

New York's Combined Application Projects: Automatically Enrolling Eligible SSI Recipients into SNAP

For two decades New York has operated a Combined Application Project (CAP) called the New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP), which automatically enrolls single Supplemental Security Income (SSI) live-alone recipients into SNAP.

From December 2021 through December 2023, NYS will transition from NYSNIP to a new CAP called the New York State Combined Application Project (NYSCAP). This guide highlights both NYSNIP and NYSCAP including who can participate, how the two CAPs differ and how the transition from NYSNIP to NYSCAP will be implemented.

What Is a CAP?

CAPs are a [partnership](#) between the Social Security Administration (SSA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and state and local agencies to streamline SNAP application procedures for individuals receiving SSI benefits. The projects are designed to strengthen access to nutrition benefits for this vulnerable population

NYS uses the standard CAP model which includes simplified joint SNAP/SSI application processing by SSA as individuals apply for or are recertified for SSI. CAPs use standard benefit amounts and/or standard shelter expenses in the benefit calculation and require evaluations to ensure cost neutrality is maintained.

NYSNIP to NYSCAP

Since 2014 OTDA has struggled to comply with the cost neutrality requirements of a CAP. For this reason, NYS submitted a waiver request to USDA/FNS to implement a new revised SSI CAP that will be simpler, more cost neutral, and easier to evaluate for cost neutrality in the future. This new CAP called NYSCAP—launched in December 2021.

NYSNIP and NYSCAP will run concurrently through December 2023. NYSNIP will be phased out over two years as new participants that meet NYSNIP criteria are placed into NYSCAP and current NYSNIP participants are recertified and/or re-budgeted and converted into NYSCAP.

Automatic Enrollment into NYSNIP/NYSCAP

CAPs automatically enroll single Supplemental Security Income (SSI) live-alone recipients into SNAP. No separate SNAP application, interview, or verification are needed to be automatically enrolled.

The SNAP office/HRA center uses monthly data matching to find eligible NYSNIP/NYSCAP participants from the list of newly approved SSI recipients in NYS.

NYSNIP/NYSCAP is available only to:

- SSI live-alone recipients—those classified as “living alone” by Social Security Administration (SSA) (i.e., live by themselves and pay their food, shelter, and clothing expenses).
- This code, called an “A/A,” designates a federal SSI living code of ‘A’ and a State Supplement code of ‘A.’

SSA sets these codes, not the SNAP office/HRA center. Only SSA can code SSI recipients as live-alones.

SSI couples and recipients in other living arrangement categories cannot participate in NYSNIP/NYSCAP, but they may be eligible for SNAP through the [Elderly Simplified Application Project \(ESAP\)](#)—another senior/disabled SNAP initiative in NYS—or through the regular SNAP application process.

Due to the transition from NYSNIP to NYSCAP, current NYSNIP recipients can no longer “opt out” of NYSNIP and use the regular SNAP process. This is because they will instead be transferred to NYSCAP at their next point of contact (interim report, recertification or reporting a change, whichever comes first). NYSCAP uses an individualized budget instead of the standardized budget that was used in NYSNIP.

18- to 21-year-old SSI Recipients Coded A/A by SSA

SSI participants ages 18 to 21 can be coded A/A, designating them as SSI live-alone, even if they reside with their parents, as long as they are paying their parents for living at home. These SSI recipients can participate in NYSNIP/NYSCAP as a separate SNAP household, as long as the parents are not in receipt of SNAP benefits. If both the parents and the 18- to 21-year-old SSI live-alone are either current SNAP participants or are applying for SNAP, then this family must apply together as one household under regular SNAP eligibility rules.

Enrollees Must Use Benefits Within 90 Days

New SNAP recipients under NYSCAP must redeem their SNAP benefits within the first 90 days of the auto-enrollment. This means that they must use their EBT card at a local SNAP vendor to purchase food. By doing this, the enrollee is agreeing to participate in SNAP and is providing an electronic application signature allowing them to receive monthly SNAP benefits. If the redemption of SNAP benefits does not occur in 90 days, the SNAP Office automatically closes the NYSCAP case, and the SNAP benefits will be removed and may not be restored.

This is also true for NYSNIP, but new applicants are no longer being enrolled in NYSNIP and so this only applies to NYSCAP enrollees going forward.

SNAP Benefits/Budgeting Under NYSNIP/NYSCAP

Enrollees into NYSNIP/NYSCAP will initially receive a minimum benefit level of \$20 or \$24. However, by filling out and returning the [NYSCAP Statewide SNAP Case Information Collection Sheet \(LDSS-4841\)](#) included with their NYSNIP/NYSCAP opening notice (includes questions about shelter and utility costs), benefits may be adjusted up to the maximum SNAP benefit level—as high as \$250.

There are no negative actions for not returning the LDSS-4841. The Information Collection Sheet gives enrollees the opportunity to provide and, if necessary, verify information that may qualify the household for a higher SNAP benefit.

Under NYSNIP the SNAP budgeting/benefit is standardized. The benefit standards consider four factors:

- The cost of shelter
- Eligibility for the heating/cooling standard utility allowance
- Presence of other income
- Geographic location

See the most recent NYSNIP Matrix by Shelter Type on page 7 of this guide.

Under NYSCAP the SNAP budgeting/benefit is individualized:

- NYSCAP enrollees will have their SNAP case opened with their actual SSI and any other income already budgeted, but with no shelter, medical, or other deductions other than the standard deduction.

- The [NYSCAP Statewide SNAP Case Information Collection Sheet \(LDSS-4841\)](#) is provided to notify the SNAP office of the enrollee's circumstances. Once the SNAP office receives a completed LDSS-4841 and any needed documents, the enrollee's SNAP budget and benefit amount must be updated using standard SNAP budgeting.
- Under NYSCAP rules, enrollees will automatically receive a reminder notice six months after the opening of their NYSCAP case if they have not returned the LDSS-4841.
 - This notice provides the enrollee with another opportunity to share with the SNAP office information on their shelter and utility costs to maximize the household's SNAP benefit.
 - Households that do not respond to this notice will not be subject to negative action, however the household will continue to receive \$20 or \$24 in monthly SNAP benefits instead of getting a monthly benefit that could be as high as \$250 a month.
- Upon receiving a completed LDSS-4841, the SNAP office must update the SNAP budget using standard SNAP budgeting rules, including:
 - Adding the actual shelter expense,
 - Determining the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance, and
 - Adding in any medical expenses eligible under SNAP rules.
- NYSCAP enrollees must meet the same SNAP verification requirements as all other SNAP cases, except:
 - They **may self-declare all shelter-related expenses** (e.g., rent, mortgage, taxes, and insurance on the dwelling), unless questionable.

Mandatory Interim Report

Households participating in either NYSNIP or NYSCAP will receive a mandatory interim report called the NYSCAP SNAP Case Interim Report ([LDSS-4836](#), [LDSS-4836 NYC](#)) at the midpoint of their certification period. This form **MUST BE returned**—if it is not returned the NYSNIP/NYSCAP case will be closed.

For NYSNIP participants the interim report is sent at the **24-month point of their 48-month certification period.**

For NYSCAP participants the interim report is sent at the **18-month point of their 36-month certification period**

The following **mandatory interim reporting** rules apply to **both NYSNIP/NYSCAP**:

- The NYSCAP SNAP Case Interim Report (LDSS-4836), which collects information about the households that is needed to complete a SNAP budget using standard SNAP

budgeting procedures, must be completed and returned to the SNAP Office or the SNAP case will be closed.

- If the interim report is returned, but there is not enough information to complete a SNAP budget, the SNAP office must contact the household to clarify or ask for needed documentation.

The following **mandatory interim reporting** rules apply to **NYSNIP only**:

- The SNAP office should convert the NYSNIP case to NYSCAP and calculate a SNAP budget using standard budgeting rules.
- Although this case has now been converted to NYSCAP, NYSNIP cases that are converted to NYSCAP at their interim report retain the remainder of their original 48-month certification period. SNAP offices must not shorten the household's certification period at the interim contact point.

NYSNIP/NYSCAP Recertification

Under SNAP rules a household is only authorized eligible for SNAP benefits for a specified, limited period of time, called the certification period. At the end of that period, the SNAP case is automatically closed unless the SNAP Office authorizes a new certification period. This process is called a recertification.

The **NYSNIP** certification period lasts up to **48 months (4 years)**.

The **NYCAP** certification period lasts up to **36 months (3 years)**.

At the end of a certification period, **both NYSNIP and NYSCAP households must**:

- Follow the recertification process in place for all SNAP recipients in order to continue to receive SNAP benefits.
- Complete and return a SNAP application/recertification form that will be sent in a notice of expiration.
- Follow regular SNAP documentation requirements. (For more information on the [documentation requirements see our prescreening guide](#) pg. 14)

At the end of a certification period the following applies **ONLY to NYSNIP households**:

- If found eligible, the household will be converted to NYSCAP and given a 36-month certification period for SNAP.

Similarly, NYSCAP households who are found eligible when recertifying will also be given a new 36-month certification period for SNAP.

Participants who lose SSI live-alone status will be taken out of NYSNIP/NYSCAP; however, they can still receive regular SNAP benefits, if they apply and are found eligible.

Changes to the NYSNIP Benefit Matrix and Benefit Allotments

NYSNIP benefit allotments are adjusted each October 1 and January 1. This can reduce the monthly SNAP benefit allotment for some NYSNIP recipients. See the new matrix for January 1, 2022 at the end of this guide. Because NYS is transitioning from NYSNIP to NYSCAP the NYSNIP matrix will continue to be updated through 2023.

Find Out More About NYSNIP

[OTDA](#) policy memos concerning NYSNIP/NYSCAP:

- [“New York State Nutrition Improvement Project” \(04-LCM-13\)](#)
- [21TA/DC080—Preliminary Guidance Regarding the New York State Combined Application Project \(NYSCAP\)](#)

NYSCAP forms and materials that can be downloaded and are part of this toolkit:

- [NYSCAP Statewide Information Collection Sheet \(LDSS-4841\)](#)
- NYSCAP Interim Report ([LDSS-4836](#) and [LDSS4836 NYC](#))
- NYSNIP Benefit Matrix – see at end of this guide.

The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) offers free and confidential services to connect potentially eligible individuals and families with SNAP benefits. NOEP Coordinators provide pre-screening, application and recertification assistance, and help resolve issues with SNAP cases. Visit FoodHelpNY.org to find a NOEP near you.

For More Information

If you have any questions about this article, or any other SNAP-related question, please contact Dawn Secor at (518) 436-8757, ext. 142, or by e-mailing dawn.secor@hungersolutionsny.org

NYSNIP BENEFITS MATRIX BY SHELTER TYPES

1/1/22– 9/30/22

The New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP) is a pilot project which auto enrolls single SSI live-alone recipients into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for up to 4 years.

HOUSEHOLD		MONTHLY FOOD STAMP BENEFIT AMOUNT		
		New York City	Nassau/Suffolk	Upstate
Shelter Type 94 (High Shelter/SUA)	SSI Only	\$250	\$250	\$244
	Other Income	\$250	\$250	\$235
Shelter Type 95 (Low Shelter/SUA)	SSI Only	\$250	\$233	\$206
	Other Income	\$242	\$224	\$197
Shelter Type 96 (High Shelter/ SUA/\$21 HEAP*)	SSI Only	\$250	\$250	\$244
	Other Income	\$250	\$250	\$235
Shelter Type 96 (High Shelter/No SUA**)	SSI Only	\$43	\$43	\$43
	Other Income	\$34	\$34	\$34
Shelter Type 97 (Low Shelter/ SUA/\$21 HEAP*)	SSI Only	\$250	\$233	\$206
	Other Income	\$242	\$224	\$197
Shelter Type 97 (Low Shelter/No SUA**)	SSI Only	\$24	\$24	\$24
	Other Income	\$20	\$20	\$20
Shelter Type 98 (No Shelter or SUA Data)	SSI Only	\$24	\$24	\$24
	Other Income	\$20	\$20	\$20

High shelter = Greater than \$278/month

Low shelter = Less than or equal to \$278/month

SUA = Eligible for Level 1 (heating/cooling) SUA

***SUA/\$21 HEAP** = Eligible for Level 1 (heating/cooling) SUA

****No SUA** = Not eligible for Level 1 (heating/cooling) SUA

No Shelter/ SUA = no information on households shelter costs or heating/cooling expenses