

# Helpful New Rules at the County Assistance Office during the COVID-19 Emergency

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has helpful new rules to ensure people have continued access to **Medical Assistance, SNAP (formerly food stamps), cash assistance, and energy assistance** during the COVID-19 state of emergency.



## County Assistance Offices (CAOs) closed to the public

- CAO workers are still working. (Unsung heroes!)
- In Philadelphia, drop boxes have been placed outside each office and are open 8 AM – 5 PM, Monday – Friday.
- New applications are being processed.
- People are encouraged to use the online and phone services to provide documentation:
  - *COMPASS website*: [compass.state.pa.us](https://compass.state.pa.us)
  - *Mobile App*: MyCompassPA (to report changes)
  - *Customer Service Centers*: Phila – 215-560-7226; Statewide – 877-395-8930



## No Medical Assistance terminations

- No one will be cut-off from Medical Assistance, Long Term Care, or Home and Community Based Services except for the following circumstances:
  - A person is no longer a resident of Pennsylvania,
  - A person asks for their case to be closed, or
  - A person has died.



## SNAP renewals will be postponed and benefits will continue

- All SNAP (formerly food stamps) renewals will be postponed 6 months.
- Semi-annual reports are also postponed 6 months.



## No SNAP or TANF terminations for failure to submit information

- No SNAP or TANF benefits will be cut-off for failure to submit information.
- We advise you to submit what you can, but don't worry if you cannot.
- A person may be terminated from TANF for failure to complete an interview. All interviews are being done over the phone.



## No sanctions or terminations for failure to participate in TANF work requirements

- The EARN centers may be encouraging remote activities, but no one will have benefits reduced or cut-off for failure to participate.
- TANF interviews will be conducted via telephone.



## County Assistance Offices will use flexible verification processes

- Medical Assistance:
  - The CAO will accept your statement as verification (proof) for everything.
  - Verification of citizenship/alien status may still be requested.
- All other benefits:
  - Your statement will be accepted as proof of loss of wages or zero income.
  - For other verification, if you cannot provide it, tell the CAO! The CAO will try to get it for you. If that does not work, the CAO will accept your statement as proof.



## Appeal Deadlines Extended

- All appeal deadlines have been extended an additional 60 days.

