

## Unaccompanied Youth Accessing Public Benefits

**Unaccompanied youth are eligible for public benefits independently. They do not need to apply as part of an adult's home.**

**Summary:** Unaccompanied youth may sign their own application for SNAP, cash, and medical benefits if they do not stably live with a parent or caregiver. When a youth applies for benefits, they should bring or reference the DHS/HFS Unaccompanied Minors Policy:  
<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=81057>.

### **Homelessness When Applying for SNAP (PM 06-04-02)**

- ✓ Lacks a regular and stable place to stay at night;
- ✓ OR regularly spends nights at one of the following places:
  - A supervised shelter that provides temporary housing; or
  - A halfway house or other facility providing residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - A place not typically considered a sleeping place such as a bus station or car; or
  - A temporary space in another person's home for **no more than 90 days**.

### **Homelessness When Applying for Cash and Medical Assistance (PM 06-04-01)**

- ✓ Lacks a regular and adequate place to stay at night; or
- ✓ Lives in a public or private temporary shelter.

### **Mailing Address**

All programs require a mailing address for letters from DHS/HFS and to communicate about regular reporting requirements. Youth can report that they are homeless and provide an address where they receive mail, or choose their own public benefits office and pick up the mail. SNAP is "redetermined" every 6 months requiring income verification and other information, and Medicaid-only cases are "redetermined" every 12 months. TANF has extensive reporting requirements throughout the year, including in-person meetings.

### **What Benefits can Unaccompanied Youth Receive:**

#### **SNAP:**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program "SNAP" gives qualifying low-income people an Illinois Link Card. This electronic benefit card can be used at most grocery stores and many farmer's markets to buy non-prepared foods (prepared hot foods, lunch counter items and microwaveable meals ready to eat **cannot** be purchased) and any seeds or plants that grow food.

## Healthcare Coverage:

An unaccompanied youth is eligible for Medicaid, or the “Medical card.”

It is not necessary to have the actual Medical card to get treatment. Youth can receive treatment by asking the health center to look up their “RIN” or Recipient ID Number for Medicaid, and presenting a form of identification. Here are a few examples of acceptable ID: a driver license or state ID, a work or school ID, school records, a letter from a social services agency or school social worker, or a birth certificate

- Medicaid/All Kids Assist: This program provides full medical services including doctor’s visits, medications, dental care and vision care to children with a family income below 147% of the federal poverty line. Youth covered under All Kids Assist do not have to pay insurance premiums or copayments for medical visits.
- Moms and Babies: This program provides full medical benefits to pregnant women (including minors) and their babies until their babies turn one year old. Mom must have been on Medicaid when the baby was born or have a family income below 213% of the federal poverty line to be part of this program. There are no co-payments or premiums.
- **After being enrolled in a Medicaid program, the youth, unless they receive SSI, will need to select an MCO (Managed Care Organization) like Harmony or Blue Cross. They should choose an MCO that their doctor accepts and their doctor’s office should be able to tell them which plans those are. If the youth does not select an MCO on time, they will be automatically assigned to a plan, and their doctor may not accept that plan, preventing the youth from being seen by that doctor.**

## TANF:

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program gives cash assistance to qualifying low income pregnant women and families living with a child under 18. This money can be used to pay bills for items like housing, food, and utilities. The program provides additional support services including GED preparation, basic English classes, child care help, and services to maintain a stable job.

**\*TANF typically requires that minor pregnant women and parents live at home with a parent, adult relative, or legal guardian; or at a maternity home; or at another adult-supervised location. However, if a minor parent lives on their own without a parent, adult relative, or legal guardian and does not receive TANF for at least 6 months, they qualify to apply for TANF.**

## **Applying for Benefits:**

1. When filling out the Request for Cash Assistance, Medical Assistance, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Form, the unaccompanied youth CAN be listed as the primary applicant (**PM 02-04-03**).
2. When signing the Form, the unaccompanied youth, if listed as the primary applicant, CAN sign (**PM 02-04-03**).

## **Applying for TANF (PM 14-06-00)**

**Minor parents and pregnant women can qualify for TANF on their own if they meet one of the following criteria:**

1. The minor was or is married;
2. The location of the minor's parents or guardians is unknown, or the parents or guardians are dead;
3. The minor has lived on their own for at least one year before having a child, or at least one year before applying for TANF;
4. Living with parents or guardians would put the minor or their child's physical or emotional health and/or safety in danger;
5. The parents or guardians won't allow the minor and the minor's child to live with them; or
6. The minor and their child cannot live with parents or guardians because:
  - a. The parents or guardians live out of state; or
  - b. The parents or guardians live in an institution; or
  - c. The parents or guardians are addicted to drugs; or
  - d. The parents or guardians have a lease that does not allow the minor to return; or
  - e. The parents' or guardians' home is subject to local health or safety standards that do not allow the minor and child to return; or
  - f. The minor is in a licensed substance abuse program that they can only be part of if they are not living at a parent's or guardian's home.

## **What to do if a youth's parent/caregiver still holds the youth's benefits:**

**If the youth's parent or caregiver reports the youth lives at home, the Family Community Resource Center should:**

- a. Register the youth's application and take action to delete the youth from the active case.
- b. Request proof from the parent/caregiver to be returned within 10 days showing that the youth actually lives in the home.

**Unaccompanied minors can consent to their own healthcare without the consent of a parent/caregiver if:**

1. The minor is between 14-18 years old,
2. The minor is living separate and apart from their parent/legal guardian,
3. The minor is managing their own affairs, and
4. The minor is not a ward of DCFS.

The minor needs a signed writing from one of the following people stating the above qualifications (Public Act 098-0671):

1. An adult relative;
2. A homeless service agency representative;
3. A lawyer licensed in Illinois;
4. A public school social worker or homeless liaison;
5. A social service agency that serves at risk, homeless, or runaway youth; or
6. A representative from a religious organization.