

California Senior Assistance Programs

Quick Cheat Sheet (2026) - printable quick-start

Start Here: Check your top 3 needs

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health coverage (Medi-Cal) | <input type="checkbox"/> Help at home (IHSS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Food (CalFresh) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent or housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility bills (electric/gas/water) | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation (rides) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash income (SSI/SSP) | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare questions (HICAP) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dental care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal help | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Property taxes |

Fast Start (do these first)

- **Need healthcare:** Apply for Medi-Cal (often required for other programs).
- **Need food help:** Apply for CalFresh (fastest “first win” for many seniors).
- **Need help at home:** Start IHSS early (county assessment can take time).
- **Facing shutoff or eviction:** Call 2-1-1 for local emergency help while you apply for longer-term programs.

Where to apply (official starting points)

Need	Start here
Medi-Cal (health coverage)	Apply online through BenefitsCal.com or your county office. Medi-Cal application options: dhcs.ca.gov .
CalFresh (food)	Apply at BenefitsCal.com or call the CalFresh line: 1-877-847-3663 .
IHSS (in-home care services)	Start with your county IHSS office (directory at cdss.ca.gov - “County IHSS Offices”).
SSI/SSP (cash assistance)	Apply at SSA.gov or call Social Security: 1-800-772-1213 .
Utility help (LIHEAP/HEAP)	Contact California Community Services & Development (CSD) to find your local provider: csd.ca.gov . Call center: 1-866-675-6623 .
Housing help	Homeowners: CalHFA.ca.gov (1-877-922-5432). Renters: contact your local housing authority and call 2-1-1 for emergency rental help.

Need help in your county? Call the California Aging and Adult Information Line: **1-800-510-2020**.

Quick Contact Directory

Write your county and local numbers on this page and keep it near your phone.

Who	Phone / website
Area Agency on Aging (local help)	California Aging and Adult Information Line: 1-800-510-2020
2-1-1 (local resources)	Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211ca.org
CalFresh (food) help line	1-877-847-3663
HICAP (Medicare counseling)	1-800-434-0222
Adult Protective Services (report abuse)	1-833-401-0832 (enter ZIP code when prompted)
Social Security (SSI/retirement)	1-800-772-1213
IHSS (in-home care)	Find your county office: cdss.ca.gov (County IHSS Offices)
Utility assistance (LIHEAP)	CSD call center: 1-866-675-6623 Main: 916-576-7109
Housing (CalHFA)	1-877-922-5432 calhfa.ca.gov

Fill in your local details

My County: _____

County Social Services Office Phone: _____

Local Housing Authority Phone: _____

My Health Plan / Medi-Cal Plan Phone: _____

Local Senior Center or Benefits Helper: _____

Notes

California Senior Benefits

Application Prep Checklist (printable)

Documents to gather

- Photo ID (driver's license, state ID, or passport)
- Social Security number for everyone applying
- Proof of California address (lease, utility bill, or mail)
- Income proof (Social Security/pension letters, pay stubs)
- Rent or mortgage statement (and property tax bill if homeowner)
- Utility bills (electric/gas/water/phone) for discounts and LIHEAP
- Medicare card and any health plan cards
- List of medical costs (premiums, copays, prescriptions) - keep receipts
- If applying for IHSS: notes on what help you need at home + doctor info

Before you hit "submit"

- Make copies (or take photos) of everything you submit.
- Write down the date you applied and any case/confirmation number.
- Use a calendar for interviews, renewal dates, and deadlines.
- Ask for language help or disability accommodations if you need them.

Free help (do not pay someone to apply)

- **Area Agency on Aging:** 1-800-510-2020 (connects you to your local AAA)
- **2-1-1 California:** Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211ca.org
- **HICAP (Medicare counseling):** 1-800-434-0222

Protect your personal information

- Never pay to apply for Medi-Cal, CalFresh, IHSS, SSI, or housing waitlists.
- Be cautious with unsolicited calls/texts asking for your Social Security number or bank details.
- Do not share your EBT card PIN with anyone.
- Report suspected abuse/scams: Adult Protective Services 1-833-401-0832.

California Senior Benefits

7-Day Quick Action Plan (printable)

Goal: get “fast help” started first, then get on longer waitlists.

Day	Do this	Notes / who to call
Day 1	Pick your top 3 needs. Start a folder. Call for help if you need it.	Call 1-800-510-2020 (Area Agency on Aging) or 2-1-1.
Day 2	Apply for Medi-Cal (health coverage).	Apply at BenefitsCal.com or through your county office.
Day 3	Apply for CalFresh (food). Ask about expedited help if you have very little money.	CalFresh line: 1-877-847-3663.
Day 4	If you need help at home: start IHSS. Ask what forms are needed and how the assessment works.	Find your county IHSS office: cdss.ca.gov (County IHSS Offices).
Day 5	Housing steps: contact your local housing authority (Section 8/senior housing) and call 2-1-1 for emergency rental help if needed.	Homeowners: CalHFA 1-877-922-5432.
Day 6	Lower your utility bills: apply for LIHEAP/HEAP and ask your utility about senior/low-income discounts.	CSD LIHEAP call center: 1-866-675-6623.
Day 7	Follow up: write down case numbers, schedule interviews, set reminders, and ask what comes next.	Use the tracker printable and keep copies of everything.

If you are in crisis today

- Call 2-1-1 for local emergency food, shelter, and crisis resources.
- If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

Phone Call Scripts

Use these as a starting point. Ask what else they need from you.

Area Agency on Aging / Benefits Help (1-800-510-2020)

Hi, my name is _____. I live in _____ County and I'm _____ years old.

My top needs are: food healthcare help at home rent/housing utilities transportation.

Can you tell me which programs to start first and who can help me apply?

County Social Services / BenefitsCal case help

Hi, I applied for _____ on (date) _____. My name is _____ (DOB _____).

Can you confirm you received it and give me my case/confirmation number?

What is the next step and when should I expect an interview or notice?

IHSS (in-home care)

Hi, I want to apply for IHSS. I live in _____ County.

I need help with: _____. What are the next steps and how do I schedule the in-home assessment?

Housing / rental help

Hi, I'm a senior looking for housing help in _____ County. Is the Section 8 or senior housing waitlist open?

If not, what local programs can help right now (emergency rental help, shelters, or senior housing lists)?

HICAP (Medicare questions) - 1-800-434-0222

Hi, I need help understanding Medicare and lowering out-of-pocket costs. Can I schedule a counseling appointment?

Information to keep by the phone

- Full legal name (as on ID)
- Date of birth
- Current address and phone number
- Monthly income amount(s)
- Rent/mortgage amount and utility providers
- List of medications and doctors

California Senior Benefits

Application & Follow-Up Tracker (printable)

Use this to track applications, case numbers, and next steps.

Program	Date applied	How (online/phone/in-person)	Case # / Confirmation	Next step & date

Reminder: Keep copies of what you submit. Write down the name of anyone you speak with.

Follow-Up Call Log

Every time you call, write what happened. This helps if you need to appeal or escalate.

Date	Who you contacted	Phone / website	What they said	Next action

Safe place for notes (do not write passwords here):
