



January 2023



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF  
COMMUNITY SERVICES/CSBG

Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State

Please practice social distancing and wear a mask whenever possible for your safety and the safety of others.

## Happy Lunar New Year and Year of the Rabbit!



### Congratulations Tina LaRocca-Marcellus!

The Division of Community Services wants to congratulate Tina LaRocca-Marcellus, Community Service Program Analyst, on her retirement from state service at the end of the month.

Tina joined the Division as a Program Analyst in August 2010 and has worked with the Community Action Network all over New York State, focusing most of her time in the North Country.

After working many years within the network, Tina hopes to continue her involvement with Community Action during her retirement.

Tina, *THANK YOU* for being such a wonderful colleague, DCS will miss your great personality and your professional guidance.



## Agency Spotlight: LifeWorks Community Action

At the beginning of the pandemic, LifeWorks Community Action in Saratoga County was forced to close their in-person market-style pantry and transition to a delivery-only model. After quickly mobilizing volunteers, pantry requests were taken over the phone, socially distant teams packed food, and volunteer drivers picked up and delivered food to the doorstep of neighbors in need. The model allowed the agency to continue services and quickly scale-up programming to meet sky-rocketing demand during the early days of the COVID-19 shutdown.

The new delivery model, however, required a solution to “choice”- something the agency views as central to its food programs. Previously customers shopped in-person to build their food packages, but as a result of the crisis, volunteers were assembling standard packages in accordance with Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) guidelines.

While many people quickly took advantage of online grocery ordering and delivery services, LifeWorks began to look at how to set up a similar system for food pantry customers and identified a cloud-based software program called SmartChoice Pantry. The system allows customers to shop with “points” to build their pantry package on-line from a computer, tablet or smartphone. Staff and volunteers maintain a live inventory in the SmartChoice database and customers can choose delivery or curb-side pick-up. Volunteers use order tickets to package the customized orders. Customers unable or who prefer not to order on-line can order over the phone with a staff person or volunteer.

An example of innovation born out of crisis, the new model also addresses a primary challenge for families with low-incomes in Saratoga County that is commonly known and consistently identified in the community needs assessment – transportation. Even before gas prices skyrocketed, the lack of transportation or the ability to afford gas to drive to services was a challenge for many families in the county. As communities slowly emerge from the pandemic, online ordering and delivery will continue to be an important part of LifeWorks food program model.



[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about LifeWorks Community Action, or contact Angelo Calbone, Community Service Director directly for further information: [a.calbone@lifeworksaction.org](mailto:a.calbone@lifeworksaction.org)

**Thank you to LifeWorks  
for sharing this  
information!**

The screenshot displays the SmartChoice Pantry interface. On the left, a list of items is shown with their respective point values and nutritional icons (U, V, VG, LS, H, GF, LF). On the right, a shopping cart is visible, showing the items added, their counts, and the total points for each item. The cart also shows the total points balance and the current cart points.

Item	Count	Points
Applesauce, Small can	1	2.00
Bag - Mixed Breads	1	2.00
Bag - Mixed Fresh Fruits	1	1.00
Beef - Frozen	1	2.00
Milk	1	2.00
Peaches - in Syrup	1	2.00

Points Balance: 73.00  
Cart Points: 11.00

## Agency Spotlight: People's Equal Action and Community Effort, Inc.

People's Equal Action and Community Effort, Inc. (PEACE, Inc.) serves Syracuse and Onondaga County. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, PEACE, Inc.'s Free Tax Prep Program experienced an influx of customers needing to prepare multiple tax year returns at a time that volunteers were in short supply due to pandemic restrictions and health concerns.

PEACE, Inc.'s VITA Program had operated during tax season pre-Pandemic, and moved to a year-round program in Fall 2021 in part with CSBG CARES funding.

PEACE, Inc.'s Free Tax Prep Program returned nearly 3 million dollars to the Central New York economy and an average tax return of nearly \$2,200. Perhaps more importantly, the program served far more low-income households than in previous years. Clients themselves shared how a quality return brought short-term stability and long-term economic mobility for their households. For example:



KM, a mother of four, earned \$14,879 at her job. Because of the stimulus and tax credits, KM received a tax return of \$19,272. As KM explained, "the money will help me and my family get a new car, daycare to work more hours, and the supplies that the baby needs right now."

RT, a mother of 3, earned just over \$25,000 at her job. Thanks to tax credits, RT earned a refund nearly equal her income, \$18,374. As she shared, "I will be putting this refund on a new home for me and my kids. So, I'm very thankful and more so excited that this year, I worked so hard, and my family can use this to go towards a new home."

[Read the full article here](#)

Friday January 27, 2023: [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\) Awareness Day](#)

Thank you to PEACE, Inc. for sharing their results and pictures of the Free Tax Program!



## 2023 State of the State Highlights

See the "Achieving the New York Dream" agenda by [clicking here](#), which includes 147 initiatives

- "New York Housing Compact" Strategy to Address New York's Housing Crisis, Build 800,000 New Homes Over Next Decade
- Transformational Plan to Strengthen Mental Health Care, Increase Capacity for Inpatient Psychiatric Treatment by 1,000 Beds and Add 3,500 Housing Units Serving Individuals with Mental Illness
- Major Public Safety Initiatives and Investments to Drive Down Gun and Violent Crime
- Raise Minimum Wage Annually and Index to Inflation, Helping New Yorkers Address Rising Cost of Living
- Cap-and-Invest Program to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Combat Climate Change
- \$165 Million in Relief to More than 800,000 Utility Customers
- Plan to Make Child Care More Affordable, Accessible, and Fair in New York

**2023 State of the State Book Available [Here](#)**

## Office for New Americans (ONA)

### ONA Celebrates New Bill Recognizing “Words Matter” for Immigrants & Shares an Important Resource for Immigrants in Detention

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) is happy to share the news that on December 9, 2022, Governor Hochul signed legislation into law that replaces the words “alien” and “illegal alien” when referring to immigrants from all statutes. The new law will change these terms to “noncitizen” or “undocumented noncitizen” respectively.

The Department of State and ONA are proud of their role in supporting the Law's inherent recognition that how we refer to all human beings is important to how a community thrives. This change is reflective of New York's “inclusive and welcoming platform on immigration matters” and demonstrates respect and humanity to the state's immigrant population.

On December 20, 2022, ONA hosted a webinar with important information for immigrants in detention. The presenters for this webinar were from the [Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman \(OIDO\)](#), an independent office within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) dedicated to examining immigration detention to promote and support safe and humane conditions. The webinar's goal was to raise awareness of OIDO's presence in immigration detention facilities in New York State and across the country.

The webinar provided participants with an understanding of OIDO's services, such as assisting individuals with complaints about potential violations of immigration detention standards or misconduct by DHS (or contract) personnel; providing independent oversight of immigration detention facilities, including conducting announced and unannounced inspections and reviewing contract terms for immigration detention facilities and services; and serving as an independent arbitrator for immigration detention facilities and services.

If you would like to receive the recording and materials from this webinar, please contact [NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov](mailto:NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov)

## New York State Department of Labor (DOL)

**The New York State Minimum Wage** is increasing for a portion of New York State (NYS) for calendar year 2023. Effective December 31, 2022, the minimum wage in NYS outside of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County will increase to \$14.20/hour. Within New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County, the minimum wage will remain \$15.00/hour.

Additional minimum wage information can be found on the New York State Department of Labor website at <https://www.ny.gov/new-york-states-minimum-wage/new-york-states-minimum-wage> or by calling 888-469-7365.

## Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is hosting a four-part webinar series in February 2023 that will showcase their [Your Money, Your Goals](#) resources. These tools and materials can help individuals meet their financial goals by increasing their knowledge and skills. This trainings series includes:

- Booklets to Help Talk About Money
- Focus on People with Disabilities
- Materials for Spanish speakers and Multilingual Audiences
- Focus on Reentry

[Register for the webinars using this link](#)

Free CFPB publications for organizations may be ordered [here](#)

## New York State Division of Consumer Protection (DCP)

As inflation leads to higher prices everywhere, New Yorkers are finding it harder to stretch their dollars. A little work before you go to the grocery store can go a long way toward helping you save money on groceries. To help your grocery dollars stretch further this year, DCP offers the following tips:

**Plan your meals.** Planning meals in advance, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, will reduce food waste and cut down on expensive meal delivery or dining-out costs. Make a grocery list to support the plan and reduce impulsive purchases.

**Look for deals.** Plan meals around a few bulk ingredients or based on the weekly grocery sales circular to ensure you're buying items on sale. Take advantage of store savings and enroll in store reward programs. Search for online coupons, use store savings, rewards cards, and watch for manufacturer coupons attached to the items in-store.

**Shop strategically for food.** Take inventory of what you have at home before going shopping. Go to the grocery store with a list, having planned out your meals until your next grocery trip.

### Reduce food waste:

- **Learn about food product dating.** According to the FDA, confusion over date labeling accounts for an estimated 20 percent of consumer food waste. Important tips to know:
  - Except for infant formula, manufacturers are not required by Federal law or regulation to place quality-based date labels on packaged food.
  - Manufacturers apply date labels at their own discretion and for a variety of reasons. The most common is to inform consumers and retailers of the date to which they can expect the food to retain its desired quality and flavor.
  - *Best if Used By* is the standard phrase to indicate the date until which a product will be at its best flavor and quality, not the date an item will spoil. Consumers should examine foods that are past their *Best if Used By* date for signs of spoilage before they throw them away. (For example, bread past its *Best if Used By* date may be stale, but if it is not moldy or spoiled, it could be used to make French toast, croutons, breadcrumbs, and several other items you may otherwise buy at the store.)
  - To learn more tips on how to cut food waste, visit [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).
- **Use your freezer.** Freezing is a great way to store most foods to keep them from going bad until you are ready to eat them.
- **Understand food and beverage storage.** It will help you maximize the freshness and quality of items. Visit [FoodKeeper](#) for information on how to safely store different foods to maintain freshness and quality.
- **Got Leftovers?** Make one dinner a week your 'smorgasbord night'. Reheat those leftovers as is or turn them into an entirely different meal by adding some additional ingredients.

**Consider planting a garden.** This can help save both time and money. Turn those harvested fresh veggies into lunches and dinners, and then can or freeze your excess harvest to enjoy it for months later.

**Wholesale clubs.** Purchase in bulk to save money on items you frequently buy. Wholesale shopping also allows you to stock up for fewer shopping trips. Some wholesale clubs allow membership sharing, and that could mean splitting the membership fee with a friend or family member. Remember to cancel memberships you aren't using.

**Buy seasonal fruits and vegetables.** Many fruits and vegetables peak at a certain time of year. Prices normally drop when they're in season and rise when they're not. Learn what's in season with this [guide to New York's produce](#).

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection provides resources and education materials to consumers, as well as voluntary mediation services between consumers and businesses. The Consumer Assistance Helpline 1-800-697-1220 is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding State Holidays, and consumer complaints can be filed at any time at [www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection](http://www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection).

For more consumer protection tips, follow the Division on social media at Twitter: @NYSConsumer and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/nysconsumer](http://www.facebook.com/nysconsumer)

## Division of Community Services Reminders:

### CSBG Eligibility Guidelines at 200% FPL for FY 2023

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The language in the current Continuing Resolution allows for the use of the 200% FPL CSBG Eligibility Guidelines until September 30, 2023.

### Quarterly Reports due January 2023

- Tuesday January 10, 2023: MWBE Form C and Form F
- Monday January 30, 2023: PPR and PPR Narratives; Fiscal and Program Attestation

### Annual Compliance Review of Organizational Standards (ACROS) FFY 2023

Eligible Entities that do not have a TRACS in FFY 2023 will submit the Self-Assessment by Tuesday, January 31, 2023.

An email with submission information was sent October 19, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact your assigned Program Analyst.

### Annual Report FY 2022 and 2022 CARES Modules

Eligible Entities were sent their FY 2022 and 2022 CARES Annual Report Modules and Instructions on December 13, 2022.

Modules completed by Eligible Entities are due back to the Division of Community Services by **February 14, 2023**.

The Division of Community Services must submit all completed Modules by March 31, 2023.

If there are any questions, including the due date, please reach out to [dosDCSInetInfo@dos.ny.gov](mailto:dosDCSInetInfo@dos.ny.gov) and please copy your Program Analyst.

## Community Action Partnership

**Community Action 101 Webinar: Wednesday, February 22, at 2 PM ET** [Click here](#) to register.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout the USA. Join the Partnership's CEO, Denise Harlow, as she shares the history, model, and Promise of Community Action, and discusses current opportunities for the Community Action network.

## CAPLAW – Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc.

**SAVE THE DATE: June 27-29, 2023: CAPLAW 2023 National Training Conference in Austin, Texas**

## 2023 Poverty Guidelines Released

HHS has released the [2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

## Additional Resources for the CSBG Network

Community Action Partnership - [Resource Library](#)

Community Action Program Legal Services (CAPLAW) - [Resource Library](#)

National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) - [Annual Report Resources](#)

New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)- [NYSCAA Learn](#)

New York State Weatherization Directors Association - [Training Calendar](#)

The Department of Public Service- [Winter Preparedness 2022-2023](#)

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