



OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING

POLICY BULLETIN # 23-50-OPE

ACCESS HRA CASH ASSISTANCE APPLICATION CALL CENTER ASSISTANCE

Date: August 28, 2023	Subtopic(s): Cash Assistance
	<p>The purpose of this policy bulletin is to inform Benefits Access Center (BAC) and HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) Center staff of a new initiative to provide real-time telephonic Community based support for individuals navigating the Cash Assistance (CA) application process on Access HRA (AHRA). This policy bulletin is informational for all others.</p> <p>In an effort to increase the success rate of CA applications and reduce duplicate application submissions, HRA has identified a need to provide support for prospective applicants using AHRA to enhance their CA applications. The agency has been receiving a significant number of duplicate applications and applications that require substantial follow-up for needed documentation and eligibility interview to complete applications. This is placing an extra burden on the agency to meet the demand for processing of new applications.</p> <p>The need for additional support to applicants during the application process has been identified as an important measure the agency can take to remediate this problem. The goal of this initiative is to allow applicants to receive real time assistance from Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who can guide them on how to best add information to a pending application, about submission of required documents, and about the eligibility interview.</p> <p>This will improve application quality and thereby reduce processing times for HRA staff. This will also allow applicants to ask questions of knowledgeable CBO staff who can advise these callers when a duplicate application is not needed, thereby further reducing processing times for HRA staff by reducing the number of duplicate applications.</p>

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE?

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In order to meet this need, the agency is contracting with three CBOs who have expertise in providing benefit application assistance to New Yorkers. These CBOs will establish call center operations that will assist AHRA clients with pending applications or recertifications.

Note: CBO staff cannot provide eligibility determinations and will not deter anyone from applying who may ultimately be found ineligible after an interview and thorough eligibility determination by HRA staff.

Service Delivery Model

The contracted CBOs are expected to follow the below service delivery model:

- A. Users will see a message suggesting they call 311 for assistance on certain AHRA screens if it appears they are going to submit a duplicate application (e.g., already have an application pending or already have an active CA case), or if they need assistance with required documentation or eligibility interview. The CBO will accept telephone referrals from 311 and/or Infoline and provide callers with assistance over the phone. Callers will be self-identified and directed by 311 or Infoline to call the CBO call center for help with application completion and application questions. The CBO will assist callers to identify the most appropriate course of action and to navigate the appropriate CA application workflow in AHRA. The CBO will be provided with talking points to help address commonly asked questions that they will be expected to answer from callers. Calls will be taken immediately or placed in a queue. In some cases, when placed in a queue and after business hours, callers will be able to leave a message and receive a call back for assistance.
- B. Applicants submitting an application through AHRA will be prompted to call 311 to be connected to an organization that can help with their application if they are about to submit what appears to be a duplicate application or if their application may be rejected (or an active case closed) due to failure to submit required documentation or complete the CA eligibility interview.
- C. When an applicant who fits the scenarios in B calls 311 or Infoline, they will be provided with phone numbers for the three CBO organizations contracted to provide assistance.
- D. Anticipated call center hours and availability are 9:00am to 7:00pm Monday through Saturday.

Note: BAC and Center staff must not refer individuals to the CBOs in lieu of providing case information or assistance. The CBOs are here to assist applicants and recipients navigate the online application process with the goal of improving the quality of submissions and reduction in duplicate applications. However, the CBOs do not replace the requirement of HRA staff to assist individuals with whom they are actively working with.

Effective Immediately