

# Nationwide Community Assistance Resource Guide

U.S. programs and services that may help with food, housing, utility bills, healthcare, communication costs, and other basic needs.

## NEED HELP BUT NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Dial **2-1-1** or visit [211.org](https://211.org). 211 connects people with local food, housing, utility, transportation, healthcare, and other community resources.

## Food Assistance

### SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

**Helps with:** Monthly benefits to help eligible households purchase groceries.

**How to start:** Apply through your state SNAP agency. Start at [USA.gov SNAP information](https://www.usa.gov/snap).

**Contact:** See [USA.gov Food Assistance](https://www.usa.gov/food-assistance) for additional food programs.

**Good to know:** Eligibility and benefit amounts vary by household and state.

### WIC - Women, Infants and Children

**Helps with:** Healthy foods, nutrition support, breastfeeding support, and referrals for eligible pregnant/postpartum women, infants, and children under age 5.

**How to start:** Find your state or local WIC agency at [USDA WIC](https://www.usda.gov/wic).

**Good to know:** Income and nutritional-risk requirements apply.

### TEFAP - The Emergency Food Assistance Program

**Helps with:** Free emergency foods distributed through local food banks, pantries, and community agencies.

**How to start:** Contact your state distributing agency or local food bank. Begin at [USA.gov Emergency Food Assistance](https://www.usa.gov/emergency-food-assistance).

**Contact:** National Hunger Hotline: **1-866-348-6479**; Spanish: **1-877-842-6273**.

**Good to know:** Local availability and eligibility rules can vary.

### School Meals and Summer Food Programs

**Helps with:** Free or reduced-price school meals and summer food support for eligible children; options may include summer meals and Summer EBT/SUN Bucks.

**How to start:** Visit [USA.gov School Meals](https://www.usa.gov/school-meals) or your child's school district/state agency.

**Good to know:** Participation and eligibility vary by state and school.

## Housing & Homelessness Support

### HUD Find Shelter

**Helps with:** Nearby shelters, food pantries, health clinics, and clothing resources.

**How to start:** Search by location at [hud.gov/findshelter](https://www.hud.gov/findshelter).

**Good to know:** Listings are local service providers; availability is determined locally.

### **Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) & Public Housing**

**Helps with:** Rental assistance for qualifying low-income households, older adults, and people with disabilities.

**How to start:** Contact your local Public Housing Agency (PHA).

**Contact:** HUD PHA help: **1-800-955-2232** | [HUD Get Help](#)

**Good to know:** Waiting lists may be closed or long. Apply through the local PHA.

### **HUD-Approved Housing Counseling**

**Helps with:** Help with rent problems, eviction prevention, foreclosure, budgeting, and housing decisions.

**How to start:** Search for a participating counseling agency or call HUD.

**Contact:** **1-800-569-4287** | [hud.gov/counseling](https://www.hud.gov/counseling)

**Good to know:** Foreclosure, eviction, and homeless counseling is free.

### **Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance**

**Helps with:** Local coordinated support for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including shelter and rehousing connections.

**How to start:** Use HUD Find Shelter or call 211 and ask for homeless services or your local Continuum of Care.

**Contact:** [HUD Continuum of Care](#)

**Good to know:** Services and eligibility are locally administered.

### **Emergency Rental Assistance / Local Prevention Programs**

**Helps with:** Short-term rent or eviction-prevention help that may be offered by states, counties, cities, nonprofits, or community action agencies.

**How to start:** Call 211 and your local community action agency. Review [USA.gov Emergency Housing Assistance](#).

**Good to know:** Funding changes frequently and may be limited.

## Utility, Energy, Phone & Internet Help

### LIHEAP - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

**Helps with:** Heating/cooling bills, energy crises, and in some places weatherization or minor energy-related repairs.

**How to start:** Contact your state, tribal, or local LIHEAP office using the federal locator.

**Contact:** 1-866-674-6327 | [LIHEAP Office Search](#)

**Good to know:** Eligibility varies by state, household size, income, and available funding.

### Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

**Helps with:** Home energy-efficiency improvements that can lower energy costs and improve home health and safety.

**How to start:** Contact your state weatherization administrator/local provider through DOE.

**Contact:** [DOE - How to Apply](#)

**Good to know:** Homeowners and renters may be eligible; income rules and waitlists apply.

### Lifeline

**Helps with:** A federal discount on qualifying phone or internet service for eligible low-income consumers.

**How to start:** Apply online, by mail, or with a participating provider.

**Contact:** 1-800-234-9473 | [Lifeline Support](#)

**Good to know:** Eligibility may be based on income or participation in certain benefit programs.

### Local Utility & Charitable Assistance

**Helps with:** Payment plans, crisis grants, disconnect prevention, and utility-specific hardship programs.

**How to start:** Call your utility before disconnection, call 211, and review state utility/charitable resources.

**Contact:** [LIHEAP Get Help](#)

**Good to know:** Ask about hardship funds, budget billing, payment arrangements, and charitable assistance.

## Healthcare, Financial & Other Basic-Needs Support

### Medicaid & CHIP

**Helps with:** Free or low-cost health coverage for eligible adults, children, pregnant people, older adults, and people with disabilities, depending on state rules.

**How to start:** Visit [USA.gov Medicaid & CHIP](#) or your state Medicaid agency.

**Good to know:** Eligibility and covered populations vary by state.

### TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

**Helps with:** Temporary cash assistance and supportive services for eligible families with children.

**How to start:** Find your state's TANF/welfare office at [USA.gov Welfare/TANF](#).

**Good to know:** Benefit levels, work rules, time limits, and eligibility vary by state.

## More Ways to Find Help

### USA.gov - Facing Financial Hardship

**Helps with:** A central federal guide to food, housing, utilities, unemployment, welfare, and other assistance.

**How to start:** Visit [usa.gov/financial-hardship](https://www.usa.gov/financial-hardship).

**Contact:** USAGov Contact Center: **1-844-872-4681**.

**Good to know:** Useful when you are unsure which government program fits your situation.

### State Social Service Agencies

**Helps with:** State-specific food, cash assistance, healthcare, disability, family-service, and other programs.

**How to start:** Find your state agency at [USA.gov State Social Services](https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services).

**Good to know:** Many federal programs are applied for and administered at the state or local level.

### 211 Community Resource Network

**Helps with:** Local food, rent, utilities, shelter, transportation, healthcare, employment, caregiving, and other help.

**How to start:** Dial **2-1-1** or search by ZIP code at [211.org](https://www.211.org).

**Good to know:** A strong first call when multiple needs are happening at once.

## When You Apply, Have These Ready If Possible

- Photo ID and requested identity documents
- Proof of household income (pay stubs, benefit statements, tax documents, etc.)
- Lease, rent statement, eviction notice, mortgage statement, or proof of housing costs
- Recent utility bills or shutoff/disconnect notice
- Names and dates of birth for household members
- Proof of participation in other benefit programs, when applicable

**Important:** This is a starting-point guide, not a guarantee of eligibility or funding. Programs may have income limits, documentation requirements, waiting lists, geographic restrictions, or limited funds. Information was reviewed for nationwide availability in August 2026. Always confirm current rules with the official program or local administering agency.

Prepared as a community resource guide for Sheep n Fish Fellowship.