

## Common Questions

### If I get welfare, will I have to go to school?

If you are between 16 and 19, unmarried and have not graduated from high school, you will probably have to return to school or enter a GED program in order to receive public assistance. HRA offers the BEGIN Program for parents who need to improve their reading, writing or math skills or who want to learn to speak English.

### If I get welfare, will I have to work?

Yes, unless one of these exceptions applies to you:

- You are under age 19 and in secondary, vocational or technical school full time
- You are ill or disabled
- You have a child under 3 months old
- You are a caretaker of an ill or disabled member of the household
- You have no available childcare
- You are more than 8 months pregnant

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**Remember:** the rules about living at home and going to school or work may be different for food stamps or Medicaid. You should continue to apply for both if you are financially eligible.

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### Will welfare support me if I go to college?

Generally, you may count up to 15 hours a week in an approved school program, such as a two-year college or vocational school, toward the work requirement. Work/study and internships may satisfy the rest of your 35-hour work requirement. As a result of a recent lawsuit, *Davila v. Eggleston*, it is now easier for single parents on welfare to attend college.

### What if I can't afford to pay for childcare or transportation to attend school or work?

When welfare assigns you to work and school activities, you are entitled to money for transportation to comply with work assignments, including transportation to and from childcare. You will also be given options for appropriate childcare if you cannot find your own.

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For more information about requesting a conference or a fair hearing, see [KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: FAIR HEARINGS & PUBLIC BENEFITS](#).

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For in-depth information, contact The Children's Aid Society at (212) 358-8930 to get a complete set of [KNOW YOUR RIGHTS](#) brochures and other legal advocacy publications in both English and Spanish. You may also log onto [www.childrensaidsociety.org](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org).

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For over 150 years, The Children's Aid Society has been assisting New York City's children and their families without regard to race, religion, nationality or socio-economic status. Children's Aid helps children in every aspect of their lives from infancy through adolescence, providing guidance and resources to ensure a child's current well-being and future potential. With over 100 programs and 40 locations in New York that touch the lives of more than 150,000 children every year, Children's Aid is one of the country's largest and most innovative child and family social service agencies.

[www.childrensaidsociety.org](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org)

THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

public  
benefits for  
minors and  
emancipated  
youth



If you are 16-20 years old, you may be able to open your own welfare case with the Human Resources Administration (HRA). Welfare can include cash, a shelter allowance, Medicaid and food stamps, depending on your eligibility.

### Basic Income Requirements

If you are under 21 and unmarried, welfare will take into account your parent's income to determine if you are financially needy. Most likely, if your parent qualifies for welfare, so will you. If you are legally married, your parent is not liable for your support.

If you are *under 18 and a single parent*, your parent's income is counted as available to you and your child.

If you are *between 18 and 20 and a single parent*, your parent's income is counted as available to you but *not* to your child. So even if you are ineligible for welfare, you may be able to obtain some assistance for the child, depending on your parent's income.

If you are financially eligible for welfare, you still must meet other requirements depending on your age, if you are pregnant or parenting, if you are married and who you live with.

To determine if your living situation is appropriate, HRA takes into consideration your involvement in educational activities, availability of childcare, ability to manage your cash grant and whom you live with.

If you claim that you should not be required to live with a parent or guardian, HRA must investigate your claim and proceed with your welfare application. If they disagree with your claim and you still refuse to live with the adult, your application can be rejected. *You are entitled to request a hearing within 30 days to appeal the decision.*

### Requirements for 16 and 17 year-olds

#### Single and pregnant or parenting

You can only open your own welfare case if you live with a parent or guardian, unless you fit certain exceptions. See below for details.

#### Single and not pregnant or parenting

If you live with your parent or guardian:

- You cannot have your own welfare case. Instead, you will be on your parent's welfare budget.

If you don't live with your parent or guardian:

- You can get a welfare case if you are an emancipated minor, that is, you are 16 or 17 years old, you were in school until you were 16, you don't need foster care and you don't live with your parent or get money from him or her.

*A 16 or 17-year-old single parent does not have to live with his or her parent or guardian if:*

- No parent or guardian is available to live with
- No parent or guardian will take you in
- You are or were subjected to serious physical or emotional harm or sexual abuse in your parent or guardian's home
- You or your child would be at risk of serious harm if you lived with your parent or guardian
- For some other reason, it is in the best interest of the child to not live in your parent or guardian's home

If you have one of these exceptions, the welfare center must help you find a supervised living arrangement, such as a maternity home or second chance home, unless your current living situation is appropriate.

### Requirements for 18, 19 and 20 year-olds

#### Single and pregnant or parenting

You can get your own welfare case and do not have to live with a parent or guardian; however, HRA has the right to sue your parent or guardian for the cost of your support.

#### Single and not pregnant or parenting

If you live with your parent or guardian:

- You can get your own cash grant if your parent is on welfare. You must fill out your own application when you turn 18.

If you don't live with your parent or guardian:

- You can get your own case if your parent or guardian won't let you live in their home or it is not a safe place for you to live. HRA can sue your parent for the cost of your support.

### If you are married

Based on your income and financial situation and that of your spouse, you may be eligible for welfare and your parent will not be liable for the cost of your support.

