

SAMPSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CLINTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28328

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SAMPSON COUNTY DSS CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INFORMATION

***Last updated December 28, 2022**

Due to COVID-19, DSS has modified operations. As circumstances evolve, continual adjustments will be made and shared.

General Operations:

- The Agency is open with modified public services as listed below.
- The front entrance to Health and Human Services is closed, back entry only.
- To limit exposure and protect everyone, visitors are encouraged to wear masks, but not required.
- Hand sanitizing stations are positioned throughout the building and surfaces are frequently cleaned & disinfected throughout the day.
- All Agency Staff self-screen daily.
- Almost all DSS services can be handled without visiting the Agency.
- Switchboard operations have been expanded to improve customer service and a telephone call to **910-592-7131** may satisfy your questions or concerns.

Service Information/Program Modifications are as follows:

- To apply for Food Assistance (FNS) or Medicaid (including Long Term Care):
 - Go online through ePASS (epass.nc.gov)
 - Mail/Drop Off/Fax (910-592-4297) a paper application
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency
- To apply for Subsidized Child Care Assistance:
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency
- To apply for Work First:
 - Go online through ePASS (epass.nc.gov)
 - Mail/Drop Off/Fax (910-592-4297) a paper application
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency
- To apply for CIP (Crisis Intervention Program):
 - Go online through ePASS (epass.nc.gov)
 - Mail/Drop Off/Fax (910-592-4297) a paper application
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency
 - A disconnect notice is no longer needed for CIP – only a past due or final notice is required.
- To apply LIHWAP (Low Income Household Water Assistance Program)
 - Go online through ePASS (epass.nc.gov)
 - Mail/Drop Off/Fax (910-592-4297) a paper application
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency
 - See below for further details
- To apply for Child Support:
 - Go online at ncchildsupport.com
 - Call for service by phone or visit the Agency

Other Information:

- **Food & Nutrition:**
 - ✓ NC FNS recipients have the ability to purchase groceries online using their EBT cards at authorized online EBT retailers. Authorized online EBT retailers are Publix, Amazon, Wal-Mart, Carlie C's, Food Lion, BJ's and Aldi.
 - ✓ Interviews will be waived on all applications/recertifications on or after April 1, 2020 until the Public Health Emergency ends.
 - ✓ Effective March 25, 2020 Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDS) are exempt until Covid-19 health emergency declaration ends.
 - ✓ Approval of telephonic signatures on application/recertification extended until 12/31/2022 (this waiver is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the state).
 - ✓ Student of higher education work requirement are exempt until 30 days after the Federal Public Health Emergency is lifted (must meet the following conditions: 1)eligible for a Work Study Program during the regular school year and 2) has an expected family contribution of \$0 as determined by the financial aid office).
 - ✓ Effective March 25, 2021 at home testing COVID-19 kits are available for underprivileged/disabled North Carolinians experiencing financial barriers to get tested. They can call 800-833-3935 or visit www.pixel.labcorp.com/NorthCarolina
 - ✓ Effective April 27, 2021 the minimum supplement to take household to maximum allotment for their household size is \$95.00. If the difference between allotment and maximum amount is less than \$95.00, the state will issue \$95.00. (This waiver is reviewed on a monthly basis by the state).
 - ✓ Suspension of H or I controlled substance Assessment are exempt until Covid-19 health emergency declaration ends.
 - ✓ Effective May 12, 2021 WFFA, Energy and FNS recipients are being offered assistance with Emergency Broadband benefits they can visit <https://getemergencybroadband.org> to apply.

- **Medicaid:** NC DHHS Division of Health Benefits (DHB) is implementing an optional COVID-19 Testing Eligibility group as a new coverage program for uninsured individuals as allowed under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. This eligibility group will be designated as Medicaid for Coronavirus (MCV). The MCV program will begin September 1, 2020 and will end the date the Public Health Emergency ends. This a limited service benefit that provides only COVID-19 testing. In order to be eligible for the MCV program, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:
 - Lives in North Carolina
 - Be a U.S. Citizen, U.S. National or have eligible immigration status, and
 - Not be covered by Medicaid, Medicare, or other health insurance.
- ✓ Testing for COVID-19 has been added to Family Planning Medicaid effective September 1, 2020.
- ✓ Medicaid cannot be terminated during the Public Health Emergency. Medicaid can only be terminated for the following reasons:
 - The individual moves out of state, or the beneficiary voluntarily requests termination of Medicaid benefits.
 - Death
 - North Carolina Health Choice (NCHC) recipients coverage could change or terminate upon review.
 - The beneficiary voluntarily requests termination of Medicaid/NC Health Choice benefits.
 - Beneficiary no longer meets the citizenship /immigration status requirements.
- ✓ NC Health Choice fees have been temporarily waived.

- **Crisis Intervention Program (CIP):** The CIP assists individuals and families who are experiencing a heating or cooling related crisis. A household is in a crisis if it is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency and sufficient, timely, and

appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Life threatening is defined as a household which has no heating or cooling source or has a disconnection, final or past due notice for which their primary heating or cooling service and the health or well-being of a household member would be in danger if the heating or cooling crisis was not alleviated.

Applications are taken beginning July 1st each year and continues until the CIP allocation is exhausted or until the end of the state fiscal year, whichever comes first.

Applicant must meet one of the following:

1. Household must meet an income test (income must be verified).
2. Household must be in a heating or cooling-related emergency.
3. Households must include a U.S. citizen or an eligible alien.

The maximum benefit that may be authorized for a household during a state fiscal year is \$600. However, there is no requirement that a household must receive benefits of \$600 in a state fiscal year.

- **Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP):** LIHWAP assistance will be made available to households based on a priority group system. To lessen the hardship on those households that have already lost water services or are in jeopardy of losing water services, groups 1 and 2 will be serviced first. If funds are available, group 3 will be served after groups 1 and 2 are completed. The classifications of groups are as follows:
 - Group 1 consists of households that have had water services disconnected.
 - Group 2 consists of households that are in jeopardy of water services being disconnected, unless action is taken to prevent the disconnection
 - Group 3 consists of households that have current water services bills and need assistance to maintain services

Applications are processed for all three priority groups.

Payments in Priority groups 1 & 2 will be based on the amount needed to restore the services or prevent disconnection of services.

The program can only pay for water/wastewater.

Priority Group 3 benefit amount will be based on six (6) times the most current monthly bill amounts up to a maximum of \$600 per State Fiscal Year.

- **Child Care:**
 - ✓ A childcare hotline (1-888-600-1685) has been set up for families to call to get information about local options for infants through children age 12. The hotline is open Monday through Friday 8 am to 5pm.

- **Adult, Children and Family Services**
 - ✓ Child or adult abuse and neglect reports should continue and will be handled 24/7. Call the Agency during the weekday at **910-592-4200 or 910-592-7131**; call Emergency Management Communications at **910-592-1151** or **911** anytime.
 - ✓ General adult service needs are continuing as normal within the Agency.
- Medicaid Transportation Services remain available by phone, call to the Agency (910) 592-7131.
- An internal drop box is in the main DSS lobby & an external drop box is at the back entrance (for any program).
- Payments can be made via the mail or within the office.
- Court operations for Child Support and Child/Adult Services have resumed with a few safety precautions and limitations in place.

If you visit our Agency, our Customer Service Center (The HUB) remains open in the main lobby.

Services include:

- Computer/Internet access (personal use for online services – file for unemployment, etc.)
- Various community resources are provided – food bank operations, housing options, other county services, etc.
- A lobby phone is available for use as needed.