

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Questions and Answers about

State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA)

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Deaf and hearing impaired individuals may use a TTD/TTY by calling 1-800-842-4524. Questions, concerns, complaints or requests for information in alternative formats must be directed to the Government and Public Relations Office at (860) 424-5010.

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How can I apply to SAGA?

You can apply to SAGA at the Department of Social Services (DSS) office nearest to where you live (see last page).

If you need cash help, we must interview you in person. Call before you come in so we can tell you what to bring to your interview. If you tell us you are disabled or you have a good reason why you can't come into the office, we will arrange to interview you at home.

A personal appointment is not necessary if you are applying for SAGA **medical assistance only**. Call any of the offices on the last page and we will mail an application to you. (You may still have to come into the office to be digitally imaged.)

What if I am homeless?

If you are homeless, apply at the Department of Social Services office nearest you.

If you are not sure where to apply, call any Department of Social Services office and someone will direct you to the right place.

When will I know if I am eligible?

If you are applying for cash help, and give us all the information we need to determine your eligibility, we will make a decision in 10 days. If you are applying for medical assistance only, we may take up to 45 days to decide if you are eligible.

What if I have an emergency when I apply?

If you have a true cash or medical emergency, we will process your application faster (in 4 days), provided you give us all the information we need to make a decision. If you do not have any food or any way to get food, we can give you a voucher to use at a grocery store. We will deduct the amount of the voucher from your first check.

If you have an urgent medical need, we can give you a medical voucher to take to your doctor or pharmacy.

If you need emergency housing, we will refer you to an area shelter.

How much help will I get from SAGA?

If you are married and living with your spouse, if you are pregnant, or if you have children under 21 living with you, you will be paid as a family case. This means you will receive a flat grant payment based on your family size, the region of the state where you live, and the type of housing you live in (subsidized or unsubsidized).

If you are a single adult, your budget will be based on your employability status. **If you are unemployable, you can get up to \$200* per month. If you are employable, your budget will be up to \$50* or \$200* per month, depending upon your living arrangements.**

(*These amounts went into effect on July 1, 2003 and are subject to change by the State Legislature. In most cases, income you receive during the month will be deducted from these amounts.)

How will I get my benefits?

SAGA recipients will receive benefits electronically, rather than by check. This electronic payment system is known as “EBT.” It allows you to get your cash, medical and food stamp benefits through a single electronic swipe card. You may use the card at many automated teller machines (ATM's) and grocery stores.

Can I get help paying for medical care?

Unless you are eligible for Medicaid (Title 19), you can usually get SAGA medical if you are eligible for SAGA cash benefits. You can also get SAGA medical assistance even if you do not get cash help from SAGA.

You will receive a **medical card** to show your doctor, hospital or pharmacy, etc., whenever you need treatment. The medical card is very valuable. Please keep it in a safe place and do not let anyone else use it. If it is stolen, call your worker right away.

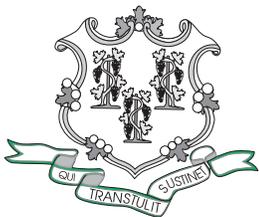
What are the rules for SAGA cash help?

If you are employable and job-ready (able to look for work right away) you do not qualify for SAGA cash. Some of the rules to be eligible for SAGA cash are:

- Unless you are pregnant or part of a family case, you must have health problems that will keep you from working for at least two months.
- You must participate in substance abuse treatment if you have a problem with alcohol or drugs.
- If you mismanage your cash award because of substance abuse (or any other reason), we may pay your benefits to a responsible protective payee or directly to certain vendors.

How long can I receive SAGA?

If you have a health problem that prevents you from working between two and six months, you must verify this claim with a doctor's note. You may receive cash help until your doctor says you are able to work.

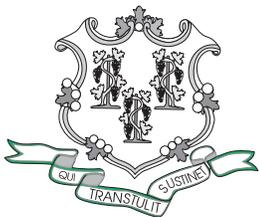


How do I qualify as unemployable?

We will consider you unemployable **if you have a physical or mental problem that keeps you from working for at least 6 months**. You must give us medical documentation of your problem, which will be reviewed by the Department's medical review team.

We will also consider you unemployable if any of the following reasons apply to you:

- You are under age 16 **(or over age 65)**.
- You are a full-time high school student.
- You take care of your child, who is under age 2.
- You take care of you totally incapacitated child or spouse in your home.
- You are over age 55 and you have not worked for at least 6 months in the last five years.
- You are a VISTA volunteer.
- You were granted SSI or Social Security Disability but haven't gotten your first check yet.
- You are waiting to get cash assistance from another Department of Social Services program.



How do I qualify for cash assistance if I am not unemployable?

You may be eligible for cash assistance if you meet one of the following requirements. A DSS worker can explain all these rules to you in greater detail.

- You have a **long-term physical or mental condition** that will prevent you from working for **six months or more**; you must provide medical verification of your illness or injury.

Or

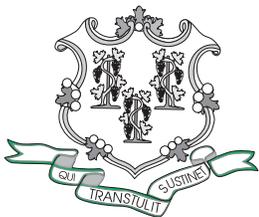
- You have a **short-term physical or mental condition** that will prevent you from working for **at least two, but less than six months**; you must provide medical verification of your illness or injury.

In addition, to qualify under this category, you must show that you have a **recent work history**. In general terms, this means you have worked and earned at least \$500.00 per quarter in each of three quarters out the last five quarters. You may also be able to meet the work history requirement if you were eligible to collect unemployment compensation during the last six months.

In some cases, you may not have to meet the work history requirement, for example, if you were in an institution, or recently graduated from high school.

What happens if I am employable?

You are not eligible for cash assistance if you are able to work. However, we can still help you with medical assistance and can refer you to programs that will help you to find and keep a job.



Are there any other eligibility rules?

Yes, here are some other rules that apply to SAGA applicants and recipients. You must:

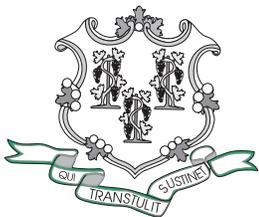
- Participate in digital imaging (fingerprinting)
- Pursue any other benefits you may qualify for, such as SSI
- Agree to a lien on your home if you own one
- Agree to an assignment of interest if you have a lawsuit or pending inheritance
- Agree to repay the Department for the help you received, including paying us back from any retroactive SSI benefits you are awarded
- Cooperate to get support from any relatives who are liable for you or any children for whom you receive assistance.

What are my rights under SAGA?

You have a right to file an application and receive a written notice of our decision on your case. You also have the right to:

- Have all available SAGA benefits explained to you
- Receive a written notice of our decision
- In most cases, to receive a written notice at least 10 days before we change, reduce or discontinue your benefits

Ask for a fair hearing on a denial, discontinuance, suspension or modification of your benefits.



What are my responsibilities under SAGA?

These are some of your responsibilities. You must:

- Answer all written and oral questions that affect your eligibility completely and truthfully as possible
- Report all changes in your income, assets, address, household composition and living arrangements to worker within 10 days.
- Report for all redeterminations and other appointments
- Comply with all SAGA eligibility rules and procedures.

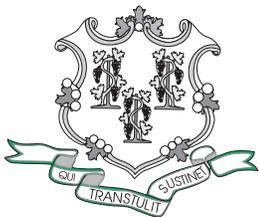
How can I ask for a Fair Hearing?

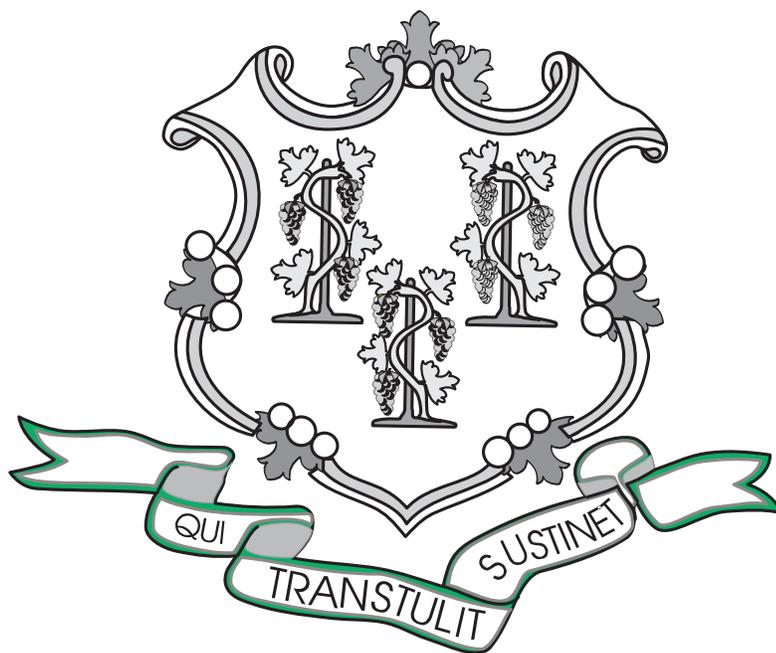
If you disagree with an action that we take on your case, you have 60 days from the date of your notice to ask for a hearing. If you ask for a hearing within the first 10 days, your benefits will continue at least until the hearing officer makes a decision on your case.

The hearing office will issue a decision within four days if we denied your application, and within 15 days on all other types of hearing requests.

You can appeal a fair hearing decision if you disagree with it.

We will tell you about your hearing rights, and how to ask for a hearing on every notice of action we send you.





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