



WEEKLY E-MAILING

March 7, 2023

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Helpful Links

ACL News & Information

Here is a link to news & information from the Administration for Community Living (ACL):

<https://acl.gov/>

ADvancing States (NASUAD) Information

Here is a link to state technical assistance from ADvancing States:

<http://www.advancingstates.org/state-technical-assistance/enhancedtechnical-assistance>

Public Input Opportunity: HUD Fair Housing Proposed Rule

Kathy B. Miller, Director of Aging Programs & Services

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) seeks comments on a [recently published proposed rule](#) implementing the Fair Housing Act's mandate to "affirmatively further fair housing" with actions to overcome patterns of discrimination, promote fair housing choices, and eliminate disparities in housing opportunities. The Fair Housing Act offers protections on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), familial status, and disability.

The proposed rule provides that housing programs must consider people with disabilities and accessibility needs as central concepts when assessing and addressing barriers to fair and equitable housing, and even explicitly requires that these programs consult with organizations that advocate on behalf of older adults and people with disabilities — such as centers for independent living and aging and disability resource centers.

About the Proposed Rule and its Impact for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

The proposed rule outlines the process through which HUD-funded housing programs — including localities, states, and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) — should assess barriers to fair and equitable housing in their communities and commit to actions to address these barriers. The process centers around an Equity Plan which would be submitted to HUD for approval every five years. The Equity Plan is a modified version of the Assessment of Fair Housing currently in use.

Equity Plans would include an analysis of fair housing data and issues in the community being served, a description of the public engagement that the program undertook to develop the analysis, and the establishment of goals, strategies, and meaningful actions to address the identified issues. In addition, housing programs would submit an annual evaluation outlining progress towards the goals set in the Equity Plans and any necessary modifications. Since the Equity Plan would be submitted a year before other important five-year plans such as the Consolidated Plan, these broader housing plans must

incorporate the goals and commitments identified in the Equity Plan.

In general, the proposed rule is designed to:

- Emphasize goal-setting in Equity Plans, as well as the responsiveness of these goals to identified local fair housing issues.
- Increase transparency. For example, HUD would post submitted Equity Plans on its website and accept comments from the public while the Equity Plan is under review.
- Enhance HUD technical assistance to local communities and provide mechanisms for regular program evaluation and greater accountability.

The proposed rule includes several changes of relevance to the disability and aging communities. For example, the proposed rule incorporates disability and accessibility into the definitions of key concepts that housing programs must address in their Equity Plans. Specifically, the proposed rule:

- Incorporates housing needs of people with disabilities of all ages, including consideration of the need for accessible housing, into the Equity Plan's definition of "affordable housing opportunities."
- Defines "fair housing choice" for persons with disabilities as providing "a realistic opportunity to obtain and maintain housing with accessibility features meeting the individual's disability-related needs, housing provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to an individual's needs, and housing where community assets are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including voluntary disability-related services that an individual needs to live in such housing."
- Notes the relevance of the Supreme Court's *Olmstead v L.C.* decision and the integration mandate of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in defining terms such as "integration." The proposed rule states that "for individuals with disabilities, integration also means that such individuals are able to access housing and services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the individual's needs."

The proposed rule also requires housing programs to seek input from the community as they identify barriers to fair housing in their area and develop their Equity Plan. It requires consultation with different types of organizations, including organizations that advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities and older adults. The rule explicitly includes centers for independent living, protection & advocacy agencies, aging and disability resource centers, and councils on developmental disabilities as examples of the organizations that

must be included. Community engagement must also include holding community meetings to gather public input at different times of the day and in different locations throughout the jurisdiction to afford more members of the public, including people with disabilities and older adults, greater opportunity to provide feedback.

HUD seeks public comments, including from disability and aging stakeholders, **through April 10**. Comments can be [submitted online through Regulations.gov](#). [This HUD guide](#) offers tips on commenting and instructions on how to submit comments by mail. In the notice of proposed rulemaking, HUD has identified a number of questions on which they are particularly interested in receiving feedback. For example,

- *Should HUD require program participants to utilize different technology to conduct outreach and engagement? If so, which technologies have proven to be successful tools for community engagement? Are these technologies usable by individuals with disabilities, including those who utilize assistive technology or require reasonable accommodations such as real-time captioning or sign-language interpreters?*
- *Are there different or additional regulatory changes HUD could make to the proposed rule that would be more effective in affirmatively furthering fair housing, including ways to improve access to community assets and other housing-related opportunities for members of protected class groups, including historically underserved communities, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations?*
- *Does the analysis in proposed § 5.154 lend itself to identifying fair housing issues for each of the following protected class groups: race, color, national origin, sex, religion, familial status, and disability? If not, how can HUD improve this aspect of the analysis to better serve this purpose? Are there additional data sources that would assist in facilitating this analysis? Should HUD require that a minimum number of meetings be held at various times of day and various accessible locations to ensure that all members of a community have an opportunity to be heard? Should HUD require that at least one meeting be held virtually?*

For more about this rule download this [FAQ and fact sheet](#) or this [2-page quick reference guide](#). HUD also has an [Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing page](#) with these and many more resources.

For more information and resources on housing for people with disabilities and older adults, visit the [Housing and Services Resource Center](#), a partnership between ACL and HUD. The HSRC [Fair Housing page](#) compiles a

variety of additional resources for the aging and disability networks, including the [Engaging the Disability Community in Fair Housing Planning Webinar Series](#).

DARS Independent Living/IL Impact Newsletter

Teresa Jones, DARS

See the link below for the latest issue of [IL Impact](#) newsletter.

<https://conta.cc/3KuGfyD>

SCC Offers National Consumer Protection Week Reminders

Charlotte Arbogast, MS, Senior Policy Analyst

March 3, 2023

Contact: Jordan Bondurant

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RICHMOND – Helping Americans understand their consumer rights and make informed choices – that’s the goal of National Consumer Protection Week. The State Corporation Commission (SCC) is pleased to join the Federal Trade Commission and other federal, state and local agencies and organizations for this annual awareness campaign, which runs from March 5-11, 2023.

Whether you are shopping for a mortgage or automobile loan, have questions about your insurance policies or want to understand charges on your utility bill, the SCC may be able to help. SCC staff may provide information as well as assist with questions and concerns involving entities that the SCC regulates including insurance companies and agents, state-chartered financial institutions, investment firms and their representatives, retail franchises, and investor-owned utilities providing electric, natural gas, water, sewer and landline telecommunications service.

The SCC provides outreach and consumer guides in addition to other materials on topics such as understanding mortgage loans, investing wisely, saving energy, explaining various types of insurance, and more.

When it comes to regulated businesses and services, the SCC encourages Virginians to shop around and understand their options; thoroughly evaluate any offer; keep written records of all transactions; find products and services that suit their particular needs; review statements and bills regularly; learn to spot scams, and verify that an individual or company is properly licensed or registered.

Consumers should attempt to resolve issues directly with a regulated individual or company first. If the issue is not resolved to the consumer’s satisfaction, however, they can contact the SCC through its toll-free number at 1-800-552-7945 or call the appropriate SCC division in Richmond using the numbers below:

- Bureau of Insurance – 804-371-9741
- Bureau of Financial Institutions – 804-371-9657

- Division of Securities and Retail Franchising – 804-371-9051
- Division of Public Utility Regulation – 804-371-9611
- Office of the Clerk – 804-371-9733
- Division of Information Resources – 804-371-9141

Information about the complaint process, along with related forms, are available from the Consumers section of the SCC website at scc.virginia.gov.

If the SCC does not have regulatory authority over a particular company, individual, product or transaction, its staff will assist consumers whenever possible by providing a referral to any appropriate local, state or federal authority for assistance. These authorities may include the Office of the Attorney General, law enforcement agencies, or the Federal Trade Commission (which consumers can also contact directly through its toll-free helpline at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357)).

To learn more about National Consumer Protection Week, visit consumer.ftc.gov.

Register online to receive SCC news releases by email at scc.virginia.gov/pages/News-Release-Subscriptions

Temporary Benefits for Several Virginia Assistance Programs Will End Soon

Charlotte Arbogast, MS, Senior Policy Analyst



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | media@dss.virginia.gov



VDSS contact: media@dss.virginia.gov

DMAS contact: vamedicaidmediarequests@dmass.virginia.gov

Temporary Benefits for Several Virginia Assistance Programs Will End Soon

RICHMOND, VA (March 6, 2023) - Several medical, food and financial assistance flexibilities and programs administered by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) are set to expire due to recent changes in federal legislation. The programs, which have provided additional benefits and eligibility waivers to many Virginians, were offered on a temporary basis to help households cope with hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with the recent passing of the federal [Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023](#) announcing the end of the continuous coverage requirement on March 31, 2023, and approaching end of the federal public health emergency (PHE) on May 11, 2023, states will soon return to normal processes, including:

- [Virginia Medicaid](#)
 - Continuous health coverage will end March 31, 2023, with disenrollment beginning no earlier than April 30, 2023. Virginia will return to normal enrollment processes, including redeterminations and processing reductions/closures of health coverage.
 - Medicaid renewals will continue over a 12-month period. Members should make sure their contact information is up to date to ensure receipt of important information during the transition back to normal operations.

- [Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer \(P-EBT\)](#)
 - Final P-EBT benefits will be issued in August 2023, in accordance with the end of the federal public health emergency.
- [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program \(SNAP\) for College Students](#)
 - Expanded eligibility requirements will end June 10, 2023, in accordance with the end of the federal public health emergency. Issuances occur on the 1st, 4th, and 7th of the month.

Additionally, temporary benefits for the following programs have recently ended:

- [Temporary Cash Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#)
 - The period of continuous coverage ended, and Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) requirements resumed January 1, 2023.
- [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program \(SNAP\) Emergency Allotments](#)
 - Emergency Allotments that raised eligible SNAP households' maximum benefit ended February 16, 2023. Households will receive benefits without the additional supplement beginning March 2023. Issuances occur on the 1st, 4th, and 7th of the month.

VDSS and DMAS are working together to provide information and resources to prepare Virginia families for the upcoming program changes. Along with a dedicated unit of trained staff to support customers during this program transition, VDSS and DMAS have also partnered with health plan providers, community organizations, local schools, institutions of higher learning, and stakeholders to ensure eligible Virginians have access to all available resources, receive assistance in navigating systems, and are able to retain access to food assistance and quality health care coverage.

"We are proud to have offered Virginians enhanced monthly benefits and expanded access to benefit programs for as long as federal law allowed," said VDSS Commissioner Dr. Danny Avula. "Together, with assistance from our partners at DMAS, we are prepared to continue to help create opportunities for Virginia's families to work towards self-sufficiency and overall well-being."

"DMAS has been preparing for this return to normal process for the past two years, and we are committed to ensuring that our members continue to receive the health coverage that they deserve," said Cheryl Roberts, DMAS Director. "In partnership with our colleagues at VDSS, we are ready to help our members find the right health coverage – whether through Medicaid, the federal marketplace, or private health insurance – so that Virginians stay covered and stay healthy."

Households currently receiving assistance through any of the affected programs are strongly encouraged to verify their contact information is up to date to ensure prompt delivery of important notices and communications related to the upcoming changes.

Household information, including mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses can be verified or updated in the following ways:

[Commonhelp](https://Commonhelp.virginia.gov) (Commonhelp.virginia.gov)

For assistance with SNAP, SNAP for College Students, Medicaid, TANF, and P-EBT.

[Cover Virginia](https://CoverVA.org) (CoverVA.org) or call 1-855-242-8282 (TTY: 1-888-221-1590)


For assistance with Medicaid or FAMIS.

[Local Department of Social Services](#) (LDSS) are prepared to assist members with updating their contact information and provide information and resources regarding other Virginia programs.

Important Changes to Benefit Programs

Federal and state benefit programs that provided temporary eligibility and enrollment procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic will begin returning to regular operations over the coming months. These programs will have specific requirements and unique timeframes for returning to pre-pandemic services.

Please use the information below to find details concerning these important updates.

 VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES	SNAP Emergency Allotments	SNAP for College Students	Medical Assistance	TANF	P-EBT
WHAT <i>does this program do?</i>	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly food benefits to eligible households and individuals. SNAP emergency allotments were a temporary federal benefit provided to active SNAP households.	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for college students provides monthly benefits to eligible college students. Eligibility was temporarily expanded to allow greater participation by students enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education.	The Medicaid and Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan (FAMIS) programs provide medical and dental health care coverage to eligible children, adults and families. Participants were provided continuous coverage during the previous period and were not required to submit for annual renewal of benefits.	The Temporary Cash Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides monthly cash payments to eligible households. TANF families were temporarily provided benefits beyond the usual 24- and 60-month limits. Requirements for the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) program were also waived.	The Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program provides free meals to school eligible aged children at participating schools. This program supplemented school meals that students missed while schools were closed or placed on part-time schedules due to COVID-19 restrictions.
WHY <i>Is this changing?</i>	Passing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023	The ending of the federal Public Health Emergency	Passing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023	The end of the temporary program allowances was based on planned administrative decisions.	The ending of the federal Public Health Emergency
WHEN <i>will changes occur?</i>	February 16, 2023	June 10, 2023	April 1, 2023	January 1, 2023	May 11, 2023
WHERE <i>can I learn more?</i>	dss.virginia.gov/SNAP	dss.virginia.gov/SNAPcollege	coverva.org/en/phe-planning	dss.virginia.gov/TANF	pebta.com
VDSS Assistance	dss.virginia.gov/benefitchanges				



For program eligibility or to apply for assistance online, visit [CommonHelp](https://CommonHelp.virginia.gov).
For phone assistance, contact the Enterprise Call Center at (855) 635-4370.
For deaf or hard-of-hearing (TTY/TTD) assistance, contact (800) 552-7917 or (866) 246-9300.

[VDSS Important Changes to Benefits Programs](#)

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About the Virginia Department of Social Services

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), one of the Commonwealth's largest government agencies, is comprised of approximately 2,000 state staff who proudly serve alongside more than 10,000 employees of 120 local departments of social services and community action agencies to deliver critical social services to Virginia's most vulnerable citizens. VDSS is committed to ensuring Virginians have access to the high-

quality human services and resources needed to enhance their individual and collective well-being, and shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities. The agency provides a wide range of services and resources in the areas of food and energy assistance, foster care and adoption, child support, and abuse and neglect prevention, among others. For more information, visit <https://www.dss.virginia.gov>.

About the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) plays an essential role in the Commonwealth's health care system by providing lifesaving medical coverage to one in four Virginians. For more information, visit www.dmas.virginia.gov.

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

SNAP EBT, P-EBT Card Scams: Virginia State Agencies issue Alert

Charlotte Arbogast, MS, Senior Policy Analyst

With COVID emergency benefits ending in mid-February, users might receive unsolicited text messages or phone calls by criminals to take advantage of any questions they may have about their benefits.

"Protect your benefits by never providing personal information to any unknown source and by changing your card Pin often," said the Virginia Department of Social Services in the scam alert. You will never be contacted and asked to provide your EBT or P-EBT card number or Pin, the agency added.

If you have responded to any unsolicited calls, texts or website links about your benefits, immediately contact the Virginia EBT client customer service help desk at (866) 281-2448.

Click or scan the [QR code here](#) to learn more EBT scam protection.

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<https://www.newsleader.com/story/news/2023/03/01/snap-ebt-p-ebt-card-scams-virginia-state-agencies-issue-alert/69958213007/>