

# Benefits Plus Learning Center



The Community Service Society's *Benefit Plus Learning Center* equips social service professionals through its high quality training opportunities to effectively help their clients' access and maintain public benefit/housing programs. Professionals learn how to navigate the government system and gain practical knowledge to help their clients cut through government red tape. Participants interact with expert instructors, learn best practices, engage in hands-on exercises, and network with other social service professionals.



Courses are held throughout the year at the Community Service Society (633 Third Avenue, 10<sup>th</sup> floor) for a fee of \$75 per person for half day (3-hour) workshops, and \$125 per person for full day courses. There are discounts for early bird and group registration. Go to <http://benefitsplus.cssny.org/home/training> for the current schedule.

These courses can also be conducted on-site at the individual agency location. Please contact Leslie Molina at 212-614-5444 or [lmolina@cssny.org](mailto:lmolina@cssny.org) for associated fees.

All participants receive a *Participant Guide* and an *Appendix* to use during the session, as well as in their work. These tools include making it practical exercises, advocacy tips, listings of local government offices and valuable resources, samples of pertinent government agency notices, and more. This brochure provides a listing and description of the Learning Center's courses.

***The Community Service Society of New York SW CPE is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #0213.***

[Click here](#) to become a member of the *Benefits Plus Learning Center* and receive email alerts to upcoming training.

# Benefits Plus Learning Center

## Training Courses

*The Community Service Society of New York SW CPE is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #0213.*

**Note:** Most of our courses are approved for continuing education credit and are marked with an “\*”. Each 3 hour course is eligible for 3 continuing education units (CEU) for licensed social workers. If a course is currently not available for CEU, and you would like it to be, please contact Leslie Molina, [lmolina@cssny.org](mailto:lmolina@cssny.org) or at 212-614-5444.

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***A full agenda of these courses are available upon request.  
Send an e-mail to [lmolina@cssny.org](mailto:lmolina@cssny.org).***

# Course Topics

## I. Introduction to Government Benefit Programs

### A. **Public Benefit Access: An Introduction to Public Benefits and Advocacy (Full Day: 6 hour training)**

Designed for advocates who want to learn how to help clients access government benefit programs, this course lays out the ground work of the public benefit system. The course includes the basics of qualifying factors, as well as useful terms, such as insurance vs. needs based benefits, financial criteria, qualified aliens and more. We introduce participants to five major public benefit programs, different resources available on the Internet, including government manuals, online calculators, housing resources, documentation guides, and more. Participants will learn how to prepare a case for advocacy, such as developing a time line, gathering documents to support client's case, as well as effective advocacy tactics, including developing a plan of action, using the chain of command, and more. Participants will have the opportunity to put into practice what they learn through making it practical exercises.

**Target Audience:** *Social service professionals new to the world of public benefits, as well as for those who may need a refresher!*

### B. **\* Unraveling the Public Benefit System (3.5 hour training)**

An introductory course on the public benefit system, which introduces you to eight major benefit programs: Cash Assistance, SSI, Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, the Essential Plan, Child Health Plus, and SNAP benefits. We will review the basics of eligibility and application, as well as discuss key concepts such as income, immigration status, insurance based benefits vs. needs based benefits, dual eligibility and more. You will discover available resources on the Internet, including government resources, legal services and various web-based calculators and online tools. Best practices to bring back to the work setting are included throughout the course.

**Target Audience:** *Social service professionals new to the world of public benefits, as well as for those who may need a refresher!*

## II. Advocacy

### A. **\* Learning the Ropes of Welfare Advocacy for Non-Attorneys (3 hour training)**

Gain the tools and knowledge to ensure your clients receive the benefits they are entitled through this course. Learn how to assess a client's situation by gathering relevant information, developing a time-line and determining the best plan of action. Discover how to resolve common problems, such as improper notification, missed appointments, lost documentation, etc. This course will also introduce you to several welfare lawsuits that will help your clients find relief while the Courts decide challenges brought by welfare attorneys. Included are helpful resources, agency contacts, and a brief description of the fair hearing process.

**Target Audience:** *Social service professionals seeking to learn advocacy strategies for Cash Assistance and SNAP applicants/recipients.*

### III. Cash Benefits

#### A. \* The Nuts and Bolts of SSI and SSDI (3.5 hour training)

Learn the differences between Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and how to identify which benefit an individual is receiving. Learn about the disability determination process, who qualifies for SSI and SSDI, dual eligibility, and application procedures, including strategies to avoid delays in the disability application process.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals seeking to help unravel SSI and SSDI benefits for their clients.*

#### B. \* Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work (3 hour training) – Part I

Individuals with disabilities may want to return to work but are unsure how earnings will impact their benefits. Find out how an SSI or SSDI beneficiary's benefit is affected when returning to work, including SSI budgeting, SSI's break-even point, what happens when an SSDI beneficiary enters and ends a trial work period, a description of the extended period of eligibility. Included is description of Ticket to Work Provisions, as well as client assistance programs. Basic knowledge of SSI and SSDI is required for this training.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who want to learn how to help SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who return to work.*

#### C. \* Rules for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Who Return to Work (3 hour training) – Part II

Discover how Social Security's return to work rules impact beneficiaries who receive both SSI and SSDI. Learn how a continuing disability review impacts a beneficiary's ongoing entitlement to benefits even as s/he engages in work. Find about health benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid for the dually eligible and the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Working People with Disabilities. Learn about expedited reinstatement and SSI and SSDI beneficiary may access this benefit. **Part I of this training is a required prerequisite.**

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who want to learn how to help SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who return to work.*

#### D. \*Cash Assistance for Beginners - Part I (3 hour training)

Find out about the Cash Assistance (CA) program for low-income families, singles, and childless couples. Part 1 covers the two programs available under the Cash Assistance program, who is included in the household size, who qualifies, how the CA grant is structured, how to calculate a household's standard of need, and how clients access the benefit.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who assist families and individuals with limited income.*

**E. \* Cash Assistance for Beginners - Part II (3 hour training)**

Discover how you can prepare your clients for the Cash Assistance application process and learn how to navigate the various appointments applicants are required to attend. We will present strategies and techniques for effective advocacy practices when clients experience common barriers in applying for Cash Assistance. Learn about program requirements such as the work rules, child support, substance requirements, finger imaging and domestic violence rules. Learn about recertification procedures as well. We strongly encourage participants take Part I of this course before Part II.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who assist families and individuals with limited income.*

**F. \* Cash Assistance for Working Families (3 hour training)**

Find out what happens when families on Cash Assistance find paid employment and what happens to their cash grant. Learn about reporting requirements, how earnings are budgeted, and overpayment procedures. Discover what happens to their Medicaid, child care and SNAP benefits when they are no longer eligible for Cash Assistance. We will cover how these transitional benefits work, who qualifies and how to apply as families transition to work.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who want to help Cash Assistance recipients who return to work.*

**G. \* Accessing Cash Assistance for Young Adults (3 hour training)**

Find out what how the Human Resource Administration (HRA) handles a Cash Assistance case when a young adult is living with his/her parents/guardian, when she is pregnant, and when s/he moves out of the household. Learn about the work rules and education requirements. Also included are strategies and techniques you can use to advocate effectively when your clients experience common challenges, such as when a young person applies for Cash Assistance and s/he is told s/he cannot apply. Knowledge of basic Cash Assistance eligibility and application requirements is required for this training – *Cash Assistance for Beginners: Part I.*

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals with knowledge of basic Cash Assistance eligibility who work with youth under 24.*

**H. \* Emergency Assistance (3 hour training)**

Learn about the types of emergency assistance available to low-income families and individuals, as well as SSI recipients, with a focus on those households who are not receiving Cash Assistance. Discover how an “emergency” is defined, who qualifies for emergency assistance and when it is appropriate to request an “exception to policy”. Learn when recipients are required to repay these grants, as well as how often they can receive them. Find out how to apply for emergency assistance and how to create a compelling case when requesting shelter arrears.

**Target Audience:** *Social service professionals assisting low income families and individuals with a financial crisis.*

## IV. Food Programs

### A. \* Checking Out the SNAP Program (3 hour training)

Find out who qualifies for SNAP benefits, and learn the budgeting procedures for the elderly, the disabled, as well as for working families with child care costs. Learn which households are eligible for expedited processing, how to use our free Benefits Plus's SNAP Calculator to determine whether a household is receiving the right amount of SNAP benefits, along with steps to take to correct the budget when incorrectly calculated. Lastly, we will review how to apply for SNAP benefits through the mail, fax and online.

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals assisting families and individuals with limited income navigate SNAP benefits.*

## V. Health Programs

### A. \* Medicaid for the Aged, Blind and Disabled Populations (3 hour training)

Find out how to navigate the Medicaid program for the disabled, aged and blind populations (non-MAGI). This course will cover a brief description of how Medicaid changed after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, who qualifies for Medicaid as a disabled, aged or blind individual, accessing Medicaid through managed care and special managed care provisions for the dually eligible, where and how to apply, as well as the renewal process, including transitioning from the NY State of Health Marketplace to the local Medicaid office when recipients become Medicare eligible. We will also provide a brief overview of the Medicare Savings Program, and Medicaid programs for the disabled: 1619(b) and the Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities.

**Target Audience:** *Health and social service professionals who work with the disabled, blind or aged populations and want to understand how Medicaid works for those who do not access Medicaid through the NY State of Health Marketplace.*

### B. \* Navigating Medicaid Spenddown for Your Clients (3 hour training)

Discover how the spenddown program works and who can access it. Figure out how to calculate the spenddown amount, how applicants and recipients can use paid and unpaid medical bills, and retroactive assistance. Find out about the pay-in system, how to get hospital services, where to apply for the spenddown, and more. Basic knowledge of Medicaid is required for this training.

**Target Audience:** *Health and social service professionals seeking an understanding of Spenddown and how to best help clients maximize the benefit.*

### C. \* The New World of Medicaid Managed Care (3 hour training)

As more Medicaid applicants/recipients enroll into managed care it is critical that advocates know how the managed care system works. This course will include an overview of mainstream managed care plans, selecting and enrolling in a plan, and switching to another plan. We will also cover special needs plans as well as managed long term care plans, the different types of managed long term care plans, including FIDA, mandatory enrollment (including

mandatory enrollment for nursing home residents), and how spenddown participants are handled.

**Target Audience:** *Health and social service professionals who are looking for an introduction to the different kinds of managed care plans under Medicaid and how they work.*

**D. \* The Affordable Care Act for the Non-Navigator (3 hour training)**

Learn about ACA's requirement for most individuals to have health insurance, who qualifies for an exemption, and what the penalties are if an individual fails to have health insurance. This course will review the types of health plans that are available: the qualified health plan, the basic health plan, and the catastrophic plan. It will include a description of the cost savings programs offered through the Marketplace – the premium tax credit and the cost sharing reduction. Also included is an overview of the enrollment process.

**Target Audience:** *Health and social service professionals seeking a basic knowledge of the ACA.*

## **VI. Housing**

**A. \* Housing Court: Eviction Proceedings (3 hour training)**

Non-attorney advocates can play an important role in helping tenants avoid the most dangerous pitfalls of Housing Court. Find out how NYC housing court works and how you can negotiate housing court on behalf of households facing an eviction. Learn the ways to answer a petition for non-payment, what types of defenses a tenant can employ and how to implement them, and the various outcomes that may result. Learn what a stipulation is and whether it is a good option for your client. Finally, discover what will happen when a judge signs an eviction order and how to delay or stop an eviction.

**Target Audience:** *Non-attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to the housing court process.*

**B. \* Road Map to Affordable Housing Options (3.5 hour training)**

Find out about the different types of affordable housing options available to vulnerable population groups. This course will provide information on supportive housing, including the New York/New York agreements, rent programs, including SCRIE, DRIE, the LINC program, FEPS, City FEPS, how to find affordable housing units through the Internet, as well as learning about housing resources for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

**Target Audience:** *Housing and social service professionals who assist low income household seeking affordable housing options.*

**C. Navigating Public Housing (3 hour training)**

Learn who qualifies for public housing, what priority codes are and how they work, how to obtain a public housing apartment, rent calculations and grounds for eviction, and an overview of grievance procedures.

**Target Audience:** *Non-Attorney housing and social service providers seeking an introduction to public housing.*

**D. Surviving in Public Housing (3 hour training)**

Learn how tenants residing in public housing can keep their apartments. Find out how to comply with the NYCHA lease, how to add and remove household members, succession rights, transferring to another apartment, as well as getting repairs and strategies to pursue when repairs are not completed.

**Target Audience:** *Non-Attorney housing and social service professionals who assist residents of public housing.*

**E. Maintaining a Section 8 Voucher (3 hour training)**

Find out how to calculate a tenant's share of the rent for tenants with a Section 8 voucher. Learn about lease requirements, how to handle recertifications, as well as annual apartment inspections. Find out how to add a family member to the lease and learn family members' rights to gain succession to an apartment. This training's focus is on NYCHA Section 8 vouchers.

**Target Audience:** *Non-attorney housing and social service professionals who assist households with a Section 8 voucher.*

## **VII. Immigrants**

**A. \* The World of Immigrants' Eligibility for Public Benefits (3 hour training)**

Public benefit programs have different rules and guidelines on immigrants' eligibility for public benefits; therefore helping immigrants obtain these benefits can be a challenging and complicated task. During this course you will learn which immigrants are "qualified aliens", "individuals who are lawfully present", or PRUCOL and which of these immigrants are eligible for public benefits. You will also discover which qualified aliens are eligible for major needs based benefit programs, including SSI, Cash Assistance, SNAP, and Medicaid. Learn how the new health program, the Essential Plan, will cover some immigrants previously covered by Medicaid. We will also learn how to use our Immigrants' Eligibility Chart to determine an immigrant's eligibility for 27 different benefit programs. **This course will not discuss how an immigrant can naturalize or become legal in the U.S.**

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who work with immigrants and who assist them with applying for benefits.*

**B. \* Benefits and Services for Individuals Who Are Undocumented (3.5 hour training)**

Individuals who are undocumented have limited government help available to them. Discover available resources they may be entitled to, including health programs, food programs, housing programs. Learn about their U.S. constitutional rights, how employment laws protect them, education rights, and how to use an ITIN. Learn about community based resources for the undocumented, such as banking, child and adult preventive services, language access, and more. **This course will not discuss how an immigrant can naturalize or become legal in the U.S.**

**Target Audience:** *Social service and legal professionals who work with individuals who are undocumented and who are residing in the U.S.*