



Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council

Public Benefits Survey Phase 1 Report

Purpose - This report will provide some basic observations and summary statistics derived from the first stage of the *Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council's (CPRAC) Public Benefits Survey*. This data collection period (**Phase 1**) began on April 16, 2024, and ended May 31, 2024, using Microsoft Forms software. The survey link was available on OTDA's CPRAC Public Hearing webpage, as well as its Facebook and X accounts. Additionally, CPRAC members and NYS Local *Department of Social Services* Commissioners were provided the survey link and were asked to distribute to their clients and external networks. The results discussed below are generated from this preliminary sample. A more comprehensive report is forthcoming.

The survey questions were presented on-line and were introduced with the following narrative:

"We would like to ask a few questions about how these NYS public benefit programs have worked for you:

SNAP (*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; formerly known as "food stamps"*);

PA (*Public Assistance; can also refer to Temporary Assistance or Cash Assistance. This also includes homeless shelter, utility and/or rental assistance through the program*);

SSI (*Supplemental Security Income*)."

"The survey should take a few minutes, depending on how many benefits you are receiving. If you do not have time to complete the entire survey, please scroll to the bottom and click "Submit" so that we can record the questions you answered. Your responses to this survey are voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous.

Thank you for giving us your feedback."

To view the survey, click here <https://forms.office.com/g/iXXyiDEtG>

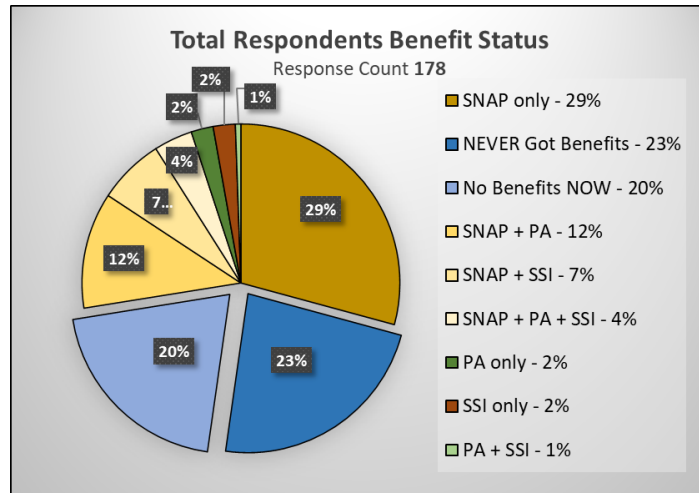
Interpretation Caveats – The data collected thus far provide *important insights* into some of the experiences reported by **people who sought public benefits through OTDA**. However, the responses are likely NOT representative of *all people in need*, nor do they represent *all* public benefit applicants and/or recipients in NYS. First, the number of responses in Phase 1 was small (178) relative to the total number of SNAP households (over 1.7 million). The online data collection method ensured convenience and safeguarded anonymity to foster **candid feedback**. However, this meant that respondents needed to be *both* literate and computer-literate. And while the survey was offered in Spanish, no one completed the Spanish version of the survey.

Additional survey collection is necessary to increase our sample size and to reach the broadest mix of individuals who seek public assistance and qualify for our programs. Thus, these results are *useful* but must be *interpreted with caution*, as is commonly required by convenience samples and anonymous focus group methodologies.

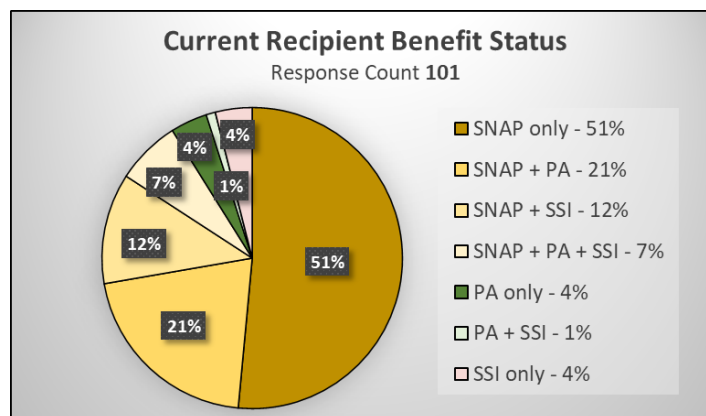
Part 1 - Summary Statistics

Sample Size:

- Of the **178 surveys** collected, a substantial portion, **43% of respondents** (blue segments on pie chart) either “**never received**” benefits (23%) or were “**not currently receiving**” benefits (20%), for a subtotal of **77 people**.



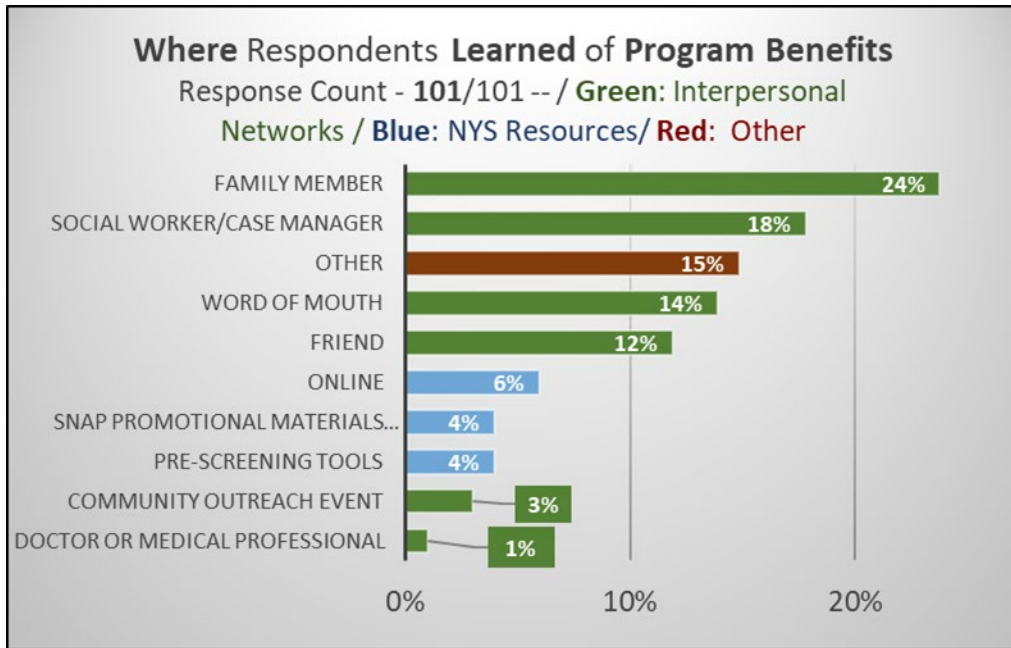
- Regardless of whether these were current recipients or not, the utility of this framework includes the advantage of collecting experiential insight from the broadest possible target population.
- Non-recipient responses (people who “never received benefits”) and responses by those who received benefits “in the past” (but not while taking the survey) were limited to open-ended, “*In your own words...*” questions. These *qualitative statements* will be analyzed separately and summarized in Part 2 of this report.
- The total count of respondents “**currently receiving benefits**” was **101**. The remainder of the charts and bulleted information in this section (Part 1) will focus on this subset of responses.



- Of these, the **largest portion**, or **82%** of the total sample, were **SNAP related**: “SNAP only” (51%), followed by SNAP + PA (21%), and SNAP + SSI (12%).

Benefit Program Awareness:

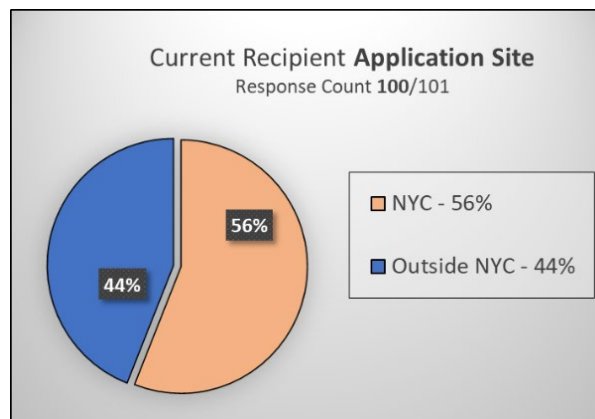
- Although responses were generated using an online survey, when asked WHERE respondents learned of OTDA benefit programs, the majority (**68%**) relied on **interpersonal networks** (see green bars on chart), including learning from a “family member” (**24%**), “social worker/case worker” (**18%**), “word of mouth” (**14%**), and a “friend” (**12%**).
- A smaller portion, **14%** of respondents chose **NYS resources**, including Online searches (6%), Promotional Materials (4%) and Pre-Screening Tools (4%).



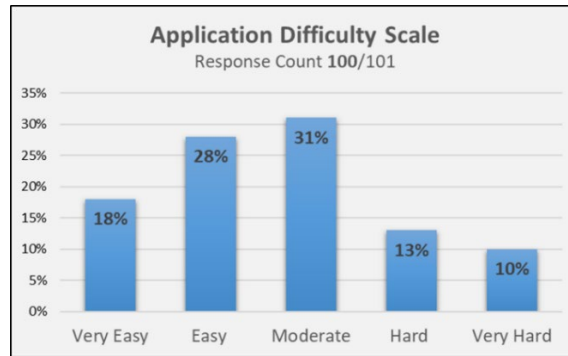
- This result, and others, highlight the on-going importance of **direct outreach** in providing support for our target population.

Application Measures:

- Of the 101 total respondents, **56%** applied for *any or all* benefits in **NYC**, while **44%** said they did so “**outside of NYC.**” (1 person did not identify their location.)



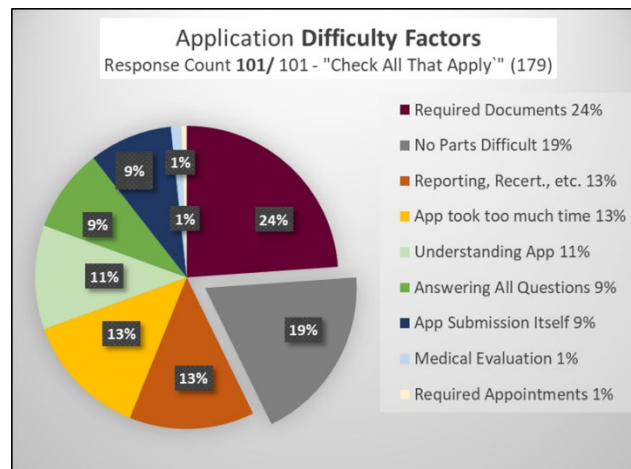
- Of the total respondents that applied for SNAP, PA, &/or SSI benefits, **46%** indicated that, *overall*, the **application** was either “**very easy**” or “**easy**”. This result may be influenced by the fact these survey respondents had a computer literacy advantage.



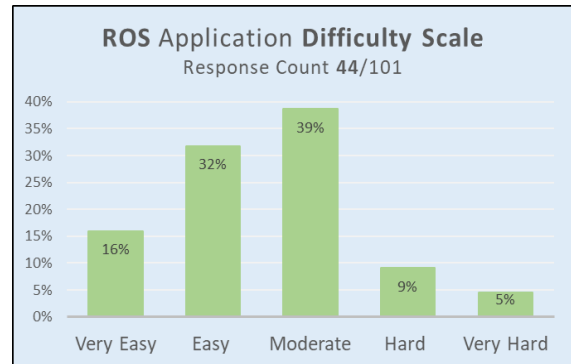
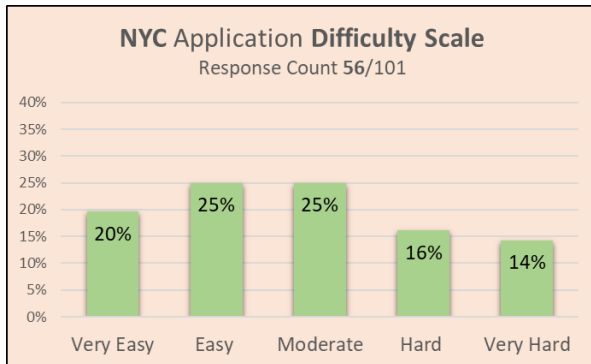
- When asked to choose among commonly identified barriers or “Difficulty Factors” (if any) to the application completion process, **19%** responded that they had “**no difficulty**”. Please note that the “Difficulty Factors” question allowed respondents to choose more than one option, so the response count (179) is higher than the sample size (101).

Application Difficulty Factors		
Response Count: 179/101 - "Check All That Apply" (179)		
43	Required Documents 24%	24%
33	No Parts Difficult 19%	19%
24	Reporting, Recert., etc. 13%	13%
24	App took too much time 13%	13%
20	Understanding App 11%	11%
16	Answering All Questions 9%	9%
16	App Submission Itself 9%	9%
2	Medical Evaluation 1%	1%
1	Required Appointments 1%	1%
179		101%

- Among the difficulty factors chosen by those applying for any or all benefits, the *highest portion* (**24%**) was regarding “**Required Documents.**” Other factors were **varied**, but **fairly evenly spread**, as shown on the pie chart below.



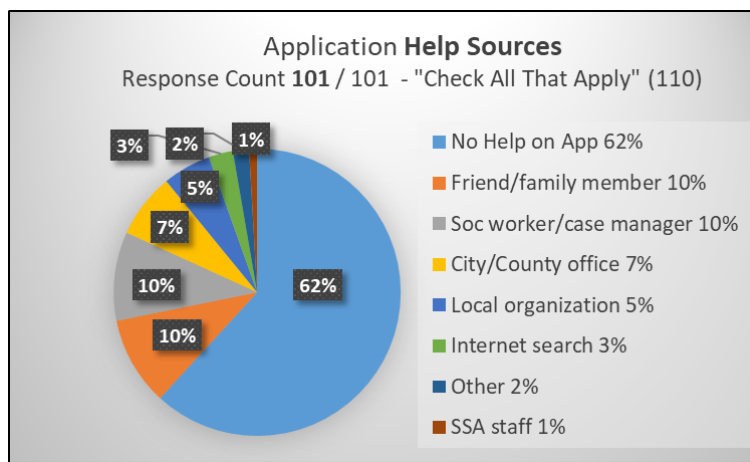
- When divided into “New York City” and “Outside New York City” (or “Rest of State,” ROS) these results suggest that responders in **NYC** had a harder time (**30%**) on the applications than those in **ROS** (**14%**). This can be seen most clearly in the *combining* the “hard” and “very hard” response tallies on the Application Difficulty Scales, respectively.



- Respondents were also asked if they received assistance filling out their application, and if so, what the source of this support was. **62%** of those “did not get help” on their application.

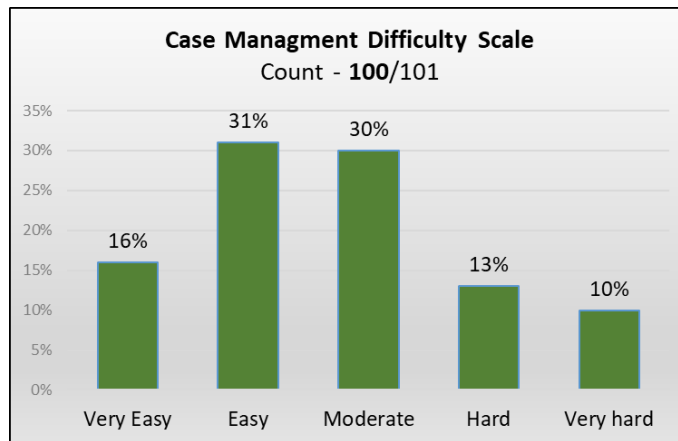
Application Help Sources		
Response Count: 101/101 - "Check All That Apply" (110)		
68	No Help on App 62%	62%
11	Friend/family member 10%	10%
11	Social worker/case manager 10%	10%
8	City/County office 7%	7%
6	Local organization 5%	5%
3	Internet search 3%	3%
2	Other 2%	2%
1	SSA staff 1%	1%
110		100%

- Again, because the response counts are low at this point in the data collection, interpretation caution is required. Also recall that the majority of respondents were SNAP recipients, so these figures may largely reflect SNAP application processes.

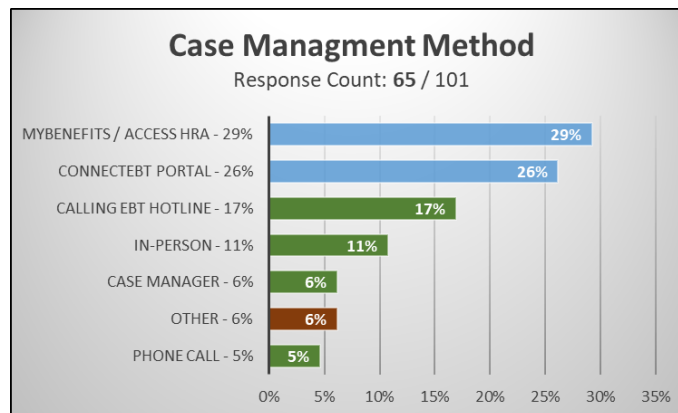


Case Management:

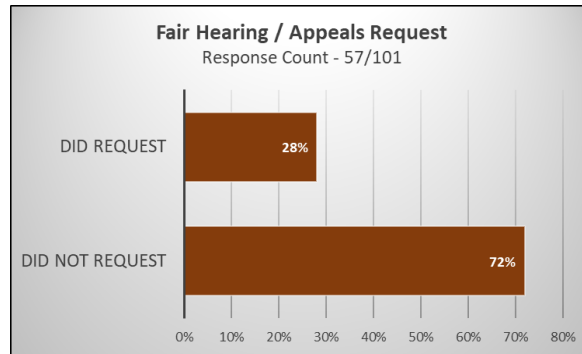
- Respondents were also asked to provide feedback on their case management experience *after* they became public benefit recipients. *Nearly half*, or 47%, responded that managing their case was either **very easy (16%)** or **easy (31%)**.
- Slightly less than one-third of these recipients reported that their case management experience was **moderately difficult (30%)**, with the remaining **23%** reporting a case management experience that was **“hard” (13%)** or **“very hard” (10%)**.



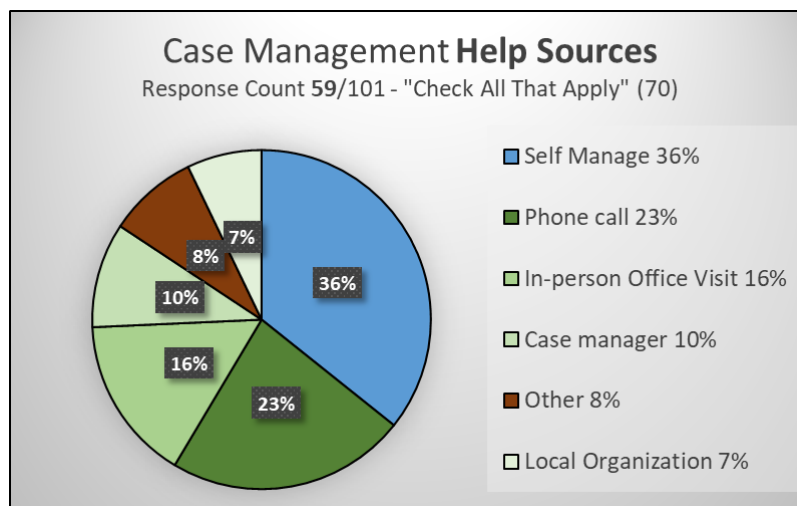
- When asked to choose which method recipients used to manage their case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.) over half, or **55%**, reported using *on-line services* (see blue bars on chart) such as **“My Benefits / Access HRA” (29%)** or the **Connect EBT portal (26%)**.
- A fairly large portion, or **39%**, of these recipients sought assistance via direct verbal communication, or *interpersonal networks*, when managing their cases (see green bars on chart), including calling an EBT hotline (17%), making an In-person office visit (11%), contact with their case manager (6%), or making a phone call (5%).
- A majority, or **55%**, indicated they manage their cases using online tools provided by OTDA (such as MYBENEFITS or CONNECTEBT Portal) or local districts of Social Services (such as ACCESS HRA).



- Regarding **“fair hearing”** or **“appeal”** requests, **28%** respondents reported making request, while **72%** responded that they did NOT make such a request. Please note, however, that only 57 of the 101 respondents chose to answer this question.



- For this measure, and others, *two important aspects of survey research observations* must be noted. First, respondents had the option of submitting the survey without answering all the questions. There are many reasons why an individual may choose to skip a question, including confusion in choosing among response options, discomfort with choosing a response, running out of time, becoming distracted, etc.
- Secondly, while the survey guaranteed anonymity, recipients may feel reluctant to submit responses that present a risk to the public benefit programs they depend upon. This means that, survey results with large “No Answer” percentages *remain informative*, nonetheless.
- Recipients were also asked to identify which sources they relied on when seeking help in managing their case. Of the options provided, the *largest portion* of respondents (**36%**) were able to **“self-manage”** their cases.
- However, **55%** of other responses, (taken collectively; see green segments in pie chart below), showed that recipients relied on *interpersonal assistance*, including **23%** who made **phone calls**, **15%** who made **in-person office visits**, **10%** who contacted **case managers**, and **7%** who sought help at a **local organization**.



Part 1 Summary

- The **CPRAC Public Benefits Survey** is a robust method for *gaining insight* into the experiences of people who have sought and/or currently receive public benefits through OTDA.
- Additional survey collection is necessary to increase our sample size and to reach the broadest mix of individuals who seek assistance and qualify for OTDA programs. Thus, these results are useful, but must be interpreted with caution.
- When reviewing the results of any survey, it is important to take note of statistical outcomes that strongly lean in one direction or another, or that produce significant outliers. Overall, the results of Phase 1 data collection showed no striking patterns.
- Responses counts *so far* were *normally distributed*, with a *variety* and *evenly spread set of experiences* recorded for each of the questions asked.
- The data points must be interpreted individually, but also collectively.
- In this way, what has emerged from the Phase 1 Survey results is that although our respondents have made good use of **online tools** in applying for and managing public benefits, a substantive portion these individuals rely on direct **interpersonal networks** within their communities to get the support they need.