive their cash Social Security benefits (SSDI, retirement) or SSI as they normally do. Benefits will be deposited on the same day as they normally are into their bank account. An individual who does not receive their benefits should call their local SSA office for more information.

3. **SSA is suspending some actions that could lead to terminations or reductions of benefits.** SSA has suspended Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs) and will not start any new CDRs. Where possible, SSA has suspended collection of overpayments.

4. **SSA has not automatically suspended deadlines for appeals, but has been directed to use “maximum” flexibility in allowing good cause for late appeals.** SSA has not automatically suspended deadlines for appealing reductions, terminations, or denials of benefits. Individuals should appeal online (at ssa.gov) where possible, call the local office to submit an appeal by phone, or submit appeal forms by mail. SSA has been directed to allow good cause for late appeals but applicants will likely need to request good cause if they file late.

5. **SSA cannot answer questions about individual economic stimulus payments as the IRS is the agency issuing those payments. (Information below on who can receive these payments.)**

6. **Social Security Benefits (SSDI and Retirement) and stimulus payments**

   Individual economic stimulus payments will be automatically issued to individuals receiving Social Security (SSDI and retirement) benefits. The IRS is the agency in charge of the economic stimulus payments. If your client does not know what type of federal benefits they receive then instruct that if they received an SSA-1099 form than they will receive an economic impact payment automatically.

   (Hint: Another way to determine if they receive Social Security (SSDI or retirement) benefits is that their monthly pay date is a day of the month besides the first.

7. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and stimulus payments**

   Although SSI recipients are eligible for these payments, it is not yet known how payments will be administered. Currently, it appears that SSI recipients can register with the IRS in order to provide information to receive an economic impact payment.

   TurboTax has partnered with the IRS to set up a portal at which people who didn't need to file taxes in 2018 or 2019 can register to have their stimulus checks direct-deposited into a bank account. Go to this website: [https://turbotax.intuit.com/stimulus-check/](https://turbotax.intuit.com/stimulus-check/)

   Then scroll down to this part:

   An individual needs a turbo tax account, email, and bank account to register.
Updates on Other Benefits

Miscellaneous Updates on Unemployment Insurance Benefits, State Disability Insurance, and Economic Stimulus Payments.

1. Applicants for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) can apply online at https://www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/UI_Online.htm or by phone at:

   By Phone

   Representatives are available at the following toll-free numbers, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12 noon (Pacific time) except on state holidays.
   - English: 1-800-300-5616
   - Spanish: 1-800-326-8937
   - Cantonese: 1-800-547-3506
   - Mandarin: 1-866-303-0706
   - Vietnamese: 1-800-547-2058
   - TTY: 1-800-815-9387

2. Information about expanded eligibility of workers who may receive Unemployment under the CARES Act is available at: https://www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019/faqs.htm

3. Applicants for State Disability Insurance (SDI) can apply online at https://www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/SDI_Online.htm or by mail.

1. Individual economic stimulus ("economic impact") payments will be made automatically to eligible individuals using information from 2018 or 2019 individual tax returns.

   Eligible taxpayers who filed tax returns for either 2019 or 2018 will automatically receive an economic impact payment of up to $1,200 for individuals or $2,400 for married couples and up to $500 for each qualifying child.

   TurboTax has partnered with the IRS to set up a portal at which people who didn't need to file taxes in 2018 or 2019 can register to have their stimulus checks direct-deposited into a bank account. https://turbotax.intuit.com/stimulus-check/ (scroll down to "If you don't need to file your taxes this year"). An individual needs a turbo tax account, email, and bank account.
2. Individuals who did not file a 2018 tax return should file a 2019 tax return as soon as possible in order to receive an economic stimulus payment. The IRS urges anyone with a tax filing obligation who has not yet filed a tax return for 2018 or 2019 to file as soon as they can to receive an economic impact payment. Taxpayers should include direct deposit banking information on the return.

3. Taxpayers with low incomes may file for free at designated free tax filing websites. The best way to find a free tax filing services is by using the look-up tool at https://apps.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/wizard.jsp

Encourage individuals to only use free tax filing sites if they are low income as some of these sites try to redirect individuals to paid products when they are eligible to file federal tax returns for free.

4. Individuals who want to know if they are eligible can check the IRS website at: https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know

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