



## HEAP Help for Winter

Due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, many “snowbirds” who would ordinarily head south for the winter are staying in Dutchess County. For other senior year-round residents, this may be their most challenging winter yet. If paying to heat your home is one of those challenges, the Dutchess County Office for the Aging (OFA) may be able to help.

Every winter, OFA offers a Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), funded through the Dutchess County Department of Community and Family Services, to provide assistance with home energy needs for low-income, older individuals and families. Services include financial assistance with fuel bills, and emergency financial assistance for fuel/utility terminations. HEAP is an income eligibility program. Those who qualified in previous years were sent an application in the fall.

HEAP benefit levels are based on household size, with details described in a chart on Page 2 of this *Spotlight*. There’s also information on “Emergency HEAP” benefit that opens in January.

If you don’t have an application but believe you meet the requirements, please call **845-486-2555**. Some restrictions apply; also, you will be interviewed, at which time your documents can be reviewed.

Todd N. Tancredi  
Director

## A Message from County Executive Marc Molinaro

*Friends,*

*Remember how you were able to adapt to new ways of doing things this past spring, when confronted with the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic?*



*Given the direction in which cases were trending as of late November, it may be time to remember how we adapted, and get ready to use that knowledge again. We hope we won’t need it, but it’s far better to be prepared.*

*Through it all, the Office for the Aging (OFA) is here for Dutchess County seniors and their caregivers. If a senior is having trouble paying to heat their home this winter, there’s information about our Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) on this page, and on Page 2.*

*Eligibility requirements for OFA’s Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program were temporarily expanded early in the pandemic, and a senior near you may now qualify. Find out more about the HDM program on Page 6.*

*As for 2021, we will use what we’ve learned in 2020 to continue adapting to changing situations, and build on the kind of programs that help seniors stay socially active while remaining physically safe. Even in the midst of a pandemic, OFA’s summertime Senior Picnic program served more seniors than ever before, as it transitioned to a drive-through format. OFA also tried something new this past fall - drive-in Bingo - and it was likewise successful. You can expect continued innovations from OFA in 2021...and beyond!*

*Have a safe and happy holiday,*

Marcus J. Molinaro  
County Executive

## 2020-21 HEAP Benefits

Eligibility for HEAP benefits is based on income and household size. Medicare Part B and Part D premiums can be deducted from income.

Household Size	Benefit
1	\$2,610
2	3,413
3	4,216
4	5,019
5	5,822
6	6,625
7	6,775
8	6,926
9	7,077
10	7,227
11	7,378
12	7,755
Each additional	560

Source: NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

### SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

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Available for free at libraries, senior centers and municipal buildings throughout Dutchess County.

Distributed in February, June, September and December, with a Medicare-focused edition in October.

To be added to or removed from our mailing list, call (845) 486-2544 or email [bjones@dutchessny.gov](mailto:bjones@dutchessny.gov).

### EMERGENCY HEAP BENEFIT

*Opens January 4, 2021*

If you are eligible, the Emergency HEAP Benefit can help you heat your home if you experience a heat or heat-related emergency. Emergency HEAP benefits and eligibility are based on income, available resources, and the type of emergency. Contact OFA for assistance.

You may be eligible for an Emergency HEAP benefit if:

Your electricity is necessary for your heating system or thermostat to work and is either shut off or scheduled to be shut off;

OR

Your electric or natural gas heat is off or scheduled to be shut off;

OR

You are out of fuel, or you have less than one quarter tank of fuel oil, kerosene or propane or have less than a ten (10) day supply of wood, wood pellets, corn, or other deliverable heat source.

AND

Your income is at or below the current income guidelines as posted in the table on this page, or you receive Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) or Code A Supplemental Security Income.

AND

The heating and/or electric bill is in your name and your household's available resources are less than \$2,000 if no member of your household is age 60 or older; or less than \$3,000 if any member of your household is age 60 or older.

Please contact OFA with questions:

**(845) 486-2555**



## Spotlight on Staff: Pam Garnot

*“Office for the Aging and NY Connects... this is Pam, how may I direct your call?”*

Pam is most likely the first person you'll speak to when you call for assistance, and the first to greet you when you enter the OFA building. If you're not quite sure what to ask about when calling OFA for the first time, Pam can help you steer in the right direction by asking questions relevant to your individual situation, and sending your calls to the proper OFA staff member or department. Pam began working as OFA Receptionist in December 2017; prior to working for the county, she worked in the New York State corrections system and for Town of Fishkill government.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pam and OFA clerical staff obtained information from Dutchess County seniors to assist in the springtime distribution of free face coverings; took reservations for the Drive Thru Picnics that served thousands of seniors this summer, then helped make arrangements for OFA's Bingo and Flu Shot Clinic events that took place in the fall. She did all of this in addition to all her other day-to-day duties.

Pam enjoys helping the senior population get answers to their questions, and ensuring that they speak to the right departments for assistance and needed resources.

## Avoiding Pandemic Scams

You've searched stores high and low and can't find the cleaning supplies or personal protective equipment (PPE) you need - but what's this? Everything you've been looking for, online? One of your Facebook friends shared it so it must be legit, right? Looks too good to be true...which it is...*because it's a scam.*

Scammers chase the headlines, and the top news story of 2020 has been the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused high-demand items like disinfectants, cleaners, wipes, paper towels and PPE to sometimes be in short supply. It's been a golden opportunity for scammers to prey on people.

This year, scammers have been using fake websites - using real product names like Clorox and Lysol - to trick people into thinking they've found the genuine article. The fake websites have nothing to do with the real product, or the legitimate businesses that sell it.

In November, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued temporary restraining orders against 25 websites that were allegedly tricking customers into paying for nonexistent cleaning products. It's only a first step, though, and indicative of how difficult it is to bring scammers to justice. The FTC has thus far been unable to find the true names and addresses of the defendants.

If you send scammers money, chances are you're never getting it back even if the scammers are caught, found guilty, and sent to prison. The money they stole - your money - is long gone.

The smart thing to do is not to engage with scammers in the first place. In the case of scams you see on social media, use the social media site's security features to report the fraudulent advertising.

You can find additional scam prevention resources at [www.dutchessny.gov/aging](http://www.dutchessny.gov/aging).

# 2020 OFA Drive-In Bingo



Many thanks to OFA 2020 Platinum sponsors EverCare At Home and Home Energy Solutions for supporting OFA events all year!

*Thanks also to:*

Sheriff Butch Anderson and the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office  
Dutchess County Parks / Bowdoin Park  
Towns of Beekman, Dover and Stanford  
Dutchess County Fair  
OFA Volunteers



## 2021 New York Medicaid Look-Back Changes

Changes are on the horizon for New York seniors considering applying for Medicaid-funded home care programs in 2021 – especially if their assets are transferred in anticipation of making a new application for those services.

The Office for the Aging has been following developments in the new New York State Medicaid “look-back” law since it was announced in April. Since then, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, key features of the law have changed more than once, and may continue to change in 2021 depending on how the pandemic evolves from here.

And what’s a “look-back” period? Put simply, it’s a period of ineligibility for assistance due to any uncompensated transfers of assets. As originally passed in the spring, the new law would have imposed a phased-in 30-month “look-back” period, for every person submitting a new application to Medicaid for community-based home care benefits, effective October 1st, 2020. Since the pandemic emergency, the effective date has been pushed back twice by the New York State Department of Health: to January 1st, 2021; and then to the current effective date of April 1st, 2021.

This deadline applies only to *new* applications for Medicaid-funded community-based home care benefits.

### What does this mean for potential applicants?

It’s an opportunity to apply for “community Medicaid” without penalty or look-back, until next April 1st. After that date, the new look-back period will begin phasing in, starting at six months and reaching the full 30-month look-back period in 2023. In other words, an application for community Medicaid filed after April 1st would be subject to penalty for asset transfers made on or after October 1st, 2020.

We emphasize that these dates may change yet again, depending on the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Nevertheless, it may become a concern sooner than you think. We’ve learned over the years that many seniors and caregivers applying for formal aide services did not expect to be doing so, and are unaware of Medicaid’s significant role in paying for in-home long term care. Unless you can afford to pay for services privately, have long-term-care insurance, or meet eligibility requirements as a veteran, you could be in for a scramble, with a steep learning curve and many unexpected expenses.

The Office for the Aging exists to help plan for these situations. NY Connects staff at OFA are well-versed in Medicaid regulations and can help seniors and caregivers plan for the long term and make the application process go as smoothly as possible.

### Key Planning Points

- Make sure financial transactions are documented in detail, and consult an elder law attorney for any advanced planning;
- Keep family informed as to the location of important documents;
- Have designated power(s) of attorney and health care proxies in place, and review them regularly.

Pandemic restrictions mean there may not be as many large family holiday gatherings as usual over the winter. Not seeing a senior family member in person could add another step to essential planning, so there’s added urgency in having OFA’s contact information handy as you make those plans.

It could be emotionally difficult to move forward with planning, especially with a pandemic looming, but completing a realistic assessment of your situation and what the future holds is likely to have a positive impact on your later years. It’s likely to be a relief for your children and grandchildren as well.

## OFA Home Delivered Meals: How To Apply, and How To Volunteer

One main goal of the Office for the Aging is to facilitate Dutchess County seniors' continued successful and independent aging for as long as is safely possible. OFA's Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program has been instrumental in helping thousands of seniors remain independent, through improved nutrition, socialization and safety check-ins.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for seniors. As a result, the number of seniors who are considered homebound has increased greatly. With this in mind, the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) temporarily expanded eligibility for HDM programs throughout the state.

To be eligible for Home Delivered Meals, an individual must meet the following guidelines:

- Age 60 or over;
- Be homebound (only leaves the home for doctor/hospital/clinic visits, religious services, and occasional outings);
- Incapacitated due to accident, illness, or frailty;
- Unable to prepare meals due to:
  - a) Lack of facilities such as refrigeration, stove, etc.;
  - b) Inability to shop or cook for oneself;
  - c) Inability to safely prepare meals;
  - d) Lack of knowledge or skill;
  - e) Without support from family, friends, and neighbors.

### Short-Term HDM Eligibility

Many seniors are briefly homebound due to factors like recent surgery limiting their mobility. Even if you think you'd only need HDMs for a short time, consider contacting OFA to learn more about the program.

### I'd Like To Volunteer To Deliver Meals

That's music to our ears!

You can volunteer to deliver meals any weekday(s), anywhere in Dutchess County. Historically, we've had a particular need for drivers in the cities of Beacon and Poughkeepsie, along with rural Dutchess County, especially east of the Taconic Parkway. We've added safety measures like daily screening for COVID symptoms, wearing face coverings, regular use of hand sanitizer, and contact-free delivery.

You can volunteer for as much or as little time as you have in your schedule. Volunteer and substitute drivers are needed mainly on weekday mornings for about 2-3 hours.

Volunteer drivers are insured, and mileage reimbursement is available for volunteers using their own vehicles.

To learn more, please call **(845) 486-2555**, or email [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov).



*OFA director Todd Tancredi with Home Delivered Meals volunteers Anna Szelowski and Cheryl Lang, who help prepare meals for delivery to seniors throughout Dutchess County, at our headquarters in the City of Poughkeepsie.*

*Anna and Cheryl were honored for their contributions by the New York State Office for the Aging during Older New Yorkers Day observations in November.*

# Get help

with your long term services  
and supports needs.



**NY Connects**  
Your Link to Long Term  
Services and Supports

The Dutchess County NY Connects program is here to help.

NY Connects is your trusted place to go for free, unbiased information about long term services and supports in New York State for people of all ages, or with any type of disability. The program links individuals of all ages to long term services and supports regardless of payment source; whether it be private pay, public or a combination of both.

Reach out to NY Connects by calling  
845-475-3511  
or visit [NYConnects.ny.gov](http://NYConnects.ny.gov).

## Winter Caregiving Tips (clip and save)

Caring for an aging friend or family member is a challenge, even under ideal circumstances. Caregiving in the winter, during a pandemic, adds more concerns. Here are a few strategies you can use to do the best you can to have the time and resources you need:

- There are places to get help in the community, and the Office for the Aging is just one of them. Use these resources. Asking for and accepting help gracefully is one key to successful aging.
- Take care of *your* health, too. Keep up with checkups and vaccines, get enough sleep, and practice good nutrition.
- You can't be perfect 24/7 every day. Forgive yourself, often.
- Have a buddy you can contact, if only to let off steam.
- Learn about the conditions of the person you're caring for. More knowledge = better planning.
- Meditate, pray, knit, take a long bath...healthy relaxation is essential.
- Work on communication and behavior management skills, especially if you're caring for a person with dementia. The strategies you need may not be intuitively obvious, so do your research.
- Take a break every so often. Even during a pandemic, it's possible to get out of the house while staying physically safe.
- Laugh - and bring laughter to others. Whether it's TV comedies or sharing corny jokes with grandkids, laughter is great medicine. It lowers blood pressure, and reduces tension and levels of stress-related chemicals in the body.

**Dutchess County Office for the Aging  
114 Delafield Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601**

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**TO:**

## **Call or Email OFA *Before* Visiting**

Our offices remain open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday – Friday, BUT we are able to accept visitors *only under strict limitations*.

Many OFA issues can be resolved as you remain safe at home.

Phone: 845-486-2555 (866-486-2555 outside the 845 area code)

Email: [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov)

Web: [www.dutchessny.gov/aging](http://www.dutchessny.gov/aging)

### **Help Dutchess County Seniors - Volunteer With OFA**

Home Delivered Meals Drivers • Health Insurance (HIICAP) Counselors • Clerical Assistance • 2021 OFA Outdoor Events Helper (Picnics, Bingo, etc.) • Exercise, Tai Chi and/or “A Matter of Balance” Leaders

**Contact OFA to Learn More**