

Notice of Proposed Class Action Settlement Regarding Disability Accommodations at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS)

This is an important notice about accessing Public Benefits and a proposed Settlement in a Federal Court class action case. Please read this notice carefully if:

- You are an individual with a disability living in Suffolk County; AND
- You have applied for or will apply for benefits and services from Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS), including SNAP (Food Stamps), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance, and Temporary Housing Assistance (THA); AND
- Because of your disability, you need help in applying for or keeping those benefits and services.

What Are the Basic Terms of the Proposed Settlement?

A proposed Settlement in a class action lawsuit filed in Federal Court, *Newkirk v. Pierre*, 19-cv-4283 (E.D.N.Y.) may affect your legal rights. Plaintiffs in this lawsuit are persons with disabilities who are applying for, or who are trying to keep public benefits through programs run by SCDSS. Plaintiffs brought this lawsuit to challenge the alleged failure of SCDSS to provide persons with disabilities with reasonable accommodations they need to help them get and keep public benefits, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a part of this Settlement, SCDSS has:

- Updated their ADA policies and notices for people like you, who are public benefits applicants and recipients with disabilities.
- Affirmed your right to ask for accommodations verbally or in writing at any point in time, if you need help in applying for or keeping benefits.
- Clarified your right to file a grievance if SCDSS denies your request for accommodations.
- Modified its computer system to track your accommodation requests.
- Provided a process for promptly responding to accommodation requests to meet an emergency need.
- Committed to training staff on the new ADA policies.

Under the proposed Settlement, SCDSS will provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities, as needed, at every point of interaction with SCDSS staff in the public benefits eligibility process.

You can see the entire proposed Settlement on the following websites:

- National Center for Law and Economic Justice (<https://nclej.org>)
- Empire Justice Center (<https://empirejustice.org/>) OR

- Suffolk County Department of Social Services
(<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services>)

You can also ask for a copy of the Settlement by calling the National Center for Law and Economic Justice at (212) 633-6967.

Who Represents the Plaintiff Class?

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice (NCLEJ), Empire Justice Center, and the Dentons law firm represent the class. The parties have jointly asked the Federal Court to approve the Settlement.

Can I Object to the Settlement?

Class members are not able to be excluded from the Settlement, but they do have the right to object to the Settlement and tell the Federal Court if they believe that the proposed settlement is not fair, reasonable, or adequate.

Class members who want to object can call, email, or write:

- NCLEJ: 50 Broadway, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10004-3821, (212) 633-6967, or bass@nclej.org, akhtar@nclej.org, or berger@nclej.org; OR
- Empire Justice Center at 320 Carleton Avenue, Suite 4000 Central Islip, NY 11722, 631-533-5272, or lhassberg@empirejustice.org.

If you object to the Settlement, Plaintiffs' attorneys cannot represent you, but will forward your objection to the Federal Court. You may also mail objections to: Honorable Nicholas G. Garaufis, United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, United States Courthouse, Room 1426 S, 225 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Objections sent directly to the Court must be received at this address no later than five (5) days before the date of the hearing.

Where and When Will The Federal Court Review the Settlement?

The Federal Court will hold a hearing to review the Settlement on **September 6, 2022**, at **1:00 p.m.** The hearing will take place before the Honorable Nicholas G. Garaufis and will be conducted by audio conference, to allow members of the Plaintiff Class to participate and make objections to the Settlement, if any. At the time of the hearing, you should dial **(650) 479-3207** and enter the Access Code **2303 585 0404**, when prompted to do so. If you are deaf or hard of hearing and require interpreter services, please contact NCLEJ at info@nclej.org, or **(212) 633-6967**, in advance of the hearing.

Is This Notice Available in Alternate Formats?

Yes. This notice can be viewed in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Yiddish, and in large print (18-point font) and audio format and, at the SCDSS website. If you would like a copy of this notice in Braille, please contact the SCDSS ADA Compliance Officer at (631) 854-9930.

For a copy of this Notice in Spanish, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information> , or call 631-854-9930

For a copy of this Notice in Arabic, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Bengali, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Chinese, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Haitian Creole, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Italian, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Korean, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Polish, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Portuguese, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Russian, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

For a copy of this Notice in Yiddish, visit:

<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Social-Services/ADA-Information>

To request a copy of this Notice in a language not listed above, please call (631) 854 – 9930.