

New York State Assembly

Annual 2024 Report

**Committee on
Social Services**



Speaker Carl E. Heastie
Maritza Davila, Chair



Maritza Davila
Assembly Member 53rd District

THE ASSEMBLY STATE OF NEW YORK ALBANY

CHAIR
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Task Force on Women's Issues

December 15th, 2024

Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of The Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY, 12248

Dear Speaker Heastie:

On behalf of the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Services, I respectfully submit the 2024 Annual Report. During the 2024 Legislative Session, the Committee successfully advanced policy and budgetary items to improve the State's safety net services that many New Yorkers rely on in the pursuit of economic stability. The Committee focused its efforts towards restoring essential funding to critical services that work to lift New Yorkers out of poverty.

The enacted budget for the State Fiscal Year 2024-25 represents the Committee's success in improving economic stability of public assistance (PA) recipients and maintaining critical financial resources for various safety net programs throughout the State. The Committee followed up on its previous SFY 24 budget success by pushing forward stand-alone legislation to expand the eligibility for a one-time income disregard for public assistance recipients that have completed an employee training program.

The Committee was also successful in the passing of multiple pieces of legislation that will improve access to public assistance programs within the State. The Committee added to its success with legislation that will expand an automated identification system to identify and match recipients of certain public benefits with utility corporation's affordability programs to also include water work corporations, expanding income exemptions, and expanding access to the Low-Income Home and Energy Assistance Program (LI-HEAP).

The Committee acknowledges its successes and continues its deep commitment to advancing legislation that will bolster the New York safety net and supportive services for the empowerment of our fellow New Yorkers who are working towards their own financial independence. I would like to thank you for your leadership and your continuous support. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues throughout the 2025 legislative session, and to build out from our previous successes, expanding invaluable resources that provide a path to self-sufficiency for the most vulnerable populations in our State.

Sincerely,

Maritza Davila
Chair
Assembly Committee on Social Services

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Maritza Davila
Chair**

Committee Members

Majority

Juan Ardila
Jeffrion Aubry
Samuel Berger
Manny De Los Santos
Simcha Eichenstein
Phara Souffrant Forest
Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas
Grace Lee
Steven Raga
Karina Reyes
Tony Simone
Michaelle C. Solages

Minority

Anil Beephan Jr.
Lester Chang
Andrew Goodell
Brian Maher (Ranker)
Matthew Simpson

Committee Staff

Jonathan Harkavy, Committee Clerk

Program and Counsel Staff

Janice Nieves, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy
Nicholas Strock, Principal Analyst
Alice Bagley, Executive Secretary

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Assembly Social Services Committee has jurisdiction over legislation affecting programs providing financial and support services to disadvantaged households in New York State. The work of the Committee also affects the elderly, and people living with disability or visual impairment, residing in the community and residential care facilities. The statutory basis for these programs is contained in the State Social Services Law.

The Committee works with the Committees on Health, Children and Families, Aging, Labor, and Housing. The Committee has legislative oversight responsibilities for programs administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

OTDA is responsible for supervising programs that provide assistance and support to eligible families and individuals in the state. Some of OTDA's functions include: providing temporary cash assistance; providing assistance in paying for food; providing heating and energy assistance; overseeing New York State's child support enforcement program; determining certain aspects of eligibility for Social Security Disability benefits; monitoring housing and homeless services programs; and providing assistance to targeted immigrant populations.

The Legislature enacted the Social Services Law to authorize the administration of basic temporary assistance and emergency support programs statewide. The local Departments of Social Services (DSS), or Human Resource Administration (HRA) in New York City, implement the Social Service Law to provide temporary help to individuals and families with their economic and social services needs to assist them in reaching self-sufficiency. These programs include Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children, Emergency Assistance for Adults, and certain parts of the Supplemental Security Income Program.

- Family Assistance (FA) - FA is a federally funded temporary assistance (TA) program for families. FA can only be provided to a family that includes a minor child living with a parent or caretaker relative, or to a pregnant woman. As a TANF-funded program, FA is subject to the state 60-month lifetime limit on assistance.
- Safety Net Assistance (SNA) - established by the Welfare Reform Act (WRA) of 1997 to provide assistance to individuals and families who are ineligible for Family Assistance (FA) or other federal temporary assistance programs. The SNA program is comprised of cash and non-cash components.
- Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children (EAF) - is a federally funded program which provides assistance to deal with crisis situations threatening a family with a child under the age of 18, or under 19 and attending full-time secondary school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical training. EAF is designed to meet needs resulting from a sudden occurrence or a set of circumstances that was unforeseen and beyond the applicant's control that demand immediate attention.
- Emergency Assistance for Adults (EAA) - are grants to assist aged, blind or disabled individuals and couples who have been determined eligible for or are receiving Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or additional state payments and applied for such assistance to meet emergency needs that cannot be met by the regular monthly benefits of SSI and additional state payments.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program- established by Congress in 1974 under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers the program which provides a federal grant to individuals and couples who are aged, blind, or disabled.

Homeless Services

Local social services districts also have a responsibility to provide services and assistance to individuals in an effort to prevent homelessness, to meet the temporary housing and other immediate needs of eligible homeless persons, and to assist homeless persons in securing permanent housing. Individuals eligible for such assistance are those who are both homeless and eligible for TA.

Domestic Violence

The federal Wellstone-Murray Family Violence Option allows states to address the safety needs of domestic violence victims and their children within the state's TANF plan. The Family Violence Option includes procedures for screening for domestic violence, assessment, and service referrals.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

New York administers the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which issues monthly benefits that can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. Benefits are provided through an electronic benefit card, similar to a debit or credit card. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, expenses, and other factors.

Any person has the right to file an application for a type of temporary assistance or care with the local social services district at any time. Each applicant for services is required to meet all eligibility requirements in order to receive benefits. OTDA has created a website, mybenefits.ny.gov, where individuals are able to learn about available benefits and the requirements to receive such benefits.

II. SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION – 2024

A. PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (PA)

Improved PA Re-Engagement Effort

A.5461 (Hunter)/ S.9267 (May)

This bill would require the OTDA to confirm the reason for non-compliance before imposing public assistance sanctions.

Establishing a Universal Public Assistance Application

A.5690 (Davila)/ No Same-As

Referred to Ways and Means

This bill would require OTDA to establish a universal application form to be used to apply for all public assistance programs.

Expand Eligible Services Covered By Public Assistance

A.5871 (Davila)/ No Same-As

Referred to Ways and Means

This bill would expand the list of eligible services under public assistance to include internet or Wi-Fi service costs.

B. OTHER LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Improving Response to Opioid Overdoses in Temporary Housing

A.206-A (Rosenthal)/ S.1872-A (Cleare)

Referred to Ways and Means

This bill would require providers of temporary housing possess opioid antagonists on site, have staff trained in administering the antagonist, and to develop a training plan with an overdose prevention program for residents.

Expanding Access to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Cooling Benefit

A.8027 (Glick)/ S.7629 (Cleare)

Passed the Assembly

This bill would expand the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LI-HEAP) cooling benefit by eliminating the medical condition eligibility requirement.

C. BILLS THAT HAVE PASSED BOTH HOUSES

Increase Domestic Violence Residential Program Support

A.2583-A (Hevesi)/ S.15-A (Gounardes)

Delivered to Governor

This bill would authorize the state to reimburse providers of temporary housing assistance with a residential domestic violence program the cost differential of placing an individual in room intended for double occupancy.

Establishing a Fiscal Benefit Cliff Taskforce

A.8431-A (Davila)/S.7830-A (Persaud)

Veto Memo 65 of 2024

This bill would establish a taskforce to study fiscal cliffs in NYS's various public assistance programs, specifically focused on the causes of fiscal cliffs and ways to reduce and/or eliminate them.

Expand Electronic Benefit Transfer System Helpline Functionality

A9269-B (Berger) / S.8662-A (Felder)

Chapter 487 of 2024

This bill would require that Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system assistance telephone line to provide a mechanism for recipients to have the ability to cancel, lock, or unlock their EBT card in cases of suspected of fraud.

Expand Utility Corporation Affordability Data Matching

A.9522 (Solages) / S.9100 (Parker)

Delivered to Governor

This bill would expand OTDA's Automated Affordability Assistance Program to add water work corporations.

Improve Availability of Public Information for Local Departments of Social Services

A.10230 (Davila)/ S.9343 (Persaud)

Veto Memo 46 of 2024

This bill would require the OTDA to post information on available State and Federal waivers, as well as rental supplement and shelter supplement plans.

III. SFY 2024-25 STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A. Overview of the TANF Block Grant

The nation's welfare system was dramatically reformed with the enactment of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The federal law adopted a "work first" approach, eliminated the entitlement to cash assistance, and imposed time limits, work requirements and sanctions on recipients. The cornerstone of the law was the creation of the TANF block grant, which provides states funds for their cash assistance and welfare-to-work programs.

New York received \$2.442 billion for the Family Assistance program through the federal TANF block grant. The 2024-25 state budget included approximately \$1.5 billion to support benefit payments to low-income New Yorkers.

B. TANF Programs and Allocations

New York's TANF program has developed into the state's most critical system of support and assistance for children and families who struggle to make ends meet. In New York, programs including wage supplements, tax credits, job training and skill development, case management and counseling, child care, and transportation were developed to assist families in need during the transition from poverty to self-sufficiency through work. For several years, New York has been authorized to utilize TANF funds not only for families eligible for federal assistance through the FA program, but also for families whose income does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level.

The 2024-25 budget included a Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) to provide local districts with a block grant. In order for a program to receive funding out of the TANF surplus, it must meet one of the four TANF purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families;
2. End the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
3. Prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Below is a breakdown of state spending of the TANF dollars for the SFY 2024-25:

CHILD CARE INVESTMENTS

The childcare subsidy program provided by local social services districts enables an income-eligible parent or caretaker to work or engage in other approved activities by helping parent(s)/caretaker(s) to pay some or all of the cost of child care services. A total of \$1.785 billion in combined state and federal funds was included in the budget to provide subsidies to parents.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITIONAL INITIATIVES

Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA): This program provides a monthly bus pass to allow eligible individuals from seven member counties to travel to and from work, or to participate in work-related activities. In Wayne County, funds are used to support the transportation costs of individuals who use the WATS Demand Response Bus Services or TANF work participation activities. Funds are also used to extend the WATS service hours to accommodate employees at Kraft. RGRTA was awarded \$82,000 in the budget.

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP): The purpose of the TANF SYEP is to provide eligible youth with a quality employment and educational experience during the summer months. For many youths, this is their first introduction to the world of work. Valuable lessons which center on employment, including work ethic, appropriate workplace behavior, interaction with co-workers and supervisors, receiving a paycheck and money management are learned. \$55 million was allocated to fund the employment program.

Non-Residential Domestic Violence Screening: Non-residential domestic violence services are designed to support safety and self-sufficiency needs for domestic violence survivors and their children. An additional \$200,000 was allocated in the enacted budget to support these critical services.

Wage Subsidy Program: Employers are reimbursed for wages and related benefits that the employer paid to the participant during the subsidy period. Using wage subsidies as a hiring incentive, nonprofit agencies work with employers to develop positions for individuals who have been unable to find employment through conventional means. This program was allocated \$475,000 to provide subsidies.

ACCESS – Welfare to Careers: Metropolitan College's Welfare-to-Careers Consortium Program is a collaboration among three major higher educational institutions in New York City (Metropolitan College, Medgar Evers College and Pace University). The Consortium affords participants the opportunity to earn their two-year degree or a baccalaureate degree, thereby greatly increasing their chances of gaining permanent, full-time employment at a sustainable salary level. \$800,000 was allocated for the ACCESS program.

Disability Advocacy Program: This program provides for the legal representation of individuals whose federal disability benefits have been denied or may be discontinued and received \$6.8 million in this year's budget.

FLEXIBLE FUND FOR FAMILY SERVICES (FFFS)

The FFFS encompasses a number of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs administered by local departments of social services that are funded with the Federal TANF Services Block Grant. The SFY 2024-25 allocations for FFFS is \$1.014 million.

2024 SUMMARY SHEET

SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS

REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON

Social Services

TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD 5

ASSEMBLY SENATE TOTAL

BILLS BILLS BILLS

BILLS REPORTED FAVORABLE TO:

Codes	1	0	1
Judiciary	0	0	0
Ways and Means	13	0	13
Rules	2	0	2
Floor	2	0	2
TOTAL	18	0	18

COMMITTEE ACTION

Held For Consideration	3	0	3
Defeated	0	0	0
Enacting Clause Stricken	3	0	3
REMAINING IN COMMITTEE	86	13	99

BILLS REFERENCE CHANGED TO:

TOTAL	0.	0	0
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APPENDIX B

**FINAL ACTION ON BILLS REPORTED BY THE
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE 2023**

ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR	SENATE BILL # SPONSOR	FINAL ACTION	DESCRIPTION
A.206-A Davila	S.1872-A Cleare	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Would require providers of temporary housing assistance to have an opioid antagonist on hand and at least one person trained to administer the medication on the premises at all times; contact emergency medical assistance any time they are responding to an overdose and report all responses to DOH; have a registered opioid overdose prevention program provide training for residents at the shelter.
A.2468 Hevesi	S.4780 Sanders	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Would require the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to contract with one or more non-profit organization to provide assistance to recipients of State Supplemental Payments (SSP) assistance.
A.2583-A Hevesi	S.15-A Gounardes	Reported, Passed Both Houses	Would authorize the state to reimburse providers of temporary housing assistance with a residential domestic violence program the cost differential of placing an individual in room intended for double occupancy.
A.5030 Rosenthal	S.2496 Mannion	Reported, Advanced to Third Reading	Requires local services districts to automatically re-enroll persons or households currently receiving assistance through the low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP), every heating season as determined by OTDA, so long as each person or household maintains eligibility.
A.5461 Hunter	S.9267 May	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Would require local social services districts outside of NYC, prior to imposing a sanction on a PA recipient for non-compliance with work rules, to confirm that the recipient is not exempt from the work requirement, and that the recipient has appropriate child care, transportation, and disability accommodations.
A.5690 Davila	No Same-As	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Establishes a universal benefits form for individuals seeking public assistance.
A.5871 Davila	No Same-As	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Would expand the list of services eligible to be covered by temporary assistance to include internet service.
A.6523-A Rosenthal	S.1567-A Salazar	Reported, Referred to Way and Means	Would require all employees and volunteers at temporary housing facilities to be trained on recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental illness and to provide referrals, as appropriate, for individuals who may be suffering from a mental illness. It would also require one worker or volunteer who provides intake services that has received the aforementioned training to be present at the facility at all times.

ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR	SENATE BILL # SPONSOR	FINAL ACTION	DESCRIPTION
A.7670 Anderson	S.779 Comrie	Reported, Referred to Ways and Means	Would expand the period in which a person may request a fair hearing following a medical professional's disability determination from 10 days to 60 days, and that no prior work assignments may be enforced until the hearing is concluded.
A.8027 Glick	S.7629 Cleare	Reported, Referred to Rules	Expands eligibility for the LIHEAP cooling component benefit by removing the requirement that at least one member of the household has a documented medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat.
A.8431-A Davila	S.7830-A Persaud	Reported, Referred to Ways and Means	Establishes a taskforce to study fiscal cliffs in NYS's various public assistance programs, specifically focused on the causes of fiscal cliffs and ways to reduce and/or eliminate them.
A.8488 Solages	S.8022 Salazar	Signed, Chapter 78	Amends a chapter of the law to ensure the State does not violate federal regulations in regard to data sharing.
A.8612 Solages	S.9827 Parker	Reported, Advanced to Third Reading	Would codify the emergency heating energy assistance program in statute and expand eligibility for assistance to prior to individuals having their power shut off or scheduled for shut off or can show that they have arrears and will likely have their utilities shut off.
A.9269-B Berger	S.8662-A Felder	Passed Both Houses	Require that Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system assistance telephone line allow for recipients to have the ability to cancel, lock, or unlock their EBT card.
A.9522 Solages	S.9100 Parker	Passed Both Houses	Adds water work corporations into the definition of a "utility corporation" for the purposes of automated identification of OTDA affordability assistance program participants.
A.9620-A Davila	No Same-As	Reported, Referred to Ways and Means	Would establish a pilot program to study the impact of integrated multi-generational supports for families with young children living in poverty.
A.10155-A Davila	S.8374-A Persaud	Referred to Ways and Means	Increases the earned income requirement to less than 400% of the FPL, as well as directs OTDA to seek any necessary waiver to implement the legislation.
A.10230 Davila	S.9343 Persaud	Passed Both Houses	Requires the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to post information on available State and Federal waivers, as well as rental supplement and shelter supplement plans.

APPENDIX C

Legislative Hearings/Roundtables

Community Service Block Grant

September 17th, 2024

New York City

The Federal Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds are awarded to grantees in every county in New York State. Community Action Agencies (CAAs), community-based organizations, and Indian tribes or tribal organizations receive CSBG funds to provide advocacy, outreach, services, and programs for economically disadvantaged persons in their local communities. Federal law requires states to hold a hearing on the implementation of CSBG program every three years to maintain eligibility for these grant funds. This federally mandated hearing focused on the development of the New York State Department of State's CSBG Management Plan. There are 52 CSBG grantees in the New York State network which serve all 62 counties with services catered to the needs of each community.

This year the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Services held the triennial Community Service Block Grant hearing in collaboration with the Assembly Standing Committee on Governmental Operations, as well the Senate Standing Committee on Social Services and the Senate Standing Committee on Finance. Witnesses provided testimonies on the access to CSBG funds as well as how they were utilized by community action agencies. Witnesses testified that the CSBG was a vital source of funding for special programs geared toward aiding individuals and families in need. The CSBG funds allowed for the continuance of special programs ranging from financial literacy initiatives, immigrant services, fatherhood initiatives, trade certifications, community development initiatives as well as summer youth employment.