



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wolf Administration and United Way of PA Highlight State and Local Resources and 211 Program for Out-of-Work Pennsylvanians

Harrisburg, PA – The Departments of Labor & Industry (L&I) and Human Services (DHS) and the United Way of Pennsylvania want Pennsylvanians to know there are state and local programs and resources available for those who are unemployed. “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought hardship to hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, including many who have never been unemployed before and don’t know where to turn for help with housing, food, and other human service needs,” said L&I Acting Secretary Jennifer Berrier. “The United Way of Pennsylvania’s 211 program is an excellent tool for Pennsylvanians who need to locate their local food bank, shelter program, or other support service. By working together, L&I, DHS and the United Way of PA hope to provide every Pennsylvanian with access to the support they need to get through this pandemic.”

To quickly search resources by ZIP code through the United Way of Pennsylvania’s 211 Program, visit pa211.org. Pennsylvanians can also dial 211 or text their ZIP code to 898-211 to connect to a resource specialist for free to get information about programs in their community and receive the emergency assistance they need.

“Pennsylvanians who are losing unemployment benefits may need help with basic needs like food, utilities and housing, and not know where to turn,” said United Way of Pennsylvania President Kristen Rotz. “We encourage you to reach out to United Way’s PA 211 information and referral service to find out whether there are resources available in your area to help you get back on your feet. Help may be available from food banks, government programs, or nonprofit organizations. It’s also important to communicate with utility companies and creditors to ask for assistance, payment plans, or waiving late fees while you are seeking new employment.”

Pennsylvanians who have lost their job or income due to the pandemic and are having trouble making ends meet are also encouraged to apply for assistance programs administered by DHS, which help more than 3 million Pennsylvanians access health care, purchase food, heat their homes during the winter, and pay for other essential needs. Applications can be submitted online at any time through the COMPASS website. Unemployment program claimants may be also eligible for programs like SNAP and Medicaid, which help keep Pennsylvanians healthy and safe until they begin working again.

“All of us want anyone who is experiencing a serious life disruption to land on their feet quickly and comfortably, but that does not mean they should go without assistance while they are looking. No one should feel like they have to endure this period and its stress, anxiety, and uncertainty alone,” said DHS Secretary Teresa Miller. “Our public assistance network exists to help people during times like what we currently face. They can be a lifeline that makes sure people can go to the doctor, have enough to eat, or pay their utilities as other bills and needs arise.”

Applications for SNAP, Medicaid, and other public assistance programs can be submitted online at www.compass.state.pa.us. Those who prefer to submit paper documentation can print from the website or request an application by phone at 1-800-692-7462 and mail it to their [local County Assistance Office \(CAO\)](#) or place it in

a CAO's secure drop box, if available. You do not need to know your own eligibility in order to apply. While CAOs remain closed, work processing applications, determining eligibility, and issuing benefits continues. Clients should use COMPASS or the MyCOMPASS PA mobile app to submit necessary updates to their case files while CAOs are closed.

Pennsylvanians who need health insurance who do not qualify for Medicaid can explore coverage options through Pennie, the commonwealth's health insurance exchange. Open enrollment for 2021 plans continues through January 15, 2021.

Pennsylvanians can learn more at www.pennie.com.

"We want to make sure all Pennsylvanians know how to access assistance programs during this stressful time, especially those who are coping with job loss due to the pandemic," added Berrier. "These programs are lifelines to those who are struggling to pay their bills and meet basic day to day needs."

For more information on public assistance programs, visit www.dhs.pa.gov.

For the latest pandemic-related information for individuals, families, businesses and schools, visit "Responding to COVID-19" on pa.gov.

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