



**COVID-19 and PUBLIC BENEFITS:**  
**SNAP, TANF and MEDICAID**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**NOTE:** The Frequently Asked Questions below were written to help answer questions we have heard because of the COVID-19 emergency. It is important to have reliable information when dealing with a public health emergency. However, the situation is changing very rapidly and the information below may not be up-to-date. Under normal circumstances, many of the answers may be different. The information that follows is based on Illinois and US laws, regulations, and emergency orders. This information is intended only to be an overview of your rights. Since every case is different, you should not rely on this information as a substitute for an attorney.

**I lost my job! What can I apply for?**

- 1) The first thing you should do is file for unemployment benefits with the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Apply online at <https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/Pages/default.aspx> or call 1-800-244-5631.
- 2) Next, apply for **SNAP benefits** (foodstamps) with the Illinois Department of Human Services. You can apply for SNAP online at <https://abe.illinois.gov/>. If you need help with ABE call IDHS *Help is Here* toll-free line at 1-833-2-FIND-HELP and look at their webpage at [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529). You can also apply for SNAP by telephone by calling the ABE Call Center at 1-800-843-6154. There might be long waits to apply by phone.
- 3) If you have children living with you that are 18 or younger (19 if in high school), you should apply for **TANF cash** assistance with the Illinois Department of Human Services. You can apply for TANF online at <https://abe.illinois.gov/>. If you need help with ABE call IDHS *Help is Here* toll-free line at 1-833-2-FIND-HELP and look at their webpage at [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529). You can also apply for TANF by telephone by calling the ABE Call Center at 1-800-843-6154. There might be long waits to apply by phone.
- 4) Fourth, if you need health insurance, you can also apply for **medical benefits** with Illinois Department of Human Services. You can apply for medical benefits online at <https://abe.illinois.gov/>. If you need help with ABE call IDHS *Help is Here* toll-free line at 1-833-2-FIND-HELP and look at their webpage at [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529). You can also apply for Medical programs by telephone by calling the ABE Call Center at 1-800-843-6154. There might be long waits to apply by phone.

**I don't have a phone or computer that I can use to apply online. Should I go into the DHS local office?**

All DHS offices are closed. If you need help with applying online, call IDHS *Help is Here* toll-free line at 1-833-2-FIND-HELP and look at their webpage at [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=123529)

**I filed my application online but DHS wants me to send them documents. How do I do that?**

Depending on which program you apply for, DHS may still need you to send them some documentation. You can fax your documents to DHS. You can also scan and upload your documents to ABE. Finally, you can mail your documents to a local office. If you mail documents to DHS, try to make a copy of the documents for your records.

**I receive SNAP but I can't complete the work requirements. Will I lose my SNAP?**

No. DHS has suspended the SNAP work requirements that people without dependents had to do. The SNAP benefits you receive while we are under the public health emergency will not count towards your limit.

**I have to work to receive my TANF cash benefits but I can't work right now because I don't have any child care. Will I lose my TANF?**

No. If you are not able to do the work and training requirements because of the COVID-19 crisis, you can request Good Cause. You may be asked to provide proof to show the reason for your good cause.

**I heard that I might get extra SNAP benefits this month. Is that true?**

Yes. DHS is going to issue emergency supplemental SNAP for April and May up to the maximum amount of SNAP for the number of people in the household. If you already receive the maximum amount, you will not be eligible for the supplement.

**Are there other legal resources available besides Land of Lincoln?**

The Public Interest Law Initiative PILI has set up the COVID-19 Illinois Free Legal Answers Task Force. [il.freelegalanswers.org](http://il.freelegalanswers.org) is a secure website (il.freelegalanswers.org) where low-income Illinoisans can ask a lawyer a question about a civil legal issue.

You can also call or email the Illinois Lawyer Finder Service. The telephone number is 800-922-8757 and the website is [www.isba.org/public/illinoislawyerfinder](http://www.isba.org/public/illinoislawyerfinder).

Illinois Legal Aid Online also has a lot of legal information at [www.illinoislegalaid.org](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org).

**Land of Lincoln Legal Aid  
Legal Advice & Referral Center  
Phone: (618) 394-7300  
1 (877) 342-7891**

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