



**DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES/CSBG**

**Kathy Hochul, Governor
Rossana Rosado, Secretary of State**

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November 2021

NYS Department of Labor: Getting New Yorkers Back to Work

Christopher White, Associate Commissioner for the Future of Work, gave a presentation at the October 27, 2021 CSBG Advisory Council on how the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted and caused a massive shift in the type of jobs that are available to the New York State workforce. The presentation highlighted who is looking for work -- when, where, and how -- and the systems and programs needed to assist them.



COVID-19 put a spotlight on the increased use of automation and the extent to which it exacerbates job displacement. These stresses highlighted the skills mismatch between what businesses need and what workers bring to the job. It has become clear that the dynamic between businesses and workers needs to shift in order to meet everyone's needs.

Two comprehensive surveys were conducted by the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) offered useful insight into the struggles of employers and employees post-pandemic.

Businesses were clear: they are not seeing enough job seekers who are qualified – meaning they don't have the experience or credentials. Job seekers were also clear: they want higher wages, flexible scheduling and remote work options, a better work-life balance, job security and a visible career path. In addition, job seekers identified their common barriers as not having the right degree, certificate, or credential (32%), not having enough experience in the field (24%) and lacking sufficient education or training (20%).

Businesses and job seekers emphasized a shared need for skill development around two large groups: professional skills (or soft skills) and digital literacy. These skill sets were noted by both businesses and job seekers: communication skills (66%), self-motivation (64%), problem-solving/critical thinking (63%), attention to detail (58%), basic computer use/computer literacy (47%), software proficiency in Excel (39%), software proficiency in Word (23%), time management (44%) and conflict management (33%).

The results can be found on the DOL website: [Workforce Survey Results](#).

There is a critical need for both skilled and entry-level workers. Many workers have expressed a desire to change industries and there is a significant need for training and development. Businesses working to adapt are in need of guidance and resources.

For additional information and resources for businesses and job seekers, visit: [NYS Department of Labor](#).

Successful use of CSBG Discretionary Funds for Fatherhood Pilot

In 2021, the New York State Department of State (DOS), through Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) discretionary funds, assisted three community action agencies pilot the Fatherhood Connection Project. Leading the charge, Connecting Communities in Action (Cattaraugus County) partnered with Allegany County Community Opportunities and Rural Development (Allegany County) and ProAction of Steuben and Yates (Steuben and Yates Counties) to form the bedrock of the Fatherhood Pilot Program. Programming was developed by Reginald Cox (creator of the Fatherhood Connection curriculum) and Dr. Christopher St. Vil, Asst. Professor at the University of Buffalo.

The goal of the Fatherhood Connection Project is to train and certify new facilitators within each county. During these 13-week Fatherhood Connection sessions participants aimed to strengthen their understanding of fatherhood roles, improve overall parenting skills, learn communication, improve their anger management techniques, discuss blended families, and learn how to become more engaged in their child's life. Training facilitators facilitated access to wrap-around services from the CAAs. These services are necessary supports which ensure the success of participant fathers and their families. Dr. St. Vil engaged rigorously to evaluate the outcomes of the pilot and the efficacy of the curriculum.

The pilot was a huge success, of the 51 men who participated, 30 graduated. Five facilitators were trained across the three-county area and continue to proctor group sessions. Data (qualitative and quantitative) from pre/post surveys, and participant interviews was compiled to provide concrete proof of the pilot's educational model. Review of this data supports the hypothesis that men who learn greater accountability and skills for empathy become stronger more empathetic fathers. It can be confidently stated that the Fatherhood Connection program is effective educational parenting program.

Testimonials from fathers lend credibility to the power of the Fatherhood Connection. "My partner and I have had different views on raising kids, and often argued with each other which created quite a divide. Once I learned that permissive parenting is not healthy for the child, we both realized how we each needed to grow in the area that the other one was better at. I needed to become more consistent in reminding them of the rules and guidelines, and she needed to become more patient, and grace filled. The new knowledge has brought us closer together and given our children a stronger sense of security. It's truly amazing!" – N. P. Here is another amazing Fatherhood Connection testimonial, from [Jason in Allegany County](#).

With the continued support of the Community Action network and the New York State Department of State, this program will have the opportunity to expand and offer its services to other fathers across New York State.

Our Sincere Gratitude for All You Do

The Division of Community Services wishes to express its sincerest gratitude to our CSBG partners and friends for their hard work and caring spirit. During these extraordinarily challenging times, the CSBG community has provided crucial services to our many neighbors facing economic and social hardships. New York State is fortunate to have such exceptional public servants who truly make a meaningful and positive difference in the lives of so many. Thank you!

Tips for Customers to Combat Heating Prices this Winter

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection is offering tips for consumers to deal with the higher-than-average home heating prices that are expected this winter season.

- **Take steps to be more energy efficient.** Consumers can take small steps at home, such as lowering the thermostat by a few degrees, using curtains that help keep heat in, and adding weather stripping to windows and doors—all that are either no or low-cost improvements. NYSERDA offers energy saving tips for residents and homeowners that can lower energy usage. Income eligible customers may also qualify for reduced-cost or free energy upgrades to their homes through [EmPower New York](#) and [Assisted Home Performance](#) with ENERGY STAR® programs. Homeowners should also check with their local gas and electric utility companies to access discounted products and services that can help them lower their energy costs.
- **Get a free energy audit.** New York homeowners are eligible for a free home energy assessment through NYSERDA's Residential Energy Audit Program. Qualified contractors help homeowners decide on and install worthy energy improvements, then assist them in connecting with NYSERDA's low-interest financing programs. Learn more about energy audits by visiting [NYSERDA's website](#).
- **Upgrade to a clean energy heat pump.** With rising fuel costs, homeowners may consider switching from fossil fuel heating equipment to a clean energy heat pump system. The NYS Clean Heat program offers rebates to homeowners to install both ground source (geothermal) heat pumps and cold-climate air source heat pumps.
- **Join a Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign.** NYSERDA supports communities across the state in implementing community-based outreach and education campaigns for clean heating and cooling. These campaigns are designed to help consumers understand heat pump and home improvement technologies and their benefits. Community members can negotiate rates collectively, select an installer competitively, and decrease up-front costs by enrolling in a local campaign.
- **Know your rights and protections.** The New York State Home Energy Fair Practices Act has comprehensive protections for residential customers regarding their utility services. These rights include the option to pay bills in installments, a cap on late fees, sufficient notice prior to shut-off of services, and protections for those on a fixed income or with medical conditions. Learn about these from the Department of Public Service at [AskPSC](#), the Department of Public Service's support site.
- **Consider bill payment options.** Residential consumers can inquire with their utility provider about billing options that allow for deferred payments or 'budget billing' to even out utility bills that are higher in one season and lower in another. This can help structure payments to make it easier to navigate costs.
- **Sign up for community solar.** Community solar allows New Yorkers to save money on their electric bills each month. Consumers can subscribe to a community solar project and start receiving credits on their regular electric bill for clean energy produced by a solar farm. Renters, co-op/condo owners and businesses can save money by accessing the clean energy produced by these solar farms. Learn more about how to sign up for community solar on [NYSERDA's website](#).



Campaign Launched to Assist with Heating and Utility Expenses

A new digital media campaign designed to raise awareness of the various state programs available to help struggling New Yorkers pay heating and utility expenses to avoid potential service interruptions during the cold weather months ahead. With utility prices expected to spike this season, the campaign will also provide tips and best practices to help contend with higher-than-average home heating costs.



According to the New York Public Service Commission, electric and natural gas bills are expected to be higher for the 2021-2022 winter season than last year, with natural gas projected to increase by an average of about 21% statewide. Propane has also increased about 30% since last winter according to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's Propane Pricing Dashboard.

With the economic impact of the COVID-19, New York families may struggle to pay their heating bills. If you're at risk of losing your heat this winter and want more information visit [Keep the Heat on](#) for help.

Eligible homeowners and renters may apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which can provide up to \$751 depending on income, household size and how they heat their home. A family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,249 or an annual gross income of \$62,983 and still qualify for benefits — a modest increase from the previous year's threshold.

You can apply for regular HEAP Benefits online at <https://mybenefits.ny.gov/>, in person at [HEAP Local District Contact](#), or by completing [HEAP Application](#). Applicants must meet eligibility requirements to receive a regular HEAP benefit. Starting January 3, 2022, HEAP will also provide a **one-time emergency** benefit to eligible households that are facing a heating emergency. For further information on emergency HEAP Benefits and how to apply visit: <https://www.ny.gov/helping-new-yorkers-keep-heat>.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

The NYS Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is accepting applications as of June 1, 2021. There are several important resources on the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance ([OTDA](#)) website. The website provides links to informational videos to help navigate and become familiar with the ERAP system.

Get Help Applying for ERAP: [Apply for the ERAP online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week](#)

Contact by phone: 844-NY1RENT (844-691-7368) 7 days a week from 8 a.m. -7 p.m. For the hearing impaired, TTY phone number: 1-833-843-8829. **Contact by Webchat:** [Chat with a representative](#)

[Eligibility](#) [Renter-Checklist](#) [Landlord-Checklist](#)

Payments will be made directly to the landlord/property owner and utility company on behalf of the tenant. Tenant applicants will be notified of the amounts paid on their behalf.

NYS Office for New Americans Offers Support Services

The NYS Office for New Americans (ONA) offers a variety of free support services and programming for immigrants and refugees in New York State. From legal assistance to English language learning, naturalization assistance to mental health support, ONA delivers services across New York through a statewide network of community-based providers. To learn more about ONA's programs, visit <https://dos.ny.gov/office-new-americans> or call the New Americans Hotline at 1-800-566-7636.

Holiday Shopping Guidance from NYS Division of Consumer Protection

The holiday season is upon us, which means family, food, and gifts. This year, experts expect shipping delays and supply shortages due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Scams and fraud are also prevalent this time of year, so it is important to stay safe.

In anticipation of the pitfalls of the holiday shopping season, the New York State Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) shares some advice for an especially hectic shopping season this year:

- **Avoid pandemic-related shortages.** Shop earlier this holiday season to avoid shipping delays and supply shortages. Consumers should also consider shopping locally rather than having packages delivered. Virtual gifts like streaming subscriptions and online gift cards are another great option.
- **Know your rights.** Retailers have responsibilities to consumers. For example, the Federal Mail, Internet, or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule (the Mail Order Rule) states that your order must be delivered within 30 days unless otherwise stated at the time of purchase. Retailers should also post refund policies clearly for your convenience.
- **Shop on trusted sites.** Scammers lurk online for victims so only shop on sites that are secure. Do your research while shopping, especially if you try a new site. Make sure you read product specifications and understand what is being advertised.
- **Protect your privacy.** Make sure your online connections are secure and that websites are encrypted, which will be noted by a lock next to web address or be stated on the website. Never save credit card details or passwords onto websites to avoid hackers. Check your social media logins periodically—these are saved sometimes without consumers' knowledge.
- **Keep track of your packages.** Always review tracking information and note any issues right away. Be aware of phishing attempts as well—scammers may send fake links to track a package. Instead, visit the retailer's website independently to verify tracking information.

The Division of Consumer Protection offers these tips and more to educate and support New York's consumers. To find more information, go to the Division of Consumer Protection website at: <https://dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection>.

The Division of Consumer Protection provides voluntary mediation 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 <https://dos.ny.gov/file-consumer-complaint>.

Connect with the Division on social media by following us via Twitter at [@NYSConsumer](#) or Facebook at www.facebook.com/nysconsumer.



Legislative Package Signed on Veterans Day 2021

On November 11, 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul signed a legislative package into law which aims to support and protect both veterans and their families. The signed legislation package includes:

- A definition of a Veteran serving in the Vietnam War Era
- Allows spouses to receive unemployment benefits due to a military transfer
- Created the Women Veterans Advisory Council to support and assist the Division of Veterans' Services in locating, educating, and advocating for all women veterans
- Established a taskforce on Veteran Employment Opportunities
- Requires homeless shelters and nursing homes to connect veteran residents to benefits
- Authorized Westchester County to waive fees for Veteran' Organizations
- Enables veterans to receive benefit information upon applying or renewing a driver's license
- Provides In-State tuition for spouses and children of active-duty service members to SUNY and CUNY
- Expands eligibility for Merit Scholarships
- Expands veteran's eligibility for additional credits and civil service appointments and promotions
- Allow ferry operators to transport soldiers, sailors, and marines in uniform without fees

"Our active service members and veterans have served a high calling to protect our democracy and freedoms, and now it is our turn to support them and their families," Governor Hochul said. Find out more information on the [New York State Division of Veterans' Services](#) website.

NYS Administration Nominations and Appointments Announced

In November, Governor Kathy Hochul announced several new administration nominations and appointments. "New York faces critical challenges ahead, and we need strong, experienced leaders who know how to work with local partners and deliver results," Governor Hochul said. "With wide ranging expertise and backgrounds, Robert Rodriguez, Rossana Rosado, and Minosca Alcantara could not be better suited for the positions for which I've recommended them. I look forward to being able to work with these individuals as we recover from the pandemic and move New York forward."

- **Robert J. Rodriguez** will be nominated as New York's 68th Secretary of State.
- **Rossana Rosado** will be nominated as Commissioner, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).
- **Minosca Alcantara** will be recommended as the Executive Director for the New York State Bridge Authority.
- **Kerri Neifeld** will be nominated as Commissioner, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).
- **Nivardo Lopez** has been appointed Deputy Secretary for Transportation.
- **Jihoon Kim**, LMSW has been appointed Deputy Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene.
- **Kate C. Harris** has been appointed Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and Technology.
- **Dr. Chinazo O. Cunningham** will be nominated as Commissioner, Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS).
- **Reverend Viviana DeCohen** has been appointed Director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Services.
- **Kylah Hynes** has been appointed Director of Federal Affairs.

For more information on nominations and appointment visit: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/>



Emergency Broadband Benefit

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program created to help families and households who cannot afford or are struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit will connect eligible households to jobs, critical healthcare services, virtual classrooms, and more.

For more information, including eligibility requirements, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>.

Outreach kits are available in multiple languages: <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-outreach-toolkit>.

It is important to note that the program runs as long as there are funds to support it, all eligible participants are encouraged to apply ASAP!

Reach out to Gregg Collar (Gregg.collar@dos.ny.gov) from the Department of State, Division of Consumer Protection, who will be able to provide you with further direction and answer any specific questions you might have regarding the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Resources for Child Tax Credit (CTC)

The Office of Community Services recently released a *Dear Colleague Letter* regarding the expansion of the *Child Tax Credit (CTC)* in the *American Rescue Plan*, signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021. Visit [whitehouse.gov/child tax credit](https://whitehouse.gov/child-tax-credit) for more information.

Resources for responding to COVID-19

- [Community Action Partnership: COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment](#)
- [CAPLAW: Coronavirus Updates for the Community Action Network](#)
- [NASCSP Coronavirus Resources](#)
- [NYSCAA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources](#)
- [Food Pantries across New York State](#)
- [New York State Department of Health](#)

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