

Resources for Homeless Families and Youth

Frequently Asked Questions

Housing and Shelter

I'm a parent with children. How can I access emergency shelters?

Go directly to the Salvation Army Shield of Hope Emergency Homeless Assessment and Response Center (EHARC) 924 N Christiana or call 3-1-1 from any hospital or police station.

- Families will be placed in a shelter with available space after an intake and screening process. Depending on availability some families may stay at 924 N Christiana for up to 14 days while awaiting placement into a shelter.
- Individuals and families will usually be able to stay in shelters for up to 270 days; however, the length of stay can vary depending on shelter policy.
- The shelter system can ONLY be accessed through 311 or 924 N Christiana- *there is no direct referral or intake at individual programs.*
- There are often times during the year when family shelters are at capacity. When this happens, families will be placed at emergency overflow sites until shelter beds become available.

How do I access long-term or permanent housing for my family?

Families who are staying in a shelter, are unsheltered, or are fleeing domestic violence (but not those who are doubled up) can apply for permanent supportive housing, transitional housing or rapid rehousing through the Chicago Coordinated Entry System (CES). Families accessing this system need to be assessed by a trained assessor at a community Access Point to determine their needs. Access Points are available throughout the city. Contact a nearby Access Point directly to set up an assessment appointment. More information on Access Points and the CES process can be found at <http://www.csh.org/chicagoces>.

Youth (ages 18-24, including parenting youth in this age range) are also eligible for housing through the CES process if they are staying in a shelter, are unsheltered, at imminent risk of homelessness (i.e. have 14 days or less to leave their current, safe environment, are fleeing domestic violence, or are unstably housed (including youth who are doubled up).

Following the assessment, the youth or family will be matched with the housing program that best suits their needs, and will be provided with support through the housing process. Matches will be made based on the family or youth's vulnerability (determined through the standardized assessment) and the availability of suitable housing programs and the period of time from when a family is assessed to when they are matched with a housing program varies.

How can I apply for public housing or a housing voucher?

Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) public housing vacancies are leased to randomly selected applicants from CHA's waitlist. *The CHA waitlist is currently closed.* To find frequently asked questions regarding the waitlist, visit www.thecha.org/help.

I am having trouble paying my rent/utilities this month. I found a place but cannot afford the security deposit. Is there anywhere I can get some financial assistance?

Call 3-1-1 and ask for "Short-Term Help" to be transferred to the Homeless Prevention Call Center.

Homeless Prevention Funds can be used to help with rent, utilities, or security deposits. Applicants must

have income and either be housed or be seeking housing and in need of assistance with first month's rent or a security deposit.

How can I find housing on the rental market that I can afford?

You can search the City of Chicago's list of affordable rental housing developments at www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/affordable_rentalhousingresourcelist.html. You can also go to www.ilhousingsearch.org to search for housing.

I lost my home due to a fire or natural disaster. What services are available for me?

The American Red Cross provides disaster relief. Call (312) 729-6100 to reach the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago.

Food Resources

Where can I find emergency food for my family or myself?

To find soup kitchens or food pantries, go to www.chicagosfoodbank.org and use the Agency Locator to search by Zip Code. You can also call the Greater Chicago Food Depository at 773-247-FOOD.

How can I apply for food stamps?

You may apply for SNAP benefits (formerly food stamps) by phone 1-800-843-6154, online at <https://abe.illinois.gov>, or in person at your local DHS office <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12>.

Phone applications are the most convenient because you will be approved the same day and not be required to go to a follow-up appointment at your DHS office.

Health and Medical

How can I apply for a medical card?

Apply online at <https://abe.illinois.gov> or call 1-800-843-6154 to apply by phone. You can also apply at your local DHS Family Community Resource Center. Find an office by going to <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12>. *Applying by phone is the quickest and easiest way to apply, especially if you do not have a stable mailing address.*

How can I find a health clinic? What if I don't have health insurance?

Most people who are eligible for Medicaid must choose a Managed Care Plan (MCO) and a Primary Care Provider (Medical Home). The Illinois Client Enrollment Broker can help individuals understand their healthcare choices. More information can be found at <http://illinoisceb.com> or call 1-877-912-8880.

Federally Qualified Health Centers provide medical care even if the patient has no health insurance or is not a US Citizen. They have sliding fee discount programs. Find a center by going to <http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>.

Who can help me find health care providers?

Call the Member Services number on your Managed Care Plan card. Your plan's Member Services department will assist you find appropriate providers to meet your needs. They will also be able to assist you with free transportation or other free services that you may be eligible for.

Where can I take my child for free immunizations?

Immunization clinics can be found at <http://www.backtoschoolimmunization.org>. The Chicago Department of Public Health Fast Track Clinics provide immunizations at no charge for children 0-18 years

of age. More info at

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/clinical_health/immunizations_walk-inclinics.html.

Where can I receive assistance with eye exams/glasses and dental care?

To locate dental clinics visit <http://www.cds.org/Clinics/>. The Illinois Eye Institute at Princeton Elementary (5125 S Princeton Ave) provides vision services; call 312-949-7990.

I'm in need of substance abuse or mental health services. Where can I find help?

If it's an emergency in which you or someone you know is suicidal, you should immediately call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255, call 911, or go to a hospital emergency room. Search for Behavioral Health Treatment services including substance abuse/addiction and/or mental health at <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> or by calling 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

I am undocumented. Can I go to a health clinic or apply for a medical card?

Undocumented immigrants are eligible to receive services at a Federally Qualified Health Center. Find one by going to <http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>. You can receive some public benefits if you are undocumented such as medical coverage under the All Kids Program.

I am an unaccompanied minor. Can I go to a Health clinic or apply for a medical card?

Yes. Unaccompanied minors can receive immunizations and other outpatient health care services without a parent's consent if they are 14 and older and identified in writing as unaccompanied by a homeless liaison, adult relative, or a social service agency. Unaccompanied minors are able to receive a medical card in their own name if they live separate and apart from a parent or legal guardian.

Public Benefits

What public benefits are available to homeless families?

Homelessness should never be a barrier for obtaining public benefits. Find info about various public benefits at www.homelessyouth.org, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Social Security Benefits, Medicaid, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition can assist homeless families in accessing public benefits. For assistance, contact 1-800-940-1119 and ask for Law Project staff.

What public benefits are available to unaccompanied youth?

Generally speaking, unaccompanied minors are entitled to the same benefits that they would receive if their family were intact. There is no requirement of obtaining consent from their parent or guardian to receive Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, or WIC. However, they will need to provide proof that they are not living with their parent or guardian, such as letter from a clerk, counselor or homeless liaison. It is a good idea to refer minors in this situation to legal services if they are having difficulty obtaining benefits from their local DHS office. The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition can assist homeless youth in accessing public benefits. For assistance, contact 1-800-940-1119 and ask for Law Project staff.

Legal Assistance/Domestic Violence

Where can I find legal assistance?

CARPLS can provide free legal assistance and referrals throughout Chicago. The free hotline is (312) 738-9200. The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless provides legal advice and assistance to homeless youth and families. For assistance, contact 1-800-940-1119 and ask for Law Project staff.

Where can I find domestic violence assistance?

Call the State of Illinois' Domestic Violence Helpline at 1-877-863-6338. The Helpline is a 24-hour, toll-free confidential number. Victims receive immediate information about their options, safety planning, and referrals to community-based providers including shelters, counseling, legal advocacy, and more.

Miscellaneous

Where can I find help with acquiring documentation I need, such as my birth certificate?

Homeless individuals (including children) born in Cook County can request a free copy of their birth certificate through Cook County Vital Records located in the Daley Center (50 W Washington, East Concourse). Homeless individuals will need to have a verification form signed by a shelter provider or homeless liaison. The form can be found at <http://cookcountyclerk.com/vitalrecords/birthcertificates/>. Individuals or children born outside of Cook County can request an Illinois birth record from the Illinois Department of Public Health Division of Vital Records (<http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/births/Pages/default.htm>). The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (1-800-940-1119) helps unaccompanied homeless youth acquire copies of their birth certificate.

Where can I find affordable childcare?

DHS' Child Care Assistance Program provides low-income, working families with access to quality, affordable childcare that allows them to continue working and contributes to the healthy, emotional and social development of the child. Families are required to cost-share on a sliding scale based on family size, income and number of children in care. Contact Illinois Action for Children at (312) 823-1100 for more information.

I'm concerned about the development of my child who is 0-5. What services are available?

The Child Find Screening Program provides free developmental screenings for children birth to 5 years old for children who do not attend a Chicago Public School. Screenings include hearing/vision, speech/language, problem solving, social skills, fine/gross motor, and listening/attending. Screenings are held regularly at libraries. Call 773-553-1800 for locations and times.