CommonHelp Reference Guide for Community Partners

Fast Facts

✓ CommonHelp is a self-service, online application system which allows customers to:
  ► Screen for potential eligibility
  ► Apply online
  ► Renew existing benefits
  ► Report changes
  ► Check benefits
✓ Using CommonHelp, a citizen will be able to submit a single application to apply for assistance for multiple programs
✓ CommonHelp is private and confidential
  ✓ Applicant will need to create a user ID and password
✓ Programs available through CommonHelp:
  ► Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  ► Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP: formerly known as food stamps)
  ► Medical Assistance (MA)
  ► Energy Assistance (EA): (crisis, cooling and fuel)
  ► Child Care Assistance

Screening for Potential Eligibility

✓ Click the “Am I Eligible?” button on the CommonHelp home page
  ► Answer short questions
  ► Results will display a list of programs for which the customer may or may not be eligible
✓ Screening takes about 15 minutes to complete
✓ Information used in screening is not stored
✓ Screening results may not be used to substitute as an application

Applying for Benefits

✓ Typically takes less than one hour
✓ May save and exit during application process and return at a later time (within 60 days of last access)
✓ Applications may be submitted after entering Name, Address, and electronic signature
  ► However, the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) will need complete information in order to process the application. Encourage the customer to complete as much of the application as possible.
✓ The applicant is encouraged to have available:
  ► Income from all sources
  ► Social Security numbers and birth dates for all household members
  ► Current or recent health insurance information
  ► Housing and utility expense information
  ► Dependent care information
  ► Resource information, such as bank accounts, vehicles, property, life insurance, etc.
✓ The customer may be required to complete an interview with the LDSS
  ► If an interview is required, the local agency will make contact with the customer regarding the details of the interview. Needed verifications will be requested at that time
  ► If an interview is not required, the local agency will make contact with the customer regarding the needed verifications
  ► Current processing times will apply

Submitting Applications

✓ Applicant must electronically sign and submit the application
✓ Anyone assisting the customer will not sign the application
✓ CommonHelp applications may not be printed and signed and given to the LDSS
  ► If the customer wants to apply using a paper application, they may access the following link to print an application (http://www.dss.virginia.gov/form)
✓ After submission, a Portable Document Format (PDF) version of the application may be printed.
✓ At this time, the customer is not able to scan and submit verifications with the electronic application