

Section 385.5 - Orientation Requirements

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Part A - The Regulations

(a) The social services official shall, at the time of application or redetermination for public assistance and food stamps, inform applicants and recipients of activities and supportive services provided under this Part for which they are eligible, including:

- 1) education, employment and training opportunities, including those which are available at no cost to the individual, which are available under the local plan prepared in accordance with the provisions of section 385.10 of this Part;
- 2) responsibilities associated with the repayment of student financial aid;
- 3) supportive services available through the social services district, and the obligation of the social services district to provide such services pursuant to section 385.4 of this Part;
- 4) work activities available through the social services district and the social services districts' obligation, if any, regarding those activities;
- 5) child care available in accordance with the provisions of Part 415 of this Title, for individuals whose public assistance has terminated;
- 6) in accordance with the provisions of Part 415 of this Title and of this Part:
 - i) the types and settings of child care services which may be reasonably accessible to individuals assigned to work activities and how such services shall be provided and financed;
 - ii) the assistance available upon request to help individuals assigned to work activities select appropriate child care services; and
 - iii) the assistance available upon request to help individuals assigned to work activities obtain child care services.

(b) The social services official shall inform applicants and recipients of public assistance of their responsibility in establishing paternity and enforcing child support obligations.

(c) Within one month of orientation, the social services official shall notify the applicant or recipient in writing of the opportunity to participate in the social services district's work activities.

- 1) Such notification shall provide a clear description of how an individual may enter and participate in work activities.
- 2) Nothing herein shall preclude the social services official from incorporating such notification into the district's orientation.

d) The social services official may inform applicants and recipients of public assistance of their obligations under law and regulations, any applicable time limits on public assistance, and any other information deemed pertinent by such official.

Part B - Department Policy

All applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance (TA) are entitled to receive information on work requirements. At application and recertification clients must be given an explanation of their rights and responsibilities as well as the benefits and obligations of participation in work activities. Districts may include additional elements in their orientation. The district orientation process is described in Section 2 of the district's biennial TA and SNAP Employment Plan. Providing orientation is the responsibility of the district, as required in state regulations. There is no requirement for applicants or recipients to attend the orientation.

Each district is required to conduct orientation at the time of application for, or redetermination of, TA eligibility, using oral or written means. Within state guidelines, districts may conduct orientation by employing a variety of delivery methods. At a minimum, districts must provide individuals with the Client Information Books (LDSS 4148A, B and C).

Orientation information should be presented in a standardized manner to ensure that the same information is provided to every client. Written materials may be presented or handed out in group or individual settings or provided by mail or in application packets. Orientation may also occur via telephone or through a virtual format in the event the client(s) cannot be present in the district office. Orientation may also be provided individually as part of the eligibility interview, or an appointment with employment unit staff.

Whether orientation is provided individually or in a group setting, the district's orientation must inform applicants and recipients of the employment activities and supportive services for which they are eligible, including:

- Education, employment and training opportunities, including those which are available at no cost to the individual;
- Responsibilities associated with the repayment of student financial aid;
- Supportive services available and the district's responsibility to provide them;
- Availability of transitional child care;
- The assistance which is available upon request to help individuals assigned to work activities to get child care, and
- Responsibilities in establishing paternity and enforcing child support obligations.

Additionally, TA applicants must be informed at, or within one month of orientation of the following:

- How the individual may participate in work activities;

- Time limits for receipt of TA;
- Requirements of teen parents to attend school, and
- The requirement to engage in work.

In addition to the required elements of orientation, districts may include additional elements in their orientation.

Districts may choose to include information in the orientation that will provide clients who lack the resources to get a job with assistance and supports that may take the form of the following:

- Assistance with work-appropriate clothing, uniforms, or necessary tools;
- Assistance with making transportation plans;
- Practice and pointers for completing job applications;
- Practice and pointers for job interviewing;
- Leads to the job market.

As clients are oriented to work activities, it is equally important that they understand the importance of keeping a job and are given adequate information about the supports available. Job loss is very common among low-income workers, especially within the first four to six months of starting a new job. Many clients initially get jobs that lack benefits, such as sick days and health insurance. As clients are encouraged to enter the workforce, it is necessary to ensure their knowledge of, and access to, the following:

- Childcare subsidies
- Income disregards
- Transitional SNAP
- Transitional medical assistance and other healthcare programs
- Other transitional services offered by the district
- HEAP
- Earned Income Tax Credits

- WIC
- www.myBenefits.ny.gov
- www.otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies

Part C - Questions and Answers

Q.1 Is orientation an individual process or can the district conduct group orientation?

A.1 Orientation may be presented in group sessions or individually. It is the option of the district to decide which type of orientation best suits its needs.

Q. 2 Is an individual required to attend orientation?

A. 2 An individual is not required to attend orientation, but if the orientation is provided in conjunction with another required element/activity, the individual still must attend the required element/activity.