

Understanding Essential and Basic Needs



Quick Reference Guide

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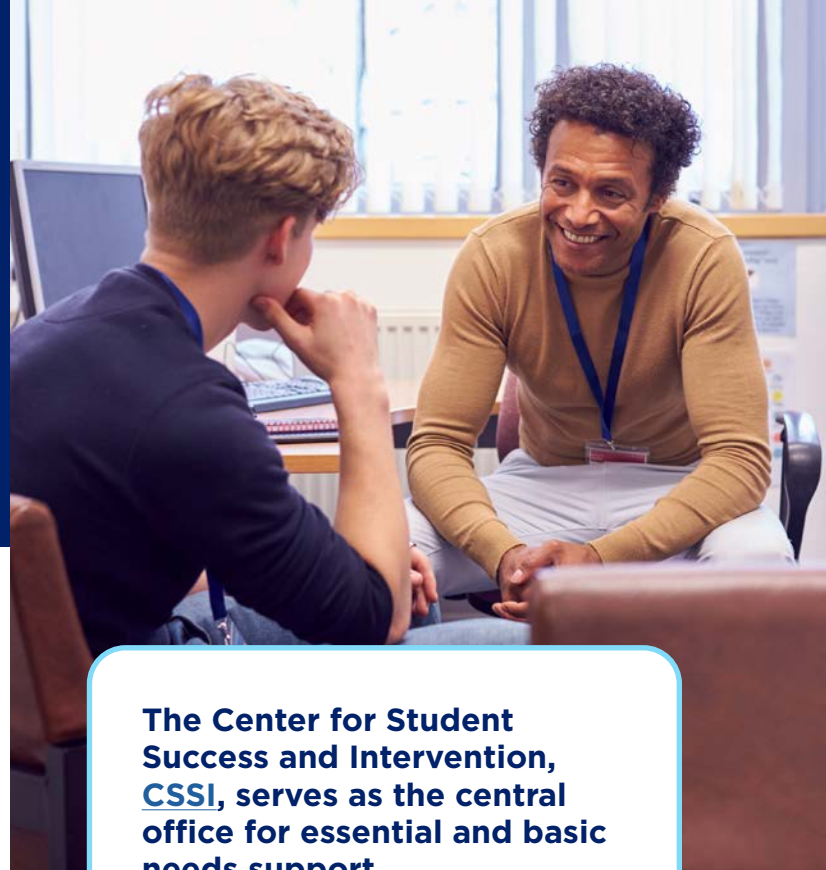
What are essential and basic needs and social services?

Columbia University defines essential and basic needs as the essential resources that impact students inside and outside of the classroom. These resources can also affect their sense of belonging, persistence, well-being, and thriving.

Essential and basic needs resources include:

- Food and clothing
- Shelter
- Transportation
- Childcare and parenting resources
- Technology
- Physical safety
- Health services, including mental and sexual health

At Columbia, essential and basic needs support and social services are available in many of the individual school and academic departments. These services can also be found in central offices like Columbia Health, the International Students and Scholars Office, Student Health on Haven, and University Life.



The Center for Student Success and Intervention, [CSSI](#), serves as the central office for essential and basic needs support.

They're often the starting point for getting connected to resources in this area, including on- and off-campus services.

For students at an affiliate school, essential and basic needs services are available through equivalent offices.

- [Teacher's College](#)
- [Union Theological Seminary](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [Barnard College](#)

Looking for support from a confidential resource? Schedule a [Health Promotion Appointment](#) to discuss options and get connected to resources.

How are social services funded?

Where are they located?

Program Type	Funding Source	Service Examples
Federal	Executive agencies like Department of Health and Human Services or Department of Education	Medicare, federal student loans, Social Security and Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
State-managed	Federal funds for the state; uses federal eligibility criteria	Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
State-funded	State funds from taxes and other revenue sources	Paid Family Leave, the Safety Net Program for unmarried and unemployed people, tax credits
Local	Local city or county governments; federal or state grants	Fair Fares, City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS)
Organizational or private	Private businesses, non-profits, philanthropic charities, or other service organizations	International Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Feeding America, Swipe Out Hunger
Community and mutual aid	Informal fundraising programs to support local community members	Raising money for someone whose house was damaged in a fire, bringing food to someone grieving the loss of a loved one, or donating to a community food bank or shelter

How does Columbia University support student essential and basic needs?

The Center for Student Success and Intervention:

This office is the central hub for understanding and connecting to essential and basic needs resources. Their case management and student support team can help you find resources available on- and off-campus. This includes programs for New York City, state, and beyond.

Individual Columbia Schools and Departments:

Services may include allocated financial aid, emergency/transitional funding, meal swipes, and temporary/transitional housing assistance. They may also provide case management support in applying to off-campus programs.



Looking for support within Columbia Health?

The Student Insurance Office can support students in navigating and understanding their health insurance, even for those not on the student health insurance plan

Case management services are available for students with clinical care concerns, like getting to medical specialists or adhering to treatment plans.



Looking for support from a confidential resource?

Schedule a [Health Promotion Appointment](#) to discuss options and get connected to resources.



What about off campus? Where can I find resources and available programs?

Community-based organizations and local support:

You can find this support by doing an internet search for “social services near me” or looking for a specific type of program like “transitional housing assistance” or “food banks”. You can also find individuals and organizations who can help you apply for programs.

New York City Residents:

[AccessHRA](#) is the hub for many essential and basic needs support programs. They offer a central application and eligibility screening to determine what programs you can access and get started with the process.

New York State Residents:

The State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance maintains a directory of local [Departments of Social Services](#). This is a great starting point for finding available programs and assistance from your local or county government.

People living elsewhere in the United States:

USA.gov provides a [directory of state social services offices](#). This includes links to services available in each state, and directories of local and community-based organizations that can also assist.



I'm an international student. What resources do I have access to?

International students and non-US citizens are not eligible for programs like Medicaid or SNAP. But there are other programs you may be eligible for through the University, as well as local and state programs.

Looking for support on the intersection of immigration and basic needs? [Speak to your ISSO advisor.](#)

Want help in navigating these resources or information on how to apply? [Meet with a student support specialist through CSSI or schedule a Health Promotion Appointment with Columbia Health](#)

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