

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PUBLIC BENEFITS IN  
RHODE ISLAND**

**WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM DENIED GOVERNMENT BENEFITS? WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM TERMINATED FROM BENEFITS?**

First, make sure to read your notice carefully, find out what the appeal deadlines are, and file your appeal in time. Call [R.I. Legal Services](#) for advice and help: 274-2652 or 1-800-662-5034 (Providence area) or 846-2264 or 1-800-637-4529 (Newport and South County).

Each program has its own time limit for requesting agency hearings.

**FIP** 30 days (10 days to continue benefits)

**Food stamps** 90 days (10 days to continue benefits)

**MA** 30 days (10 days to continue benefits)  
(RItCare and RItShare)

**SSI/Social Security** 60 days (10-30 days to continue benefits)

**Unemployment** 15 days

**TDI** 10 days

**ARE IMMIGRANTS ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC BENEFITS?**

The rules on immigrant eligibility are different for each government benefit program. Pregnant women and children with no proof of status are eligible for WIC and RItCare. Some non-citizens who are legally present in the U.S. are eligible for some government benefits, but for more information on eligibility for benefits and immigration status, call the International Institute at 461-5940.

**WHAT BENEFITS AM I ELIGIBLE FOR AS A MEMBER OF A FAMILY?**

**FIP** – Family Independence Program is the cash welfare program run by the Department of Human Services. It replaced the AFDC program.

**Who is eligible?** Pregnant woman beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy; families with children under 18 (or who will graduate from high school before age 19); children living with relatives other than their parents; caretaker relatives if financially eligible.

**What does FIP provide?** A monthly cash payment, food stamps (if eligible), Medical Assistance, and employment and training services.

For more information on the FIP program, go to [www.povertyinstitute.org](http://www.povertyinstitute.org) (R.I.'s Family Independence Plan and Overview).

### **Food Stamps**

The food stamp program run by the Department of Human Services provides a way for people with low income to buy food items.

**Who is eligible?** Low income individuals and families

### **WIC**

WIC is a food program run by the Department of Health. WIC provides coupons for food, juice, milk, baby formula, and certain food items to low-income women and children.

**Who is eligible?** Pregnant women; breast-feeding mothers, post-partum women, and children under age 5.

### **RItCare**

RItCare is a managed health care program run by the Department of Human Services.

**Who is eligible?** Low income pregnant women, families, and children up to age 19

**What does RItCare provide?** Full medical coverage including doctor visits, prescriptions, inpatient and outpatient hospital care, lab tests, etc.

### **RItShare**

RItShare is a health program run by the Department of Human Services.

**Who is eligible for RItShare?** Low income families with an employed parent with a “qualified” health insurance plan at his or her work.

**What does RItShare provide?** RItShare pays the employee’s health insurance premium for the health insurance s/he gets through work and also covers copays and other services not provided by the company’s insurance.

### **Child care.**

The child care subsidy program pays for all or part of child care costs for children under age 16.

**Who is eligible?** Family Independence Program (FIP) families are eligible for child care while the parent is in school, in a training program, or working. Non-FIP low-income families are eligible for child care while the parent is working. A family needing child care due to the disability of parent or child may be eligible for “special needs” child care.

**What is the child care benefit?** Part or all of costs of child care is paid, depending upon income of the family.

**Where do I apply?** FIP families apply at their local DHS office. Non-FIP families call 462-5300.

For additional information on any program run by the RI Department of Human Services, go to [www.dhs.state.ri.us](http://www.dhs.state.ri.us).

## **WHAT BENEFITS AM I ENTITLED TO AS A SINGLE EMPLOYABLE ADULT WITHOUT MINOR CHILDREN AT HOME?**

### **Unemployment.**

The Unemployment Compensation benefit program is run by the R.I. Department of Labor & Training (DLT).

**Who is eligible?** Individuals who have lost their job through no fault of their own (for example, laid off, quit with good cause, fired without good cause). You must be able and available for work.

**What is the weekly benefit?** The amount of payment depends on your earnings. The current minimum is \$56/week and maximum is \$427. Benefits are available for dependent children.

Other questions about unemployment? Go to [www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/uifaq2.htm](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/uifaq2.htm) or call 243-9100.

### **Food Stamps**

The food stamp program is run by the Dept. of Human Services. It provides a way for low-income people to buy food items.

**Can employable adults without children qualify?** Adults without children, who are unemployed but able to work can collect food stamps only for 3 months in a 36 month period. But this rule doesn't apply in areas with a high unemployment rate, currently Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and Block Island.

## **WHERE CAN I GET FOOD ASSISTANCE?**

You might be eligible for food stamps through the Department of Human Services. Call: Providence: 222-7000  
Warwick: 736-6511  
Pawtucket: 729-5400  
Woonsocket: 235-6300

If you are a pregnant woman, a post-partum woman, or a breast-feeding woman, or if you have a child under 5, you might be eligible for help through WIC. Call 1-800-942-7434.

Local food pantries provide food assistance. To locate the food pantry in your area call the Travelers' Aid Helpline at 351-6500

## **WHAT BENEFITS AM I ENTITLED TO IF I'M TOO SICK TO WORK?**

### **Medical Assistance**

Medical Assistance is a comprehensive health coverage program run by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

**Who is eligible?** Individuals who are totally disabled by a physical or mental illness which has lasted, or is expected to last, 12 months or end in death.

**What does MA cover?** A wide range of medical services including doctor visits, prescriptions, lab tests, durable medical equipment, inpatient and outpatient hospital, and some dental.

### **GPA Medical**

GPA medical, a program run by the Dept. of Human Services provides limited medical coverage.

**Who is eligible?** Individuals who have very low income and who are unable to work because of a physical or mental condition (including substance abuse) which will last at least 30 days.

**What does GPA cover?** Doctor visits and certain prescribed medicine. Hospitals in R.I. should not charge for inpatient or outpatient services they provide to GPA recipients.

### **TDI**

Temporary Disability Insurance is a cash benefit program run by the RI Dept. of Labor & Training.

**Who is eligible?** Individuals who work in R.I. and will be unable to work for at least 7 days due to an illness or injury verified by a doctor.

**What does TDI provide?** TDI provides a weekly cash benefit, depending on your wages. The current maximum benefit is \$561/week plus an allowance for each dependent child under age 18.

**Are any R.I. workers not eligible for TDI?** Yes. Federal, state and some city workers don't participate in the TDI system.

Other questions about TDI? Contact [www.dlt.ri.gov/tdi/tdifaq.htm](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/tdi/tdifaq.htm) or call 462-8420.

### **SSI**

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a cash benefit program of the Social Security Administration.

**Who is eligible?** Low-income individuals who are unable to work due to physical or mental disabilities which have lasted or are expected to last 12 months or end in death. Low income disabled children can be eligible for SSI.

**What does SSI provide?** A monthly cash payment and automatic eligibility for Medical Assistance. In R.I. in 2003, the maximum SSI check is \$609.35 a month.

### **Social Security Disability**

Social Security Disability Insurance is a cash benefit program of the Social Security Administration.

**Who is eligible?** Individuals who have worked long enough to qualify and who can no longer work due to a disability which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or end in death. Sometimes disabled children or spouses of a worker can be eligible for benefits, too.

**What does SSDI provide?** A monthly cash payment; the amount depends on work and earnings history. After 24 months on Social Security disability, you can qualify for Medicare, the “Red, white, and Blue card”. (Unlike SSI recipients, SSDI recipients don’t get automatic Medical Assistance, but might still be eligible for MA.)

## **I NEED HELP PAYING FOR PRESCRIPTIONS. WHAT IS AVAILABLE?**

The Department of Human Services provides prescription coverage to recipients of **Medical Assistance, RItCare/RItShare**, and **GPA medical** (although GPA doesn’t cover all types of prescriptions).

Low income senior citizens (and people 55-65 who receive Social Security disability checks) may get help paying for certain types of medications through the state **RIPAE** program. Depending on income, RIPAE will pay up to 60% of the cost of medications for certain chronic conditions, including:

- Alzheimer’s disease
- Arthritis
- Asthma & chronic respiratory illness
- Cancer
- Circulatory insufficiency
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Glaucoma
- Heart problems
- High cholesterol
- Hypertension
- Parkinson’s disease
- Renal patients—prescription vitamin and mineral supplements
- Urinary incontinence

The **Medication for the Needy** program at URI provides low-income people with access to 3 months of sample medications from most drug companies. Call 1-800-287-5571 for an application.

**Citizens Health** program provides a reduced fee for certain medications at a cost of \$12 a year. Call 1-800-563-5479 for information.

Low-income diabetics may obtain diabetes supplies from the **Diabetes Resource Center** in Providence (456-4419) or Central Falls (728-4342).

## **I'M UNEMPLOYED. CAN I GET MEDICAL COVERAGE?**

If you are pregnant or living with your minor children, you may be eligible for RiteCare/RIteshare through the Dept. of Human Services (DHS). If you're a veteran, you may qualify for coverage through the VA. If you're disabled or too sick to work, you might qualify for Medical Assistance or GPA through DHS. There is no program in R.I. which provides medical coverage to unemployed people who don't fall into these categories.

## **I HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE. WHERE CAN I GET A DOCTOR?**

The Community Health Centers see patients who aren't covered by insurance. To find the health center in your area, go to:

[www.health.state.RI.us/disease/primarycare/healthcenters.html](http://www.health.state.RI.us/disease/primarycare/healthcenters.html).

The Community Mental Health Centers provide psychiatric care for patients who aren't covered by insurance. To find the mental health center nearest you, go to:

[www.riccmhc.org](http://www.riccmhc.org)

You can contact the clinics at R.I. Hospital and other hospitals in the state, or the Rhode Island Free Clinic, 557 Broad Street in Providence. If you are homeless, you can get medical services through Travelers' Aid.

For eye exams and glasses, contact Saving Sight Rhode Island at 738-1150.

For refurbished hearing aids, call Ocean State Center for Independent Living at 738-1013 or PARI at 725-1966.

For free asthma treatment at Taming Asthma call Jeanne D'Agostino at 521-3603.

If you need dental treatment:

Elderly/Disabled, call RI Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped  
at 728-9448

Child living in Providence? Call St. Joseph's Dental Clinic, 456-4461.

Other sources of dental care:

Burrillville, NorthWest Health Center, 568-7661  
Hope Valley, Wood River Health Center, 568-7661  
Newport, Newport Health Center, 847-7821

N. Kingstown, Bayside Health Ctr., 783-0523  
Wakefield, S. County Health Ctr., 783-0523  
Woonsocket, Thundermist Health Ctr., 767-4161

CCRI Dental Hygiene Clinic (September through May)  
in Lincoln, 333-7250