

# A GUIDE TO SURVIVING AND THRIVING AT CUNY

Second Edition: Spring 2021



**CUNY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Healthy  
CUNY**  
promoting health  
for academic success

# Acknowledgements

This guide was prepared by CUNY students, in collaboration with faculty and staff of Healthy CUNY. Healthy CUNY is a university-wide initiative that since 2007 has promoted health for academic success at CUNY. It is sponsored by the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH) and the CUNY Office of Student Affairs. The research summarized in this report has been generously supported by the CUNY Chancellor and Office of Academic Affairs. Special thanks to Executive Vice-Chancellor Jose Luis Cruz for his support. Healthy CUNY acknowledges the continuing support from the CUNY SPH and its Dean, Ayman El-Mohandes.

We are very appreciative of the CUNY staff and students who reviewed the guide and offered helpful comments on earlier drafts and suggested resources for inclusion in the guide.

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We could not have produced this guide without the support, advice and resources contributed by these and other individuals, but we note that the opinions expressed in this Guide are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of CUNY or our advisers.

The result of our combined efforts is this Guide to Surviving and Thriving at CUNY. As CUNY students, we are eager to assist other CUNY students who are dealing with academic, health and social challenges caused or made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis. In an effort to assist students early in what is sure to be a challenging academic year, we are releasing

the guide, first prepared over the summer of 2020 and early fall 2020. Like many of you, we too were living with the pandemic, dealing with family and life crises, trying to keep up with crazy world events, and with getting facts about how CUNY would operate in the Fall. Though we have made every effort to provide current and useful content, we acknowledge that there may be some omissions and inaccuracies. We invite our readers to submit reactions, suggestions and corrections to [HealthyCUNY@sph.cuny.edu](mailto:HealthyCUNY@sph.cuny.edu).

## **NEW for Spring 2021! Guide to Surviving and Thriving Version 2.0**

### **How to Use This Guide**

We've received some feedback about the first version of the Guide and we're excited to see that students are finding it useful! We know the Guide is long (there is so much information we wanted to share with you) so we've made this version easier to navigate.

**You don't have to read the whole thing!** We include a streamlined table of contents below, and links to all the chapters. Please continue to share this Guide with your friends, class mates, organizations and social networks.

Stay safe and stay healthy!

*The Healthy CUNY COVID-19 Work Group*



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**SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDE:** *Additional information and resources are provided in the supplementary sections beginning on page 91.*

# Introduction

Dear CUNY Students:

In the Spring 2020 semester, the world we knew fell apart. New York City was devastated by the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic; by August, more than 232,000 NYC residents had been infected and almost 24,000 had died from COVID-19. CUNY closed its campuses on March 19 and in the following weeks, many New Yorkers, including many CUNY students, experienced high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. **Many faced food insecurity or worried about paying rent. Many students—or someone in their family— lost a job.** And not surprisingly, many students had trouble with schoolwork. Some of us had to homeschool our children or siblings or supervise their online schoolwork, others had to take care of sick family members, struggle with Blackboard or Zoom, or find new ways to fit schoolwork into the rest of our lives. For some of us, these economic and health challenges came on top of struggles that existed before March—poverty, racism, inadequate income, and too much stress.

The Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters showed something else about CUNY students. **It showed that we are tough, caring, generous, and compassionate.** Many of us served as essential workers in health care, transit, or food services, even as we stayed in school. Many volunteered for community services, and many cared for extended family and neighbors.

Clearly, we can use an extra helping hand in coping with school right now. That's where this guide comes in. It was developed by students and faculty working with Healthy CUNY, a CUNY-wide initiative that helps CUNY students overcome health and social problems in order to support their academic success. **The title explains our aim: to help CUNY students survive and thrive at CUNY as New York City confronts the COVID-19 pandemic.**



*In December 2020, CUNY graduate and nurse Sandra Lindsay became the first person in the United States to receive the COVID-19 vaccine [credit](#)*

## The guide has three goals:

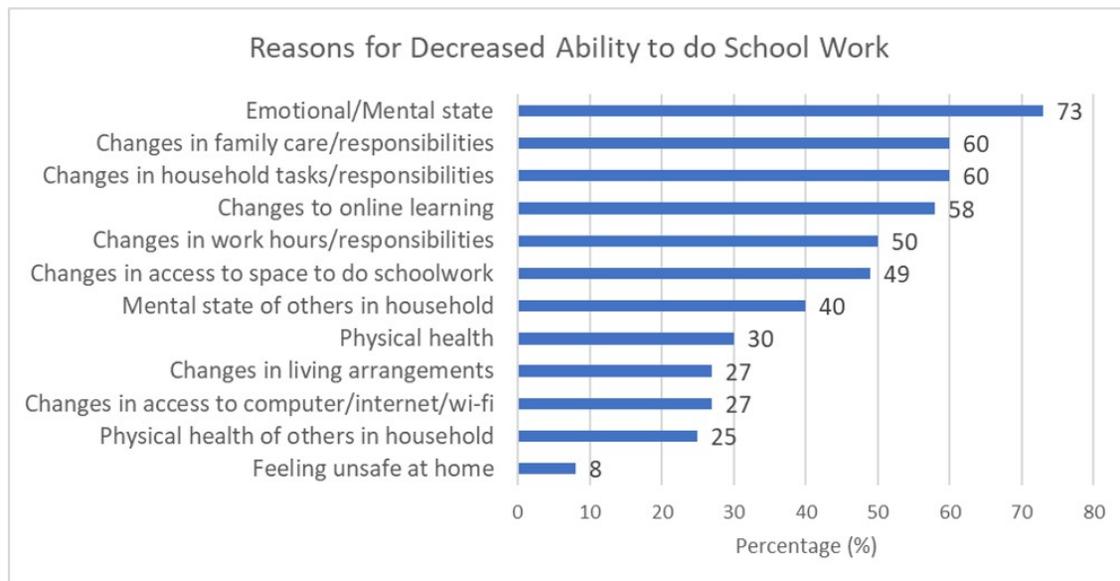
1. **Provide a one-stop guide of health, academic, financial, and basic needs services** at CUNY and in the community that can help us overcome the problems they we may face at CUNY and beyond
2. **Offer the emotional support and social connections** that can help all of us find the strength and will to solve the problems we face in pursuing our education at CUNY this semester and beyond
3. **Encourage all of us to become advocates for ourselves** within CUNY and beyond and to become a collective force that can help CUNY to better meet our changing needs

## How did we prepare this guide?

The starting point was a survey we conducted in April 2020 in which more than 2,000 students throughout CUNY told us about their COVID-19-related experiences. You'll find data from the survey in the Guide and also quotes from some of the more than 700 students who told us their personal stories in the survey. All responses are anonymous.

Over the summer, a team of CUNY students, faculty and staff worked together to create this Guide. We also met with student leaders, CUNY staff, and others to get their input. We reviewed more than three dozen other guides and conducted internet searches to find the most helpful resources.

Surviving and thriving at CUNY requires information from trusted sources. CUNY students trust and rely on CUNY for information, but we also rely on fellow students who know the unique challenges we face. The students who helped write this guide have faced and continue to face the issues covered here.



*“As a visual and tactile learner, I am having a VERY hard time adjusting to taking online classes.”*

*“Since the epidemic began, unfortunately only my uncle is working and we are trying to make ends meet with the rent and the utility bills. It’s been stressful because some days we eat less just to be cautious of how much money is being spent.”*

The HealthyCUNY COVID-19 Survey asked if, as a result of the pandemic, we, as CUNY students, were having more trouble with our schoolwork and if so why? More than half of those who answered said they were having more trouble and the chart and quotes above show some of the reasons. The responses show how much the pandemic has disrupted our lives. In the Guide we provide some strategies for addressing each of these problems. (HealthyCUNY Survey on the Effect of COVID-19 on CUNY Students, Spring 2020).

The Guide has seven sections and readers can click on the title below to go right to the section that will help address the issue(s) we are facing today—or readers can read through the whole guide to learn more and be able to help your friends if they need assistance.

**1. Educational Challenges** describes how students can solve some of the educational challenges that COVID-19 has created including succeeding in school, solving tech problems, contacting your professors, what to do if you or a friend are thinking of dropping out, and how to overcome financial problems that make it hard to stay in school.

**2. Mental Health Challenges** helps readers tell the difference between everyday worries and mental health problems; provides tips and resources for overcoming depression, anxiety, and stress; identifies sources of help for family or partner violence and substance abuse; and explains different types of mental health care and informal support.

**3. Physical Health Challenges** helps students get health insurance, find a doctor or other health care provider, and find assistance to maintain wellness by getting enough sleep and exercise, protecting your vision, getting needed immunizations, and finding sexual and reproductive health care. Since the pandemic has unsettled our health care system, this section helps students find timely information about available services. It also includes a section on COVID-19 vaccination.

**4. Basic Needs Challenges** helps readers to get what everybody needs to survive and thrive: enough food, safe shelter, an income, financial stability, and employment. For each of these basic needs, the guide connects students to both campus- and community-based resources and information.

**5. Special Population Needs** describes the particular needs of such groups of CUNY students as those who are parents or caretakers of children, immigrant and international students, students with disabilities, LGBTQI students, and students working in low wage or essential jobs. Each of these groups faces many of the challenges described in Parts 2 through 5, but this section pays attention to your unique needs if you identify with one or more of these populations.

**6. Overcoming Racism and Discrimination** connects CUNY students with information and resources that can help overcome some of the old and new ways that CUNY students experience systemic and other forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. It considers the special challenges faced by Black, Latinx, Asian-American, female, and LGBTQI students and their families and how each of these groups can cope with, respond to, and ultimately dismantle these negative forces.

**7. Advocacy for Surviving and Thriving At CUNY: Making “Good Trouble”** provides readers with information, resources and support that allows them to act individually and collectively to improve their lives at CUNY and in the larger society. It connects what students can do for themselves to get what they need to stay healthy and succeed in school and life and what students, faculty and CUNY can do together to make CUNY and NYC a better place to study, learn, work and live.

For more than a century, CUNY students have been in the forefront of the social movements that have made New York and the United States fairer and more decent places to live. CUNY students helped to organize the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s; the civil rights and women’s movements in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s; the antiwar movement in the 1960s; the lesbian and gay movements of the 1960s and 1970s; and against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s. CUNY students fought for open admissions and free tuition at CUNY, they were leaders of the fight to have the rights of DACA students recognized, and today they are fighting against climate change, to show that Black Lives Matter, and to overturn unfair federal, state, and city policies.

No one at CUNY chose to have a pandemic, but now that it is here, CUNY students, with faculty, staff, their families, and communities, will once again show that we are the guardians and protectors of a fair and thriving future for New York City. We hope this Guide helps some of us find that path.

*Sincerely,*  
*The Healthy CUNY COVID-19 Work Group*

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*Some of the authors of this Guide. Top to bottom left to right. Thania Pierre, Patti Lamberson, Nick Freudenberg, Erinn Bacchus, Christina Valeros, Tarisha Fleurmond, Nida Joseph, Zoe Schacht-Levine, and Rachel Knopp. Not shown: Heidi Jones, Meredith Manze, Vicky Ngo.*

# EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

One of our major goals in creating this guide is to help students like us be successful in our educational careers during this unprecedented time. With the mid-semester shift to distance learning, many students expressed difficulties operating some of the programs used to attend classes (e.g. Zoom, Blackboard, etc.) as well as difficulty engaging and communicating remotely. Others found it extremely hard to focus on their home environment, balance competing responsibilities with food, housing and financial insecurity, along with coping with grief, loss, and feelings of uncertainty. The transition to distance learning happened quickly, and for some, with extraordinarily little time to adjust. This portion of the guide is aimed at helping our fellow CUNY students to maximize our ability to study, troubleshoot technological issues, manage difficult communications, and provide readers with tools and resources to help us complete our degree or program.

Additionally, we recognize that many students with learning disabilities like ADHD may experience different educational challenges. If you or someone you know is looking for more information about learning disabilities and resources to help manage some of the associated difficulties, [you can find some that we've compiled here](#).

*“I am medicated for severe ADHD. While medication helps, the school environment is an essential component of being able to stay focused. Without the traditional school environment, I face more challenges from my ADHD.”*

## Maximizing Studying to Succeed in School

### Learning Styles

Along our educational journey, some of us may have discovered what learning style works best for us. For some, distance learning enhanced the ability to learn and retain information. However, for many others, the transition to distance learning has complicated the learning experience. In our April 2020 survey, **about 54% of students reported that changes to online learning had affected their ability to do schoolwork.** As one student wrote, “I’m a person that thrives in physical educational settings because I benefit from listening to classmates’ questions and this is an obstacle I cannot overcome or adapt to with distance learning.”

Since we’ll be attending classes remotely for the time being, it may be beneficial to know and understand what learning style works best for each of us. This may make it easier to identify methods and learning hacks to increase our performance and hopefully improve our overall educational experience.

# THE MOST COMMON LEARNING STYLES

**VISUAL:** Individuals learn best through observation and visual presentation often using diagrams, pictures, and figures

**AUDITORY:** Individuals learn best through listening and verbal instructions

**READING/WRITING:** Individuals learn best by taking notes in lectures and reading textbooks

**KINESTHETIC/PHYSICAL:** Individuals learn best through physical manipulation of objects and gaining experience via practice. Click here for more information on learning styles.

If you're unsure what learning style best fits you, [here is an online questionnaire](#) that may help narrow it down. Additional information about learning styles can be found at [Time4Learning](#).

More recently, three additional styles have been included in the discussion around learning:

**LOGICAL INDIVIDUALS:** Learn best when they can apply logic, reasoning, and a scientific way of thinking

**SOCIAL INDIVIDUALS:** Learn best by working in groups

**SOLITARY INDIVIDUALS:** Prefer to self-study and work alone

By identifying how you learn best, you may be able to find strategies to facilitate learning remotely based on your needs. Some potential strategies are discussed in the following sections.

*\*Tip: For example, if you know you are a visual learner, using a service like Khan Academy may be helpful in lieu of in-person classes.\**

## Online Resources and Study Groups

Even though most of our classes will be conducted via distance learning, we can still connect with our classmates online. Setting up regular calls with a group of peers can help you carve out time to do classwork or have the company of people whom you can bounce ideas off of while studying.

### Here are some ways to initiate finding study buddies and creating study groups:

- Join your college's student page on Facebook and post your schedule early in the semester - asking if anyone shares classes with you and propose exchanging contact information to create a study group.
- Contact your professor to facilitate the exchange of contact information in your class. [Here is an email template to ask them for their support.](#)

- Propose a regularly scheduled Zoom call among your friends and/or students from previous classes. You can work on your own assignments in the company of other people, have regular check-ins during the call and set small goals to hold each other accountable.

### And for those who prefer learning on your own, online resources can help solidify concepts for a variety of courses:

- [Khan Academy](#) An educational organization that produces short lessons in the form of videos on a wide variety of topic areas
- [Coursera](#) An online learning resource that offers massive open online courses, specializations, degrees, professional and courses
- [EdX](#) A massive open online course provider created by Harvard and MIT

## Plan, Organize, and Avoid Distractions

“When my mom is at work, I have to stay home babysitting my autistic brother. Home services have been cancelled and we are not receiving the care services that we received for my brother before the pandemic.”

Of the students that responded to our Spring 2020 survey, about 56% reported dropping or withdrawing from courses due to feeling anxious, distracted, or not being able to focus on schoolwork. Distractions at home are sometimes unavoidable. It's important to accept what we cannot change and focus on the things we can.

Here are some tips for fostering a more productive work environment both physically and mentally:

- **Make a “to do” list of everything you have to get done**, including anything pressing in your personal and professional life. Organize items by course and include due dates.
- **Use a calendar to map out time to study**, as well as personal and professional obligations including time to have fun. Be flexible and open to change. Sometimes seeing everything in a calendar can illuminate an imbalance and need for amendment. It's important to budget time for all of one's priorities.
- **Keep a neat and organized work area (if possible)**. Utilize the space in front of a window as a workspace to increase sunlight exposure. Add plants and colorful pictures to make the scene aesthetically pleasing. Use a white noise machine, fan, or air purifier on high, or noise-canceling headphones to block out any distracting noises.
- **Create a schedule with your housemates**, if possible, to communicate the times you need a certain space, or you need silence and the absence of distractions. Negotiate and communicate your needs.

## Combating Procrastination, Anxiety, and Writer's Block

Our survey showed that many students struggled with procrastination, motivation, and concentration affecting their ability to do their coursework. We recognize that many of us are experiencing changes in our work environment, learning environment, and the responsibilities we must take on.

### A Student Speaks on Combating Procrastination

As a professional procrastinator, I find that the most difficult and time-consuming part of completing a school assignment or any other large project is simply the initial decision to open up the work and start. It will take me three weeks to read the instructions of an assignment I only have a month to complete.

Although it seems counterintuitive, not knowing the amount of work I must do seems less overwhelming than knowing and being concerned about it for weeks.

As they say, "ignorance is bliss."

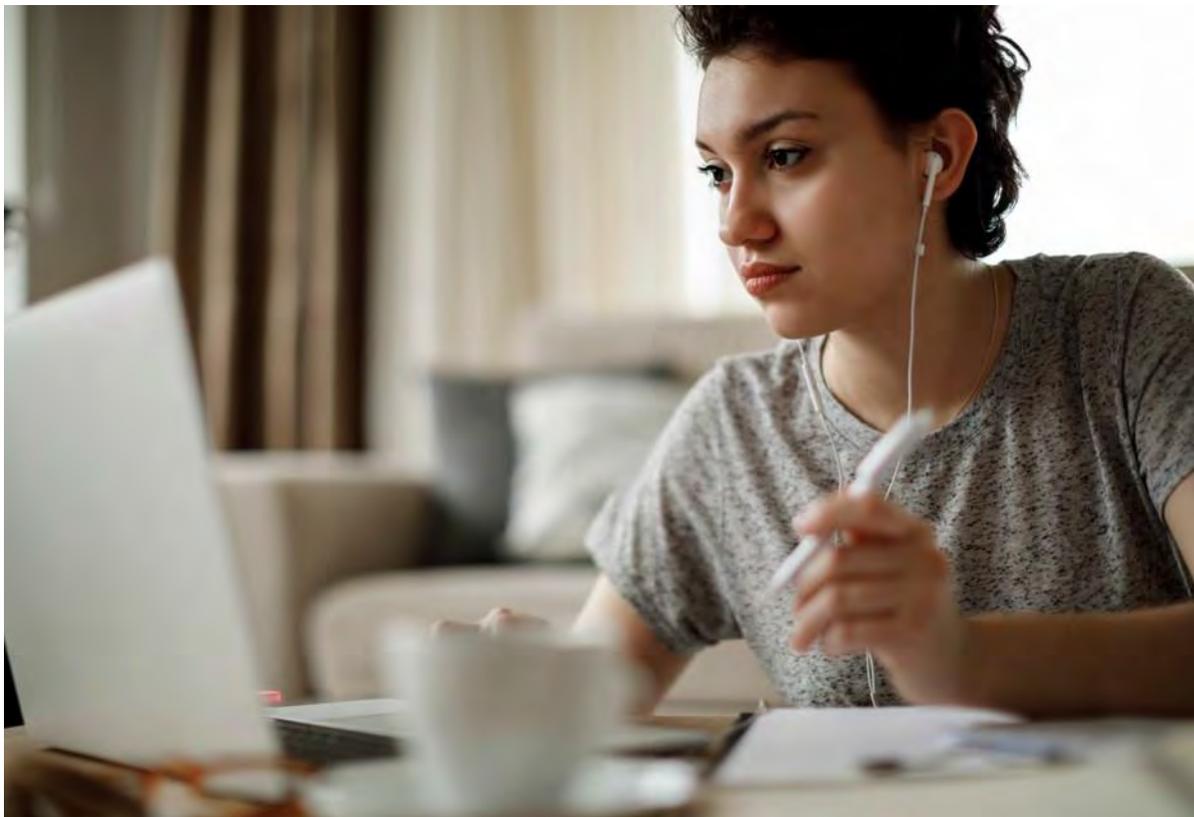
Here are some tips for combating procrastination, anxiety, and writer's block:

- **Just start writing even** if it's gibberish at first, just start writing. Starting is often the hardest part and once you're on a roll, the words will flow, and the block will dissipate.
- **Study with others** even if they are not working on the same type of work you are their studious energy will rub off on you and should help generate productivity. Surround yourself with trusted friends and peers. [See here for more on how to use Zoom Study Groups.](#)
- **Take a break and dance, sing, act silly**, clean your work/living space, take a walk, do an activity that distracts you from your schoolwork and momentarily helps release your anxiety. Sometimes the anxiety of not being able to do work paralyzes us and makes it harder to do work. Getting your mind off of the source of anxiety can help you move past the negative feelings

and self-doubts that were hindering you. Do an activity that increases your self-confidence and promotes self-love to overcome obstacles that originally feel insurmountable.

## Engaging with Content, Students, and Professors

The survey responses have made it clear that it can be really difficult to meaningfully engage with your coursework and class over a screen. Many of us have found ourselves shuffled into a different home environment, with new spaces, distractions and responsibilities that affect our focus and ability to engage in class. [One resource for navigating these issues during the semester is Distance Learning in the Time of COVID-19.](#) Written by CUNY program administrators at The Graduate Center and Macaulay Honors College, the document provides bulleted lists of tips for managing your time and workload, managing your space and distractions, and for meeting classes online and video conferencing. These include, for instance, scheduling your work to coincide with times and spaces where you feel most focused, and setting aside a time to breathe and take a break from your work.



# Tech Resources

## Zoom and Blackboard Tips

With a shift to distance learning, we have found ourselves having to spend more time on online platforms such as Zoom and Blackboard. Below are some resources from CUNY and the platform sites themselves to assist you in using them for your classes (and potentially study groups!).



- **The City College of New York's Instructional Guide (CCNY) Office of Information Technology** wrote an instructional guide for campus staff and students on basic Zoom features. While some sections are pertinent to CCNY students (e.g., setting up an individual CCNY Zoom account), other sections can be applicable to any CUNY student. For example, the guide provides easy to read sections on features available during a Zoom meeting and how to pass off host responsibilities. [The Instructional Guide can be accessed here.](#)
- **The CUNY School of Law Zoom Tips:** [Click here](#) for student tips for participating in online learning, including Zoom tips and links for commonly-used features and functions such as screen-sharing.
- **Virtual Backgrounds:** If you are signing onto a meeting with your webcam turned on, Zoom allows you to change your background with a Virtual Background feature. You might opt for a virtual background, for instance, if you feel that your surroundings could be distracting. You can enable this feature before you're on a call or during one. [For information on Zoom virtual backgrounds, click](#)

[here](#). We have also compiled some useful Zoom tips [here](#).

- **Blackboard Tips** While many professors had already coupled their coursework with Blackboard, we want to acknowledge that some of us have had to use the platform a lot more with the transition to distance learning, and that some may not be familiar with all aspects of the platform. We have compiled some helpful resources below:

» ***Blackboard Accessibility*** For a section created by Blackboard on accessibility, [click here](#); information on its accessibility features [can be accessed here](#). For information regarding visual impairments, [see here](#). [Click here](#) if you are using Blackboard with a hearing impairment; [here](#) if you have a mobility impairment; and [here](#) if you have a learning disability.

» ***CUNY Assistive Technology Services*** You can reach out to a team of assistive technology specialists by emailing [CATS@cuny.edu](mailto:CATS@cuny.edu). For more information about their support services offered, [click here](#).

» ***Blackboard Collaborate*** Some professors may use Blackboard Collaborate, a web conferencing system built into Blackboard. CUNY has compiled some links on using the platform [here](#). [Click here](#) for information on best practices; [here for a guide](#) on how to join sessions; and [here for a guide](#) on participating in breakout groups.

» ***Blackboard Mobile Application*** You can download a Blackboard mobile application to interact with your courses. [Click here for a CUNY resource](#) that provides links to help you navigate the app. For example, information on how to participate in discussions can be [found here](#), while information on how to view course content on the app can be [accessed here](#).

» ***Additional Blackboard Guides*** You can also find more guides on using Blackboard [as a student here](#). For tips on how to prevent losing your work, [click here](#). To information on how to check if an assignment was submitted, [click here](#).

» **Give yourself time before a deadline** to submit your assignment. If your submission on Blackboard did not go through and it caused you to miss your deadline, email your professor immediately with your document.

# Communicating with CUNY Professors and Administration

## Email Templates

There is only so much that professors can glean about a student's life from their class. As CUNY students, our responsibilities often stretch beyond our academics, and our lives can be a lot more complicated than what our professors see on the screen. Outside of the classroom, we might be juggling a second job, taking care of our family members, or struggling to find a safe place to sleep.

**It can be hard to reach out to our professors to let them know where we are at, but early and proactive communication—to the extent that it's possible—could make a class more manageable in the long run. [Here you can find some email templates](#) to foster conversations with professors about any concerns you might have either at the start of the semester or as they come up later.**

**Tip for Students with Learning Disabilities:** Campuses have robust disability service offices and programs to ensure that students receive the accommodations that they need. [Click here](#) for more information about CUNY Disability Services. [See here](#) for an email and phone directory of campus disability services centers organized by campus.

[See Supplement #1 Email Templates](#)

## Who Else Can Students Contact with Problems?

If you are not getting the support you need from a professor, you can forward communications to your campus' Dean of Students with an explanation of the issue. CC the Dean of Students on any continuing communication with said professor. The Dean of Students' contact information can be found in each school's campus directory.

- **CUNY Central:** If the issue persists you can bring up the matter to CUNY Central. Forward correspondence with professor along with an explanation to CUNY Central Student Affairs at [studentaffairs@cuny.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@cuny.edu) detailing the issue. (This includes not only unresponsive professors, but also those going against CUNY Central guidance such as denying an academic recess or requiring in-person classes to pursue a degree in a selected major.)

## What if I'm Thinking of Dropping Out?

"I find it extremely difficult to concentrate because I am in constant fear my child or my elderly parents are going to die. I cry constantly. I try to do my reading but am distracted by the news playing in the tv in the other room. I **don't** know how I'm going to complete the work for this semester."

Many students reported delayed academics, delayed anticipated graduation date, and having to drop or anticipate dropping one or more classes. The extra stressors weighing on students threatening their health and safety as well as their job, housing and food security can leave little energy and decreased prioritization of academics. It is important to be compassionate with one's self and refrain from making any rash decisions in response to stress, depression, and anxiety.



## STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE DROPPING OUT:

- **Contact your advisor and your school's student affairs and student resources** offices to assist you in managing your workload and accessing supports; you can discuss with an advisor reducing your class-load, reconfiguring plans for graduation and being open to taking it slow and steady. Just taking one class continues to propel you closer to your degree.
- **Talk to the financial aid office;** [see financial resources here in the guide](#)
- **Try to find a way to take a break without dropping out by:**
  - » Reducing your class-load.
  - » Taking time off by requesting a leave of absence with the commitment of returning the following semester or year.
  - » Don't let the work you've done thus far go to waste. It's okay to need a break and take some time off to focus on other priorities, but leave the possibility open of coming back and completing your degree.
- **Seek emergency grants** as some are offered on CUNY campuses and/or federal emergency grants.
  - » Seek out other resources to help ease the burden of existing stressors that affect one's ability to do well in school. In our survey, these stressors ranged from housing insecurity, food insecurity, and situations with space and study environment. [Please see here for other resources](#) in our guide to help with food insecurity, financial insecurity, and housing insecurity.
- **Take advantage of tutoring available on each CUNY campus.** For a spreadsheet with the hours of operation, contact information and website for each campus' services, [click here](#).

“My mother got corona virus and she was the only source of income that I had, **she’s** still in the hospital now and **I’m** just trying to deal with this all. I dropped an important class that **would’ve** made me finish this spring but instead I’ll be finishing my semester this **summer.**”

Being CUNY students ourselves, we understand how important financial stressors are to our overall wellbeing. In our survey, about 54% of students reported a decrease in income. While this section of the guide features information to combat some of the technical challenges to succeeding in our educational career, we realize that many students will also need access to information addressing financial challenges. [Please see our Basic Needs section of the guide located here](#) for more on this.

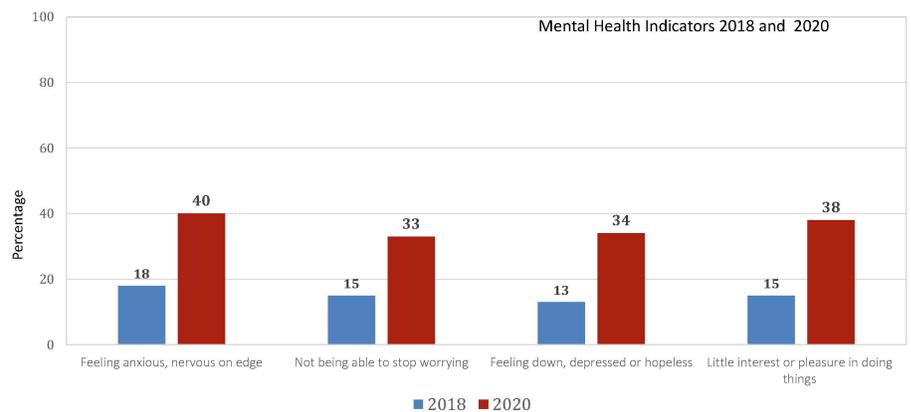


# MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

As current students at CUNY, we understand how much recent world and national events have tested our mental health. And from our own experiences, we also understand how this can affect our ability to effectively study, work, and even navigate daily tasks. This section of the guide aims to help readers understand some of the common mental health issues that CUNY students have been experiencing, provide tools to help combat some of these negative effects, and offer resources to mental health professionals when self-management is not enough.

**In our survey, about 54% of students reported difficulties with anxiety or depression.**

## Effect on Mental Health



## Anxiety, Stress, and Depression

### Stress

Given the current state of our nation and the world, feeling stressed is not only understandable, it's expected. In our April 2020 survey, about 37% of CUNY students reported feeling nervous, anxious or on edge for several days in the past two weeks. Most commonly, students experienced stress, anxiety, general uncertainty about the future, living in a state of fear, and grief associated with the loss of a loved one.

One student shared, **"I have to deal with extreme stress for this uncertain situation. I work in an essential store and I required to go to work even in this pandemic situation. My parents are both old and I am worried about getting infected and passing it to them. Because of the stress I am having trouble sleeping."**

As fellow students trying to stay afloat, balancing school, work, family, health, and a slew of other responsibilities, we know how difficult it can be to maintain a healthy mind. So, how do you know when it's just "normal" life stress and when it's more serious? Below are some signs and symptoms of every day, manageable, stress.

## Signs and Symptoms of Everyday Stress

- Dizziness or general signs of “being out of it”
- Headaches
- Grinding teeth, clenched jaw
- Increase in or loss of appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Racing heart
- Tiredness/exhaustion
- Lack of motivation or focus
- Upset stomach/ indigestion
- Low mood or withdrawal
- Increased worrying

Without adequate management, stress can be impairing and can prevent you from taking care of things you need to do. If it is persistent, it may reach a level of clinical depression or anxiety. It may also exacerbate other mental health illnesses like, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. To combat stress, it's important to take care of yourself and engage in healthy behaviors like having a balanced meal, exercising, and getting enough sleep. [Even a simple 10-minute walk or getting some sunlight outside can make you feel so much better. It's also helpful to reach out to friends and family and stay connected so that you can get emotional support from people in your life.](#) For more information and resources related to physical health, [please visit the Physical Health section of this guide, located here.](#)

***“I suffer from depression, and the isolation has been extremely difficult for me - it has brought back feelings of loneliness and exclusion that even with mental health care make it difficult to finish writing my dissertation. I'm mostly focused on making it through each day right now.”***

# Anxiety and Depression

Our survey results found that many CUNY students are facing issues with stress, anxiety, and depression. About 54% of CUNY students indicated that they were experiencing anxiety and/or depression.

One student described how COVID-19 stressed her:

**“Not being able to see friends, make condolence calls for friends and family that have passed away. Dealing with mental health issues of family members that is heightened because of the virus. Not having space to just be, because there are so many people around all the time.”**

Here we explain some of the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression and we provide resources for learning about and finding help for these common mental health problems.

## What Exactly is Anxiety?

There are several kinds of anxiety disorders. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness ([NAMI](#)), anxiety disorders each have unique symptoms, but all anxiety disorders have one thing in common: persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening.

Often when people talk about experiencing anxiety, they're referring to Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) which produces chronic, exaggerated worrying about everyday life. This worrying can consume hours each day and make it difficult to concentrate or finish tasks.

Some of the physical and emotional symptoms associated with many anxiety disorders include:

### Emotional Symptoms

- Feelings of apprehension or dread
- Feeling tense or jumpy
- Restlessness or irritability
- Anticipating the worst and being watchful for signs of danger

### Physical Symptoms

- Pounding or racing heart and shortness of breath
- Sweating, tremors, and twitches
- Headaches, fatigue, and insomnia
- Upset stomach, frequent urination, or diarrhea

## What Exactly is Depression?

It's important to know that many of us feel sad at times or go through a rough patch. However, depressive disorder, commonly referred to as depression, is when a person experiences a depressive episode lasting longer than two weeks.

**Symptoms and signs of a depressive disorder include:**

- Sadness or low mood
- Loss of interest or loss of pleasure in all activities
- Change in appetite or weight
- Sleep disturbances
- Feeling agitated or feeling slowed down
- Fatigue
- Feelings of low self-worth, guilt, or shortcomings
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts or intentions

We know it can be difficult to determine when the symptoms you're feeling are severe enough to seek help. Much of this varies from person-to-person, making it important for each of us to pay attention to how we react to and handle everyday stress. **However, if these or any other stress symptoms you are experiencing persist for a prolonged period of more than two weeks or they begin to affect your ability to function daily, please contact a mental health professional. [Find help here.](#)**

## Finding a Mental Health Care Provider

Almost half (49%) of the Healthy CUNY Spring 2020 Survey respondents reported an increased need for mental health services to help cope with stress, anxiety or depression due to the pandemic.

Mental health care can be a tricky field to navigate as there are many different types of mental health issues as well as many different types of mental health professionals. However, **it is important to understand and recognize what type of mental health care you are seeking** out so that you can find the professional that would be most helpful to you.

All mental health professionals can listen to your needs and evaluate your mental health issues through various techniques. **Mental health professionals may differ in terms of their training and approach methods.** In addition, some ministers, rabbis, and imams provide therapy of various sorts.

*Note: Psychotherapists, Counselors, Therapists, and Clinicians are generic terms that can refer to different types of mental health professionals., but the three most common mental health providers are psychologist, social workers, and psychiatrists. Below is a table that provides a few distinguishing characteristics for each.*

Psychologists	Social Workers	Psychiatrists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Doctorate degree in psychology</li> <li>● The types of psychologists that provide therapy are counseling and clinical psychologist.</li> <li>● Psychologists are trained to provide formal psychological and cognitive assessments, mental health diagnosis, as well as a range of psychological therapies for a variety of mental health conditions and life problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Masters of Social Work</li> <li>● There are also different types of social workers (e.g., Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, etc.).</li> <li>● Those that have clinical training and are licensed can also provide assessment, diagnosis, and therapy for a variety of mental health conditions and life problems.</li> <li>● They also tend to have a stronger emphasis on connecting people with community and community support systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Licensed medical doctor</li> <li>● Can provide medication assessment and management in cases where psychotropic medications are required or preferred.</li> <li>● Some also can provide talk therapy combined with medication.</li> </ul>

If you are unsure which type of mental health professional you should consult, it may be best to talk to your primary care provider—your regular doctor or health provider. First, discuss how you’ve been feeling, what your worries and concerns are, and ask him/her how you should proceed with mental health treatment/counseling. If you don’t have a primary care provider, CUNY has mental health services that can help you get started; for a list of campus mental health and personal counseling offices [click here](#).

Since there are many different forms of mental health care and types of therapy, it is important to speak with your mental health professional first. **Ask them any questions you may have about different types of therapies** and what they think would be beneficial for you and your personal needs.

# Types of Mental Health Therapies

## Evidence Based Practices

There are several evidence-based practices that are often used in therapy.

### **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY(CBT)**

One of the most popular evidence-based practices helps you become aware of your thinking and how it affects your emotions and behaviors. This approach is very skills oriented and can use a lot of exercises and practice assignments to help you develop more adaptive behaviors and ways of thinking.

### **DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY**

A type of CBT that teaches skills to increase awareness, acceptance, and management of painful emotions and decrease conflict in relationships. It is often used to treat suicidal and self-destructive behaviors.

### **MINDFULNESS-BASED THERAPY**

Connects Cognitive behavioral techniques with meditation practices.

### **INTERPERSONAL THERAPY**

Focuses on you as an individual person and your relationship with others and supports the development of healthier communications and relationships.

There are also alternative therapies, including pet therapy, art therapy, and music therapy, that can be helpful for some people. [Visit here for more.](#)

Therapists provide their services in different formats including:

**INDIVIDUAL THERAPY:** One on one sessions with your therapist.

**COUPLES THERAPY:** Involves both partners and focuses on the relationship goals.

**GROUP THERAPY:** Small group therapy is usually provided to 5-10 people. Some groups are therapy process groups where several people are working through their issues together. Some groups are more skills or education groups, which tend to be more structured and focused on skill development, which can feel similar to a small class. Can be particularly beneficial because they provide an opportunity to practice social skills, get social support from others who are experiencing something similar, and can learn from peers.

**FAMILY THERAPY:** Involves family members to work together on issues that relate to family dynamics and supports improvements in family functioning.

Due to physical distancing requirements imposed by the pandemic, most therapy, like many things, have moved to virtual platforms.



# Online Therapy

## A Student Speaks on Online Therapy (Telehealth)

I had never felt more alone than the two weeks I had COVID-19. My eyes still fill with tears over a month later just thinking about being completely alone. I had come down with COVID-19 like symptoms and to keep my roommates, neighbors, and the greater NYC community safe, I arranged to stay in a **friend's** empty studio apartment while she was in California waiting out the pandemic with her family.

It was the first time in my entire 28 years of living that I **didn't** see another person, touch another person, talk to another person in person, hug another person, sit next to another person, exist in the same physical space as another person. There was no way I could have prepared and nothing I could have brought that would have prevented the emotional turmoil I would experience while isolating. I remember feeling unloved, unimportant, neglected, jealous, angry, annoyed, afraid, frustrated, distraught, useless, sad, lonely. I spent my days commuting/circulating from the bed to the couch, to the kitchen, back to the couch and back to bed. As someone who depends on physical affection as her main source of producing and releasing neurochemicals that cause positive emotions, each day that passed sent me deeper into agony and despair.

My therapist, who at the time I had been having tele-appointments with once a week, heard how much I was suffering and offered to increase my session frequency to twice a week. I was hesitant to accept the additional sessions; I **didn't** think I deserved them. Being without physical contact and human connection fed my insecurities. I was convinced that my mental health wasn't worth **anyone's** extra time or energy. Luckily, my therapist disagreed. I just wanted to crawl into a hole and wake up when it was all over. She **didn't** let me. We worked on my relationship with my mom, my lack of boundaries with my sister, my frustrations with my significant other. We went over my allotted time in a number of these sessions when we **weren't** done working through a topic; she **didn't** even seem to care. In contrast to our typical sessions where five minutes before the hour she concludes the conversation regardless of its completion and asks if I want to schedule our next appointment, her willingness to disregard the time limit while I was struggling with my mental health and self-worth, made me feel valued and important again.

The therapist referred to above is actually the mental health counselor at my CUNY school and although my mental health has drastically improved since my time in isolation, I continue to fill up my telecounseling sessions with whatever is pressing on my mind that day. Looking back at those two weeks I see resilience in myself, but more importantly I see the support, guidance, patience, compassion, willingness, and flexibility of someone I never met dedicating her time and energy to my wellbeing. At a time when my suffering felt inescapable, and my mental health seemed unsalvageable, having someone repeatedly call me and express care about me was invaluable and essential to my healing process.

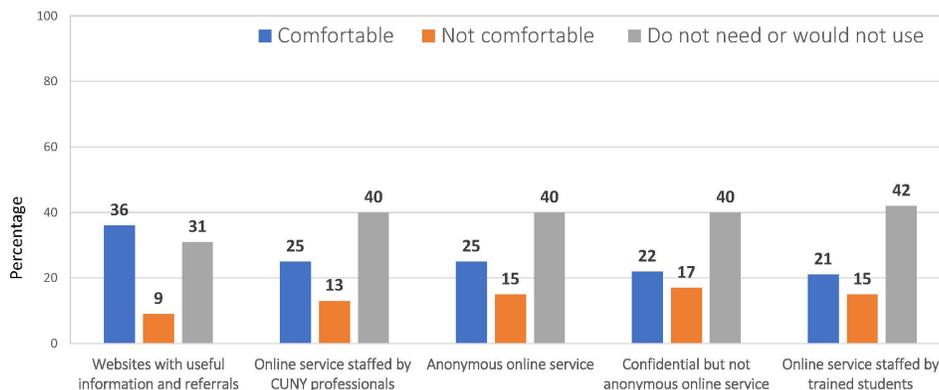
## What is Telehealth?

Although all CUNY schools have student counseling centers, their availability varies between campuses. [Here is a list of the mental health and telecounseling services available at each CUNY campus](#), their availability, what platform they hold sessions over, and a link to each school's telecounseling and mental health web page for more information and guidance on making an appointment.

In the age of COVID-19, **telehealth has become an even more important sector of the health care system**. Telehealth is a term used to describe the wide range of remote services and technologies used in patient care increasing access and advancing the delivery system. **Telemedicine is the subset of telehealth that specifically involves the use of technology and software to communicate with patients and provide clinical services without an in-person visit**. Not only does telemedicine avoid the increased possibility of exposure and risk of spreading of COVID-19 to non-COVID positive patients seeking healthcare, many of whom may be immunocompromised, but it also reduces the number of patients in hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare settings which increases hospital bed availability for those in need of hands-on care.

**Within telemedicine is telecounseling, a field that continues to expand with a growing market of newly emerging mental health focused apps, mental health professionals who only make phone or zoom appointments, and a continuously expanding database of organizations providing counseling over the phone and via text**. Other online software and mental health services and programs, i.e. apps, can assist with checking in and practicing awareness of one's mental health, they can be limited to their programming using a predictable pattern limiting the outcomes, benefits, and potential to learn and grow, unlike talking to an actual human being. [You can find some sources of telehealth services in the Supplementary Guide here](#).

**During the pandemic, how comfortable are you with getting help for stress, anxiety or depression from following sources?**



These findings from the Healthy CUNY 2020 COVID Survey shows that between one in five and one in three students are comfortable getting help for mental health concerns from various sources, with websites being comfortable for the largest proportion. Note that comfort levels and willingness to use various providers do not vary much by source.

## Is Telehealth for Me?

It is difficult to admit to ourselves we need help, let alone ask for it. For many people, and in numerous cultures, prioritizing mental health, attending therapy and consulting with a professionally trained counselor is stigmatized, seen as weak and looked down upon. Yet at a time when uncertainty and fear monopolize the minds of many people, these negative associations about mental health and seeking care hinder us from exploring that which could truly benefit us. While not everyone benefits from therapy, many of those who overcame their resistance to visiting a therapist say it has changed their lives for the better. For some, telehealth may be a good way to get these benefits in the current period.

## Limitations to Telecounseling

- **No in-person communication**, which can limit being able to see facial expressions, aesthetic expressions, or visual mannerisms. However, some providers offer videoconferencing to increase engagement in therapy.
- **Must be in a space where one is comfortable to share freely**, preferably alone behind a closed door, this may not be an easy option for some.
- **Some therapists are only reachable during the set appointment** calling you

from a hidden number, depending on the therapist/organization. Changing the appointment last minute can be difficult and may cause unwanted charges that insurance may not cover.

- **It's important to seek out a therapist through a reputable organization** to ensure your safety and confidentiality.

## Benefits to Telecounseling

- **Some therapists, depending on the organization, are available 24/7**, e.g. Talkspace advertises round the clock texting, messaging, and communication with one's primary therapist.
- **Hotlines like NYC Well and the LGBTQI Hotline allow you to completely maintain your anonymity**, which can be comforting to those that are not yet comfortable sharing about their mental health distress. Staying anonymous can help reduce discomfort related to stigma and embarrassment. However, it is important to remember that all therapy, regardless of whether it is in person or on the phone, are private and confidential. Your therapist cannot share your information with others, except when they are concerned about your safety or the safety of others and need to notify appropriate authorities.

- Many resources exist online and in the telehealth community for whatever niche-need one might have, e.g. connecting with those struggling with similar issues through a meet-up group or finding a therapist who shares key facets of your identity or is educated in your culture.

## Using Telehealth Resources

- **Educate yourself on the different options available:** services provided, cost, insurance (the following are just a couple of examples, more in resources/links above)
  - » **CUNY Counseling Platform:** varies from campus to campus, no cost to students
  - » **NYC Well:** over phone or via text, may not get same person every time, no cost
  - » **Talkspace:** Multiple communication methods, consistent primary, weekly cost that may be covered by insurance
- **Schedule your initial meeting.**
  - » **Don't be shy;** meeting someone for the first time is always a little awkward.
  - » **Although it may feel uncomfortable/awkward to share your struggles,** deepest thoughts, and feelings with someone you've just met, try to truly talk about the things that are weighing on you.

- » **Gauge and evaluate their responses.** Are they giving you what you need? Are they being receptive to what you're saying? Are you being receptive to their knowledge and suggestions? Does their counseling style work for you? It's okay if the answer is no.
- » **If the answer is no, try again. Find someone who matches your needs.** Don't give up. Be honest if they try to schedule another meeting saying, "I don't think this is the right match." or, "I need someone who understands what it's like to be a [identity trait]."

- **Once you've found the right fit, keep going!**
- **Weekly appointments are usually standard.**
- **Respect their time.** If you show up early be patient and wait for them to finish with their last patient. If you're running late, try to contact them and let them know. If you have to cancel, let them know as soon as possible.

Your campus counseling center is there to help you and guide you with whatever mental health needs you may have. [You can locate your specific CUNY campus counseling center here.](#) The best way to get started with the on-campus resources would be to locate your specific campus' mental health service and call them up to see what your options are for providing help right now. If you would rather get mental health help from somewhere in the community, the best place to start would be to ask your primary care provider for a

referral. Your primary care doctor has a list of mental health providers that they recommend to their patients, therefore you can be assured that these are reliable mental health professionals.

**Mental health is a particularly important issue. If you do not feel comfortable talking to a mental health professional, you should consider talking to a trusted family member or friend or someone you can confide in.**

## Getting Started with Mental Health Care

### Talking to a Provider for the First Time

Getting started with mental health care for the first time can be scary and difficult to navigate. However, just know that you are not in this alone and there are plenty of resources and people to help you. If you are unsure where to start the best place may be starting by talking to your primary care provider about any mental health issues that you are experiencing and asking him/her if they have any advice or people you can go to talk to. If you do not have a primary care provider, ask the CUNY counseling center on your campus to help you find someone.

## Introducing a Specific Issue

The **hardest part of getting mental health help may be talking about your struggles and personal history with another person, which is very intimate and hard to do with a stranger.** When you first meet with a mental health professional, they usually have an intake session where they ask about your needs, family and social background, school and work life, medical history, and your preferences. They will also provide you with information about how they work and together you'll probably develop therapy goals. It's important that during this early phase, you're able to share honestly and openly about what's going on with you so they can have a clear picture of your life and stressors. **Although it can be extremely difficult to open up to someone completely new and a stranger to you, it is important to keep in mind that these people are here to help you therefore the more you share, the more you'll get out of your sessions.**

## How to Make an Appointment

Each specific campus has a different mental health counseling center and mental health representative. [You can click here to see a list of all the CUNY campus counseling centers.](#) If you click on each individual campus name it will take you to the mental health service site for that specific campus. It will tell you the hours and how best to reach out to someone if you would like to make an appointment, whether it be email or phone call. This would be the best place to start if you are completely unsure how to move forward. **We suggest clicking the link above and locating your specific campus and reaching out to the representative listed whether it be by phone call or email at first and then proceeding from there with them.**



# Mental Health Resources

CUNY is now offering students free crisis counseling access, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The “Crisis Text Line” is a service that provides students access to a trained crisis counselor, not employed by CUNY, to assist in problem-solving and safety planning during moments of crisis, using SMS messaging. **Students can use Crisis Text Line by texting CUNY to 741741 any time and they will be connected to a counselor who offers support.** For additional information on the process please see this [info sheet](#).

## Meditation

Meditation is the practice of reflecting upon the patterns of one’s own thoughts fostering mindfulness and self-awareness. According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, numerous studies reviewed in 2014 cite evidence of meditation reducing symptoms of anxiety including pain and depression.

- [The 10 Minute Mind Mindfulness course](#) free to CUNY students, staff, and faculty. Sign up and receive daily guided mindfulness practices to assist in stress management and focus on breath.
- [Calm App](#) for meditation and help with sleep and stress.
- [Destress Monday](#) Deep breathing exercises called square breathing using counting with focusing
- [Ten Percent Happier App](#) for guided meditations, videos, talks, and sleep content to help you build (or boost) your meditation practice, and stick with it.
- [Headspace](#) Available as an app or online. It provides guided meditations, animations, articles, and videos to help more people access and experience the benefits of meditation.

## COVID-Related Mental Health Resources

- [Virus Anxiety Resources](#): To cope with coronavirus anxiety and improve mental health supports for staying home.
- [Medium Article: Freebies If You’re Stuck at Home During Coronavirus](#): Helpful article on
- [Nod Resources/App](#) for students to stay connected socially to flatten the curve.

- [Coping With Stress and Social Distancing During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#): Outbreak Two page document from NYC.GOV providing guidance/strategies to cope with stress and social distancing.
- [CUNY Continuity Mental Health Tips](#): Guidance and strategies for practicing self-care; retaining a sense of purpose; clearing your mind; reducing risk and anxiety; and more. [Link here.](#)
- [CDC Guidelines for Stress and Coping Related to COVID-19](#): [Provides guidance/strategies for coping with stress.](#)

## Peer Support

One of the strongest protectors of mental health is support from peers.

One student wrote, “I feel like communication online is different than person to person. I feel that if I was physically there with my peers and professor, I would have questions and maybe my peers would have different questions and I would learn differently.”

In our survey, several students noted that the loss of face-to-face interactions with other students had a negative impact on their school work. We didn’t realize how integral the physical presence of our peers is to create a conducive learning environment until we didn’t have that support helping us to focus, concentrate, and understand the material.

- For information on [creating Zoom study groups and facilitating communication with your peers](#), [check here.](#)
- [To seek out student life events on your campus and connect with peers socially, explore the campus student government programs and events on your school’s website.](#) Join or start a club with other students who share your passions and beliefs (your student government can help with connecting you to campus clubs or starting a new club). Connect with your campus Student Government on social media to keep up with student life and stay connected with other students.

## Partner Violence and Child Abuse

The media has reported that the isolation imposed by Covid-19 has led to increased reports of domestic violence and child abuse. If you or anyone you know is experiencing any type of domestic violence or child abuse, please reach out to a professional. There are plenty of resources out there to help you in abusive situations:

- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) Provides support for those experiencing domestic violence, questioning unhealthy relationships, etc.
- [Childhelp National Abuse Hotline](#) Provides support and help for the prevention of child abuse.

## Substance Use

Since the pandemic started, have you or someone you know been relying more on wine, or a joint, or some other substance to get you through the day? Many people have increased use or started using one of these substances recently and for some it can turn into a problem that interferes with school, relationships, and health. If you or someone you know is having this kind of problem, it may help to seek professional assistance. Once again, there are many resources to help you:

- [SAMSHA \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services\) Hotline](#): Provides treatment referral and information services for people facing mental health and/or substance use disorders. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for the SAMSHA national helpline.
- [NYS Department of Health Office of Addiction Services and Supports Dashboard](#): allows you to search for the type of help you would like to receive.

## Suicide Prevention

If you or someone you know is feeling extremely down and contemplating suicide, please seek help from professionals.

### WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE IN YOURSELF, FRIENDS, OR FAMILY

- Talking about wanting to die
- Talking about or feeling hopeless, or feeling like a burden to others
- Increase use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Change in sleeping habits
- Withdrawing oneself
- Showing extreme mood swings

## Suicide Prevention Help

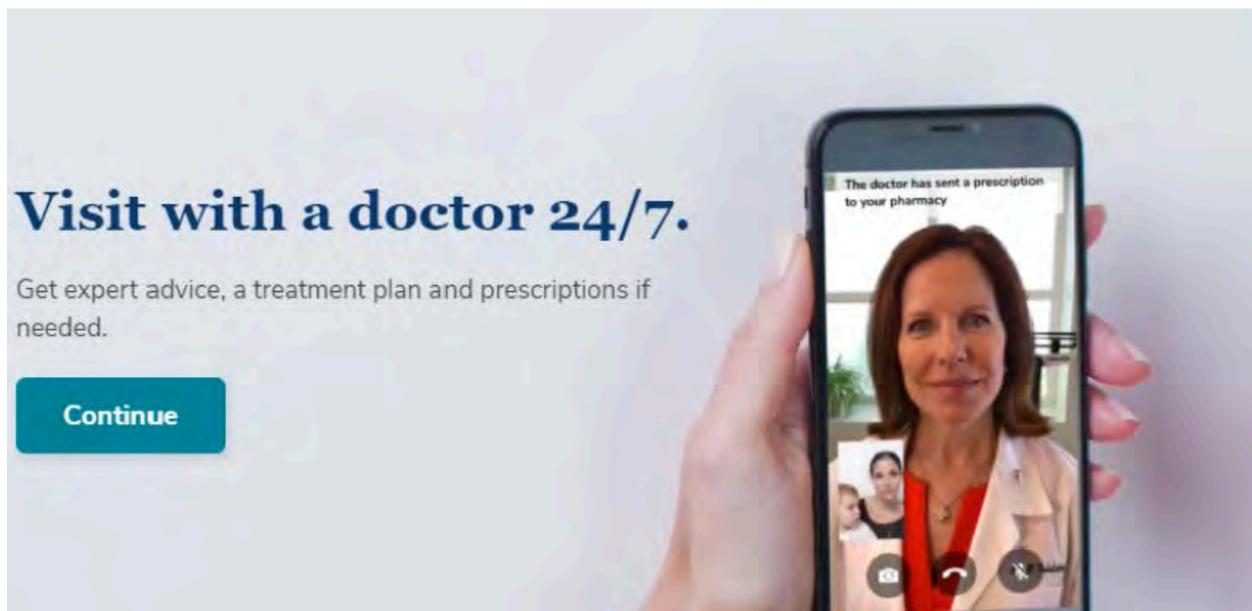
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Prevention hotline](#): 24/7. Call 1-800-273-8255.
- [Vibrant Space Brought by Vibrant Emotional Health](#): provides extra support, resources, and coping materials. It offers the option to call someone on the hotline or start a live chat online.
- [Self-Harm Crisis Text Line](#): Provides crisis support via text. Text “HOME” to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor, free and available 24/7.

The global pandemic as well as the other current events going on the world can be extremely upsetting, unsettling, and stress-inducing. However, many resources and medical professionals are out there to help you properly cope. Once again, if you or someone that you know are contemplating ending your life, please seek out help from medical professionals in the form of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

## Resources for Serious Mental Illness

Sometimes MH problems can escalate to a crisis or a more severe MH condition where you might need more specialized care or even hospitalization. Here are some resources to learn about more severe mental illnesses such as psychotic disorders and eating disorders.

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide:](#) Provides credible information and resources to help navigate through this time of crisis. Includes information on managing stress and anxiety at this time, how to access medication and how to cope with the loss of a loved one. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to bettering the lives of those impacted by mental illness.
- [International OCD Foundation Resources for the OCD and Related Disorders Community:](#) Provides resources related to teletherapy, self-care, coping strategies, etc. for people with OCD and related disorders.
- [National Eating Disorders Association Helpline:](#) Provides support, resources and/or treatment options for people affected by eating disorders. Call 800-931-2237 Monday-Thursday 11am-9pm and Friday 11am-5pm. Text 800-931-2237 Monday-Thursday 3pm-6pm. Or chat with a counselor through their website linked above, Monday-Thursday 9am-9pm and Friday 9am-5pm. All communication is confidential, and if you call/text when they are closed, you will receive a response promptly.



## Additional Resources for Mental Health

- **[For the Frontlines:](#)** Free crisis counseling text line for health care professionals and essential workers. Text “FRONTLINE” to 741741.
- **[Healthy CUNY:](#)** Healthy CUNY is an organization that evaluates factors impacting the health and wellbeing of CUNY students conducting studies and surveys and reporting the data.
- **[LGBTQ National Hotline:](#)** Anonymous and confidential hotline where callers can feel safe voicing issues and concerns that predominantly impact LGBTQ populations without fear of stigmatization. Call 888-843-4564 open Monday-Friday 4pm-midnight, Saturday noon-5pm or email: [help@LGBThotline.org](mailto:help@LGBThotline.org).
- **[The Steve Fund:](#)** Helping students of color who are feeling depressed/stressed/overwhelmed. Text “STEVE” to 741741 to connect with a live crisis counselor 24/7 and email [info@stevefund.org](mailto:info@stevefund.org) with any questions.

Finally, some students have found that these simple practices have helped them to maintain their mental health in the face of daily assaults of upsetting news:

- **Take frequent breaks** from social media and the news.
- **Set daily time limits** for social media and news apps.
- **Set aside specific days** to be away from any social media or news outlets.
- **Aim to also consume media** that highlights the progress made or positive outcomes.

For more on this, [see the section on racism and discrimination](#)

# PHYSICAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

“The increased anxiety regarding the pandemic as well as my academic future has me suffocated. My entire family had gotten sick with no way of knowing if they had contracted COVID-19, leaving me to do most of the house work, then I later became ill. The limbo that we’re stuck in made me incapable of keeping up with school work.”

As this quote shows, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that physical health and mental health are inseparably linked. In this section, we aim to help all CUNY students protect and promote our physical health in order to help us all feel better, stay healthy, and succeed in school and life. For information and resources on mental health, [please visit the Mental Health Section of this guide](#). If you are currently experiencing depression or anxiety related to the pandemic, counselors are available 24/7 at NYC Well to talk, text, or chat (text “Well” to 65173).

In this section, [we provide information on some of the health challenges posed by the pandemic that can worsen existing problems or put you at higher risk of new ones, including being infected by COVID-19](#). Our goal is to help us all stay well. We include links to helpful resources on the relevant topics, with a focus on community and online resources during this time of remote learning.

In a spring 2020 Healthy CUNY Survey, [29% of students reported having symptoms that could have been COVID-19 in the last month](#). Of those students who reported being tested, 28% tested positive.

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as an opportunity for students to strive for the best possible physical health. It is important to pay attention to [potential COVID-19 symptoms](#) including fever, dry cough, shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor. If you don't have a regular doctor, check the health care resources section of this guide. Many CUNY Health Services offices now offer tele-medical consultations and are a great resource for health-related questions and referrals.

- To contact your CUNY campus health services office, [visit here](#).
- Click here for CUNY Coronavirus updates for the 2020-21 academic year.
- For information about how to stay safe from coronavirus infection, [please follow the CDC Guidelines on How to Protect Yourself and Others](#).
- Visit the NYC Department of Health webpage to learn about [COVID-19: Symptoms and What to Do When Sick](#).



## The COVID-19 Vaccine

By the end of January, 2021, there have been over 400,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States. About 40,000 of those deaths were in New York State, more than half of those were in New York City. These estimates, reported daily in the [New York Times](#), are going up each day. Many of us at CUNY have lost family members, friends and neighbors or have gotten ill ourselves. In addition, many of our fellow students work in healthcare or other front-line settings which puts them at higher risk of becoming infected or getting severely ill with COVID-19.

The great news is that there is now a vaccine for COVID-19. Development of the COVID-19 vaccine has brought a sense of relief and hope that there will eventually be an end to this pandemic. As a CUNY student, you may have questions or concerns about the COVID vaccine and wonder when and where you will be able to get vaccinated. Maybe you have questions about vaccine safety or side-effects, or concerns about its effectiveness. This section provides some helpful information to answer your questions about the vaccine now, as well as links to trusted resources for other questions that come up, and for staying informed as more vaccine becomes available.

## Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccination

Vaccines save millions of lives each year. They work by prompting the body's natural immune system to recognize and fight off the bacteria or

virus (in this case the coronavirus) if it enters the body at any point. Experts recommend that you get the COVID-19 vaccine even if you've already had the disease, since it is not yet known how long one's natural immunity will last. Even if you are young and healthy, it is important to get vaccinated to protect those around us who are more vulnerable to illness, such as older people, newborns, or people with health conditions like diabetes or some lung diseases. You can read more about pre-existing health risks for COVID-19 and other ways to protect yourself and others from getting sick in the **Physical Health Challenges** section of this Guide.

For comprehensive information about the COVID-19 Vaccine benefits, visit the Centers for Disease Control website [here](#).

Click [here](#) for comprehensive information about the COVID-19 vaccine from New York City Department of Health.

As vaccines become more available and more CUNY students become eligible for vaccination, you can also check [CUNY Coronavirus Updates](#) for information for CUNY students.

## Types of COVID-19 Vaccines

As of January, 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use. These vaccines are both messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. mRNA are molecules that provide instructions to the body to fight off the coronavirus. Once the body receives the instructions to fight the virus, it breaks down and gets rid of the mRNA. Click [here](#) for more information from

the CDC about how mRNA vaccines work.

There are currently more than 50 COVID-19 vaccines in trials across the world. For information about global COVID-19 vaccine development, visit the [World Health Organization](#) website.

Visit the [CDC Covid Data Tracker](#) for up to date information on the national COVID-19 vaccination roll-out.

New York State [Vaccine Dashboard](#) provides daily updates on the State's vaccine program. Click here for [multi-lingual resources on COVID-19](#)

## Vaccine Safety and Side Effects

A tremendous amount of research, development and testing goes into production of vaccines.

Even when production is sped up, such as with the COVID-19 vaccine, there is minimal risk to patients compared to the benefits of avoiding potential infection, illness and death. Both the BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are more than 94% effective. By getting vaccinated, you are helping protect yourself while helping to make your family, friends and community safer.

The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the live virus and cannot give you COVID-19. In clinical trials a small percentage of patients experienced mild to moderate side effects, such as soreness in the arm where the vaccine is given, mild fever and fatigue.

- More information about side effects can be found [here](#).

While there is a lot written about vaccine safety on the internet, we found that much of it is not backed by science. We recommend checking out the vaccine information you find on the internet to make it comes from a credible source and that it is updated regularly. A few such resources are listed below.

- [Frequently asked questions](#) about COVID-19 Vaccines
- [COVID-19 vaccine myths debunked](#) (Mayo Clinic)
- To learn more about how to find credible vaccine information click [here](#).

## When and Where Can I Get a COVID-19 Vaccine?

While vaccine distribution is under way, New York City and State's vaccine supply is limited. The vaccine will be distributed in phases to groups of people according to their risk of exposure or severe illness. You can check eligibility for yourself or your family online – see links below. If you are eligible, don't wait! Find a location [here](#). Vaccines are not expected to be widely available to all New Yorkers until mid-2021. This may change as new vaccines become available and the new federal vaccine program rolls out. We recommend checking the New York City and State websites regularly for eligibility updates and vaccination location and appointment information. For information on how the CDC is making COVID-19 vaccine recommendations click [here](#). A table of current vaccine eligible groups and a projected timeline can be found on the [New York City Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility](#) webpage.

Don't forget to bring your appointment confirmation and proof of eligibility to your vaccine appointment. If you are receiving the vaccine in New York City you may be asked to show proof of residency. Also bring your insurance card if you have one. Remember, COVID-19 vaccinations are FREE and nobody will be turned away based on immigration status, race, religion, sexual orientation or inability to pay.

Here are some useful resources for finding a vaccine site and scheduling an appointment. Check back frequently, as appointments do fill up quickly.

- Visit NYC Health Department [COVID-19 Vaccine Hubs](#) to schedule an appointment, or call [877-VAX-4NYC](#) or [877-829-4692](#).
- For NYC Health + Hospitals COVID-19 Vaccine Scheduler click [here](#).
- The [NYC COVID-19 Vaccine Finder](#) is a one-stop site for New Yorkers to find their nearest COVID-19 vaccination location. The Vaccine Finder can also provide New Yorkers with information to schedule vaccination appointments.
- New York State's phased distribution plan can be found [here](#).
- For New York State COVID-19 Vaccine eligibility screening tool and a list of NY State run vaccination sites. Visit [here](#).
- If you live outside of New York State, you can check your local or state health department for information about COVID-19 vaccine distribution. For a list of US State and Territorial health departments click [here](#).

Some New Yorkers have questions about the vaccine and its efficacy and safety. It's right to ask questions but not to fail to take action when protection is available. We the public health students and faculty who wrote this guide strongly believe that all the available evidence suggests that COVID-19 infection is a far greater threat to our health and the health of the people we care about and interact with than the vaccine. For that reason, we will get vaccinated as soon as we can and urge our fellow CUNY students and their families and loved ones to do the same. In our view, high levels of vaccination are the surest path to restoring our city and our university. Students who want to learn more about how to persuade people you care about to get vaccinated can read [here](#).

For more answers to your questions about getting vaccinated for COVID-19 check out this [New York Times article](#).

**For opening dates and scheduling information for State\_FEMA vaccination sites statewide, including CUNY's York College and Medgar Evers College, click [here](#).**

## Health Care Resources

Health care resources include medications, facilities, and the health care workers needed to provide health services. Access to health care resources is important to maintain good health, prevent disease, and manage chronic conditions. **Students should have access to these resources to reach their full potential academically.**

Fortunately, the Affordable Care Act of 2010 made it easier for many Americans and especially young adults to get health insurance. **However, our surveys show that 8% of CUNY students— about 22,000 individuals—still lack health insurance, and many of them are immigrants.**

Additionally, the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 led many New Yorkers to lose their jobs and their health insurance. Struggling to pay for health care or find a doctor can be incredibly stressful and makes it harder for students to focus on schoolwork. Consulting the resources listed below can help to solve health care access problems before they become overwhelming.

Our Healthy CUNY COVID-19 survey that was conducted this April shows how dramatically the pandemic contributed to students rating their health more negatively. **At the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester, only 10% of students reported their general health was fair or poor, but by April, 58% said their health was fair or poor—a shocking decline.** In the last few months, NYC has made free COVID-19 testing available in every borough which will help to stop the spread of the virus—and may help some students address their fears with action.

***“Personally, I was sick for longer than expected with the COVID-19. It has been 6 weeks and counting. I was unable to do my course work due to the symptoms of the disease”***

## Where Can I Get Tested or Treated for COVID-19?

- **You can find COVID-19 testing sites** by visiting the NYC Health and Hospitals website [linked here](#). For information about contact tracing (what to expect), [click here](#).
- **COVID-19: Symptoms and What to Do When Sick:** Guidance from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. [Link here](#).
- **If you need public health services** (other than COVID-19 testing) such as immunizations, sexual health testing and services, and tuberculosis testing, you can visit a NYC Department of Health Clinic. For information about services, locations, and hours, [click here](#).

## What if I Don't Have a Regular Health Provider or Health Insurance?

Students who do not have a regular health provider (or health insurance) can find care at one of the facilities run by New York City Health and Hospitals, New York's public hospital system.

- **NYC Health and Hospitals** health centers, clinics, and hospitals [Find locations and information on making an appointment here](#). to residents of their neighborhoods.

- **Gotham Health, NYC Health and Hospitals** primary care centers. [Find locations and phone numbers here.](#)
- **You can find a list of the names, addresses, zip codes and telephone numbers of all [community health centers in New York City here.](#)** Most provide free, subsidized or low-cost services to residents of their neighborhoods.

For up-to-date health-related information and resources from CUNY during the pandemic, [visit CUNY Continuity: Fall 2020.](#) While most CUNY campuses are mostly closed for the fall semester, CUNY does offer general health resources on each campus for students including wellness centers and health clinics, health information and tips, and immunizations. [To find your campus health center, click here.](#) Be sure to call or email first for open days/hours. Some campus wellness centers offer telephone consultation to students.

## Health Insurance

Having health insurance makes it easier to stay healthy because it enables you to visit a doctor before you get sick and it takes care of most unaffordable medical bills. Unexpected medical bills can make it harder to pay for college. If you are uninsured, you may be eligible for Medicaid or affordable essential plans.

As the debates in the 2020 Presidential election have shown, the United States is alone among wealthy nations without universal access to health care, but in addition to voting on November 3rd, pursuing insurance coverage for yourself is a critical step you can take to protect your health.

- [New York State of Health:](#) New York State's Health Insurance Marketplace and Medicaid Enrollment site. Uninsured New York residents have until December 31st to sign up for insurance through the Marketplace, an extension approved due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dates for future enrollments will be announced on the NY State of Health webpage linked above.

- [NYC Health Insurance](#) Link New York City offers free or affordable health insurance to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status. You can call 311 for enrollment in a public health insurance program in your neighborhood, or Text CoveredNYC to 877-877 to start the process.

- [Citywide Health Insurance Access \(OCHIA\)](#) During "normal" times before the pandemic, facilitated enrollers from OCHIA, were found on CUNY campuses offering health insurance programs to eligible students. During the pandemic, you can download the Access HRA mobile app here or [visit nyc.gov/hra](https://www.nyc.gov/hra) and click on the 'Locations' tab for more information on the consolidated HRA office locations.

## Who is Most at Risk for Severe Illness Due to COVID-19?

**Everyone, including healthy young adults, is at risk for getting or spreading the coronavirus.**

Being young does not guarantee protection. But older adults and people who have serious underlying medical conditions (such as heart disease, cancer, obesity, kidney disease, and diabetes) have an increased risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and even death due to COVID-19. **Some chronic conditions that put everyone at risk for developing COVID-19 include diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, asthma, and other upper respiratory diseases.** If you have an autoimmune condition (such as lupus, gout, rheumatoid arthritis) or take medications that suppress the immune system, you also may be at a higher risk for getting serious illness.

In addition, new research shows that young adults who smoke are [twice as likely to develop complications](#) from COVID-19, and that vaping is linked to a substantially increased risk of COVID-19 among teenagers and young adults. If you smoke or vape, now is a great time to quit. [See here for smoking and vaping cessation resources.](#)

- [The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) has the most up to date information on conditions that may put you or someone you know at high risk for complications from COVID-19.

In addition to underlying medical conditions, there are economic and social conditions such as poverty, racism, and overcrowded housing which put individuals and communities at a higher risk for developing COVID-19. These higher levels of social risk are not the consequences of individual choices but of a social and economic system that in recent decades has worsened inequality and leaves many New Yorkers lacking what they need to maintain health. [To read more about the economic and social conditions associated with COVID-19 risk, click here.](#)

To add to that, front-line health workers and other essential workers who interact with the public regularly have a higher risk of infection due to their close contact with people who have the coronavirus infection ([read more about that here](#)). Students should visit the [CDC website](#), and the [Basic Needs](#) and [Special Populations](#) sections of this guide for resources geared toward supporting other vulnerable populations.

**If you have an underlying condition, it is especially important to follow CDC recommendations about physical distancing, hand-washing, wearing proper face coverings, and other practices that can prevent COVID-19's spread.** We expand below on some of the more common underlying medical conditions experienced by college students and offer some tips and resources for staying healthy. If you have high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, or asthma—conditions that can elevate the risk and seriousness of COVID-19 infection—[visit here.](#)

If you have concerns about your health or feel sick, call, or visit a health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, [go to the Health Care Access section of this guide for resources](#). In an emergency, call 911. Remember, it's better to be safe than sorry, so if in doubt ask for professional help.

## Staying Healthy

In our survey, **almost 60% of CUNY students said their ability to do schoolwork had decreased, and over half of these students said the decreased ability was due to their own physical health or the health of others in the household.**

To avoid getting COVID-19, it is important to [follow CDC recommendations](#) about physical distancing, hand-washing, [wearing proper face coverings](#), and other practices that can prevent COVID-19's spread. [And remember, now is a great time to quit smoking or vaping to further protect your health now and in the future.](#)

## Physical Activity

**The increase in the remote online classes and working from home means students like us are sitting more than usual and getting less exercise.** Physical activity such as walking, jogging, yoga, and strength training can help you stay healthy by lowering your risk of heart disease, weight gain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high glucose, and now COVID-19. Exercise is also a great way to reduce stress as well as protect your health.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), all adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity throughout the week. But even just taking a short break from sitting, by doing 3-4 minutes of light intensity physical movement, such as walking or stretching, will help ease your muscles, improve blood circulation, and muscle activity, and reduce stress.

Here are a few ideas for free ways to exercise at home:

- [22 Free Workouts You Can Do at Home Right Now](#): New York Times Wirecutter article lists free apps and programs [including exercise videos for kids!](#)
- [YMCA 360](#) offers free online on-demand health and fitness videos for all levels of fitness.



## Healthy Sleep Habits

One of the most important things you can do to stay healthy and do well in school during COVID is to **maintain—or establish—good sleep habits**. Getting enough sleep supports the immune system which will help you to avoid and fight off infection. Sleep also helps you maintain a healthy metabolism so you can burn energy. In addition, healthy sleep patterns make it easier to manage emotions and to focus and think more clearly. **Lack of a normal routine and daytime structure while working and studying from home can throw off healthy sleep patterns.** Too much screen time, too little physical activity, as well as anxiety and depression caused by the pandemic and our current political and economic circumstances can make it hard to fall asleep and to sleep well.

“I feel emotionally exhausted by the time I get around to do my work. I do homework after 10pm till 4am just so I can get peace and quiet; then sleep from around 4am to 9am.”

Some tips for healthy sleep include managing stress, limiting screen time at night, avoiding naps and over the counter sleep aids, and creating a sleep schedule. For more information on managing stress, check out the [Mental Health Section of this guide](#). [Click here for more information and guidelines for healthy sleep during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

## Eye Health

Excessive electronic screen time (PCs, laptops, smartphones, tablets, LCD TVs) not only disrupts sleep, but can also damage your eyesight! Blue light exposure may increase the risk for macular degeneration (damaging light sensitive cells in the retina) and cause headaches or migraines. If you have diabetes, it is particularly important to protect your eyes and see an eye doctor regularly. To protect your eyes and your overall health during COVID, wash your hands frequently and practice social distancing. **Also try to avoid touching or rubbing your eyes—one trick is to wear glasses or sunglasses to add a layer of protection.**

- [Click here for tips for eyecare](#) during COVID 19 from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, including how to protect your eyes and when to see an eyecare professional.

## Wellness Visits

Don't put your health on hold—even during the pandemic. **Make sure you are up to date with your regular health care visits (including mental health), screenings, and vaccines to reduce risks of preventable disease and infections and to stay healthy.** This year, it is especially important to prepare for the upcoming flu season by continuing to practice steps for avoiding infection, such as frequent hand washing and social distancing and by getting a flu shot. If you have a chronic disease or condition or take prescribed medication,

be sure to maintain regular checkups. Many health care providers are offering telehealth, or virtual office visit options to meet patient needs. [Check out the Health Care Resources](#) and [Mental Health Resources](#) sections of this guide, for free and low-cost health services options. [You can find more links to telephone and telehealth services here.](#)

## Reproductive and Sexual Health

**Any close contact (within 6 feet) with an infected person can expose you to the coronavirus—whether you're engaged in sexual activity or not.** So being physically intimate with a person, whether by kissing or having intercourse—can easily spread COVID-19. The only certain way to avoid infecting someone or getting infected through sex is to be confident neither you nor your partner(s) are infected.

**And don't forget to keep up with your regular sexual health screenings and check-ups.** Even though we now need to worry about COVID-19, we also still need to protect ourselves against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections as well as unwanted pregnancy. Check out the links below for more information about free and low-cost health clinics and more resources and tips!

- [American Sexual Health Association Sex and COVID-19](#): Understand the risks of sex and intimate contact in the time of COVID-19.

- [Planned Parenthood of Greater NY](#): Find a Clinic, learn about telehealth services and more. Read about Planned Parenthood's guidance on COVID-19 and Your Sexual Health [here](#).
- [NYC Sexual Health Clinics](#) offer sexual and reproductive health care services including STI testing and birth control. If you need sexual health services and are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, call the NYC Sexual Health Clinic Hotline at 347-396-7959.
- **Healthy CUNY**: Learn about our work on Healthy Relationships and check out our Sexual and [Reproductive Health Resources Page here](#).
- **CUNY Campus Health Centers**: Many offer sexual health services for free. To find your campus center, [click here](#).
- **CUNY Women's Centers** are a great resource for women's health and wellness information. To find your campus Women's Center, click [here](#).



# SUPPORTING STUDENT BASIC NEEDS



*Staff and students distribute food at Medgar Evers College Community Pantry*

**It's pretty hard for us to concentrate on school, if we're worried about how to pay for our next meal, make rent, or find a job to support ourselves and our family.** This section describes how CUNY students can meet some of our basic needs, especially during the current pandemic and economic crisis. The focus is on helping students to overcome food, housing and economic challenges that can interfere with academic success, well-being, and a comfortable life.

A college education and degree provide opportunity for economic security and greater lifetime earning potential. While CUNY has done more than most colleges to help students and their families to escape poverty, 2020 brings some new threats to keeping college enrollment affordable. Cuts in State and Federal funds brought about by the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic threaten many of the safety net programs that have supported CUNY students and other low-income New Yorkers. Moreover, more than a decade of tax cuts for the wealthy have made it harder for the city, state, and federal governments to generate the tax revenues to support existing programs, much less fund new ones.

In addition, even before COVID, the high cost of housing and the low wages for many jobs made it hard for many CUNY students and their families to make ends meet. Now, with the price of food rising, many students or their parents losing their jobs, paying for food and housing has become even harder. **About sixty percent of CUNY undergraduate students come from households that earn less than \$30,000 per year and surveys have shown that too many CUNY students are hungry or food insecure, unstably housed or homeless, or struggle to meet other basic needs.** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that human beings require basic needs like food, water shelter, financial security, to survive and succeed in life. Having these basic needs met makes it much easier to motivate our focus on school. The COVID-19 pandemic and worsening economic climate may force even more students to make the difficult choice between basic survival and attending school. In our survey, one student described how the pandemic changed her family's life: **"An unsustainable way of living. No water or heat due to closure of business sustaining us. Had to relocate to another state for living and giving birth to my first child."**

In the past several years CUNY has been working to help address student basic needs, primarily through food pantries, emergency funding and special programs. These programs offer an important lifeline to many students but with limited funding and staff, and, in Fall 2020, mostly closed campuses, by themselves, these programs cannot meet the growing need that CUNY students face through the fall semester and beyond. Helping students survive and thrive at CUNY means helping students to meet their basic needs in order to stay in school and graduate! Some campuses have created model programs that deserve to be expanded and set up in more CUNY sites. **The Transition Academy at Medgar Evers College, for example, does that by acting as a "basic needs hub", helping students find food, housing, financial and emotional support and much more.**

## CUNY One Stop Shops

In late 2020 and early 2021, CUNY launched new One Stop Shops on eight campuses, including the seven community colleges and John Jay College. Designed as a successor to what had been called Single Stop, the new One Stop Shops are designed to meet the evolving needs of students by providing a variety remote and in-person services that include access to pantries and help applying for SNAP and housing assistance; financial and tax preparation assistance, and other services newly incorporated to address issues created by the pandemic.

“CUNY is working hard to ease the burden on its resilient community with a newly expanded, all-encompassing network of services that will make it easier for students to pursue their academic goals,” said CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “Students who are facing food and housing insecurity, and those who have lost their jobs and lack income, can now access these one-stop shops at their colleges and get help. I encourage anyone who isn’t already taking advantage of these resources to contact their campuses and avail themselves of these inclusive resources and services.”

To determine eligibility for benefits, students and their families participate in a short question-and-answer session. College program counselors then direct students and their families to federal, state or local benefits that they are eligible to receive. More information can be found by visiting college program pages below:

- [Borough of Manhattan Community College](#)
- [Bronx Community College](#)
- [Guttman Community College](#)
- [Hostos Community College](#)
- [John Jay College of Criminal Justice](#)
- [Kingsborough Community College](#)
- [LaGuardia Community College](#)
- [Queensborough Community College](#)

A Kingsborough Community College student was elated to receive a \$100 supermarket gift card from the One Stop Shop at a time when her local food bank was low on supplies and she was unsure where her next meal would come from.

**“I didn’t know what I was going to eat,” she said. “I didn’t have any food and it literally saved me.”**

**Getting the food we need to stay healthy and avoid hunger should be a basic right for anyone and everyone.** As students, we need food to help us do well academically. It is hard to concentrate when we are hungry. There are many resources, whether through CUNY or the greater community as well that can help students with food resources.

In this guide, we provide students with resources for direct food assistance, SNAP/WIC, monetary support, and nutrition. With the world constantly changing around us, we want to inform our fellow students of any changes in access to programs such as SNAP/WIC or other direct food assistance programs. Food is such an essential part of our lives and really helps us to succeed.

The rest of this section lists some of the resources and information that is available to help CUNY students meet a few common basic needs: food, housing and financial security. We hope readers can use this information both to find what you need to meet your needs but also so that you can share these resources with your friends and class mates, so they too can find the assistance they need.



*Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez visits a CUNY food pantry*

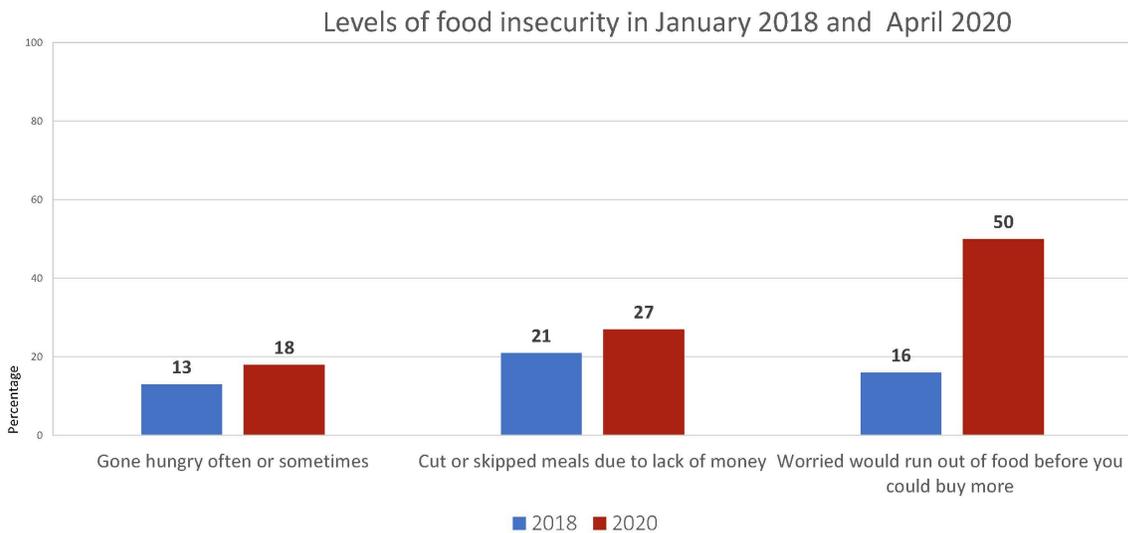
# Food Security

Our COVID-19 survey data show that CUNY students are experiencing loss of income and report increased spending on food and other household expenses during the pandemic. Between 2018 and April 2020, Healthy CUNY surveys showed that the proportion of CUNY students who reported that they were worried would run out of food before they could buy more tripled, from about 16% to 50%.

“Due to decreased income, I have been rationing the amount of money I spend on a weekly basis so that I can continue to afford to live off of what I currently have.”

“The supermarkets never have anything anymore. I prefer for the children to eat before I do. Sometimes I just won’t eat at all.”

### Food Insecurity among CUNY Student in 2018 and 2020, 2 months into COVID-19 Pandemic



Half of the students (49.8%) reported being very or somewhat worried about losing their housing as a result of the pandemic and about half reported experiencing some forms of food insecurity in the two weeks preceding the survey.

## Direct Food Assistance

In response to COVID-19, **New York City launched a Grab-and-Go program that provides free meals for all New Yorkers.** We can pick up these meals at various meal hubs without need for registration, ID or documentation. Using the NYC Department of Education database, enter your borough, school district, address, and mile radius to find the nearest meal hubs.

In addition to [Grab-and-Go meal hubs](#), food pantries, soup kitchens, and community programs located around the city provide food to people who need it. [The FoodHelp NYC Map](#) locates the nearest food pantry or community kitchen. Enter your address in the top left and filter by borough and by facility type (e.g., applying for SNAP/food benefits, community kitchen, food pantry); the map can also filter by kosher providers.

The [Coalition for the Homeless Grand Central Program](#) lists detailed routes of their food drop off service. Their mobile vans offer hot meals every night in Manhattan and the Bronx. They have three routes: uptown, downtown and through the Bronx, that stop at various places every night.

## Safety and Risks of Food Resources During COVID-19

Back in April, one of the most common barriers to obtaining food for CUNY students

was the fear of exposure to COVID-19. While running errands like shopping at a grocery store or a farmer's market carries some risk, there are some steps that you can take to stay safe.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Running Errands page gives an extensive list of advice on how to stay safe while going grocery shopping, shopping at farmer's markets, and receiving delivery and take-out. If possible, use online or food delivery services; otherwise, there are tips on how to protect yourself while shopping and how to safely unpack your groceries at home. Click [here](#) for more information and helpful tips on how to protect yourself while you're out running errands.

## SNAP/WIC and Government Assistance

### SNAP (The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

**SNAP is a government benefit program that is issued electronically and can be used to purchase food. You can purchase bread, cereal, fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, and dairy products.** You cannot purchase beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco and you cannot purchase pet food, soap, medicine, and household supplies.

- Use your SNAP benefits to shop online for fresh produce and groceries. Use your EBT card to shop at these participating stores in NYC: [Amazon](#), [Shoprite](#) and [Walmart](#)

## Basics of SNAP Benefits

SNAP distributes a monthly benefit amount to low income households in order to purchase food items at participating supermarkets and grocery stores.

## Qualifying for SNAP

Students can qualify for SNAP if they:

- Meet the income guidelines. Visit the [New York State SNAP website](#) for an overview of income eligibility levels for households of different types
- Household has an elderly member (age 60 or over) or disabled member. The information you [input here](#) will estimate whether your household meets the SNAP eligibility requirements

**In addition, a new federal expansion of SNAP benefit eligibility during the pandemic includes students who:**

- Have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0 based on their FAFSA for the academic year
- Are *eligible* to participate in a federal or state work-study program. This is a change from requiring *receipt* of work-study.

For more information about student eligibility for SNAP, [go here](#).

## SNAP Work Requirements for Students

**In order to qualify for SNAP, students enrolled in part-time/ full-time education are generally required to engage in work activities for an average of 20 hours weekly** and the pay must be at least the minimum wage. However, SNAP work requirements have changed for students due to COVID-19 and under a new NY State policy expanding SNAP eligibility to low-income college students engaged at least half-time in career and technical education courses.

Students not enrolled in these programs (such as students enrolled in 4 year academic programs) must request “good cause” (defined by USDA as illness, family emergency, lack of transportation etc.) to be exempt from work requirements.

Please note that if you are receiving unemployment insurance, or if you are *eligible to receive* work-study, you are considered to be compliant with work requirements. For more information about work requirements for SNAP, [go here](#).

**New York State policy expands SNAP eligibility to almost 45,000 CUNY students who were not eligible before.**

The expanded eligibility will help students avoid food insecurity while advancing their education. **Income-eligible students enrolled at least half-time in a career or technical education program offered at a CUNY comprehensive, technical, or community college will now be eligible for SNAP.**

**Additionally, income-eligible individuals attending any of the 10 Educational Opportunity Centers in New York State and enrolled at least half-time in a career and technical education program, remedial courses, basic adult education, literacy, or English as a second language are included in this new policy.** Previously, these students did not qualify for SNAP assistance, unless they met certain criteria such as working at least 20 hours per week, or caring for a child, or were unable to work, among others.

If you are enrolled in a CUNY community college or career or technical program, you can now download a verification form on CUNY First to include with your SNAP application. **For more information check out [www.cuny.edu/SNAP](http://www.cuny.edu/SNAP).**

## Emergency Allotments (EA) for SNAP Recipients

There are no changes in maximum SNAP allotment, the total dollar amount provided. However, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides a supplement called the EA (the Emergency Allotment) to SNAP households who did not receive the maximum benefits amount per household. If a household is already receiving the maximum of \$355 for a household of two people, they will not be eligible for benefits via the EA supplements. In Spring 2021, further expansions are expected.

For more information, go [here](#).

## Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)

The program issues supplements to households with children who receive free or reduced-price meals in their schools. Before

households in a state can receive P-EBT benefits, the USDA must approve the state's plan, as has happened in New York State. For more information, [go here](#).

## SNAP Application Process

New York City applicants are encouraged to use the [ACCESS HRA](#) website to apply for SNAP. Application forms in many different languages can be found [here](#).

For a list of SNAP Centers click [here](#).

Students with disabilities can request a home visit by calling constituent services at 212-331-4640 or 311.

## Need assistance with your SNAP application?

CUNY students can connect with a Swipe Out Hunger **CUNY Food Navigator** [here](#), or text FOOD to 855-230-6746 and a fellow CUNY student will reach out to help connect you with SNAP if you are eligible, as well as other local food resources. This is a free program for all CUNY students.

Staff at CUNY One Stop Shops are also available to assist with benefits eligibility and enrollment. Learn more [here](#).

## WIC

WIC is a special supplemental foods program for women, infants, and children. It offers nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referrals, and nutritious foods. For more information about how this program works, please [go here](#). Among the groups who are eligible for WIC are mothers of children age 5 or younger, pregnant and breast-feeding women, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, step-parents and guardians.

You can receive WIC even if you are:

- You are not a legal resident, a green card is not needed
- You or other household members work
- You get food stamps, public assistance or Medicaid
- You are a foreign student (F-1 Visa)
- You do not have a social security number

[For more information about WIC, see here.](#)

For help determining your eligibility for SNAP or WIC benefits, or assistance with your application or recertification, contact the [Hunger Free America Benefits Access Team](#) at 646-355-1475.



## Monetary Supports

CUNY campuses can provide monetary grants that can be used to assist in paying for food or free up money for it. At least 22 campuses offer the Carroll and Milton Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund, which provides financial support for qualifying students experiencing a short-term financial crisis that may make it difficult for them to stay in school. Check the specific page for the Petrie grant on your campus site, as the details of the grant- amount, application and eligibility, for instance- may differ with each school.

Where this page is housed can vary from campus, so we recommend that you type the grant name and your campus on Google for ease of access. Other non-campus financial resources can make it easier to get food. [See here for more resources.](#)

## Nutrition Resources

Nutrition is a major component when people begin to think about food. Food is more than just something to eat, and rather should be considered as healthy, plentiful options for people to eat to maintain a healthy diet and overall form of wellness. There are many different nutrition resources whether it is where to get healthy food and produce from or what are healthy recipes that you can make.



One resource is Fresh Food Box from GROW NYC. Fresh Food Box delivers a box of food for \$14 to \$15 that would normally be \$20 to \$30 in a grocery store. You are able to use EBT/SNAP to purchase these food boxes filled with 10 to 15 pounds of fresh produce. The program is available in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.

For a map of locations, [visit here for location sites.](#)

Another source for nutrition resources is City Harvest. City Harvest is a non-profit food group that set out to feed NYC's hungry. Besides City Harvest planning ways to feed those in need, City Harvest also provides nutritional resources and education on how to eat properly and healthfully.

City Harvest provides free nutrition education classes with topics including:

- 1) Healthy recipes
- 2) Buying healthy groceries on a budget
- 3) How to properly read nutrition labels
- 4) How to safely store food so that you are making it last longer

More information on City Harvest and the nutritional resources and education that they provide can be [found here](#).

## Additional Campus Resources

Campus and food assistance will continue, and each campus has its own plan for helping through vouchers, referrals, pre-packed and grab & go food. Many pantries have online registration, but this is inconsistent across the campuses. **Before heading to campus, we advise you to first call or email your campus pantry.**

- You can [find a directory of CUNY Food Pantries](#) with their campus location and contact information; you can visit any campus food pantry during distance learning.
- You may also find support using the services provided by your [Student Affairs office](#); you can find the office contact on your campus website.

## Homelessness and Housing Instability

Housing insecurity poses a threat to the academic success of CUNY students. How can one expect a student to succeed when they have to constantly worry about where they are going to sleep at night?

**In the spring 2020 survey on the Effects of COVID-19 on CUNY students, about 50% of students reported that they have some worries about losing current housing due to coronavirus. Additionally, about 54% of students who had to withdraw from classes last semester said it was because they need to focus on basic needs like housing and food.** Combined with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, housing insecurity puts students at a disadvantage and creates an environment that makes it difficult to succeed.

CUNY students who are homeless or forced to live in shelters report that they often feel invisible, struggling to get through each day but not easily finding the help they need at CUNY or elsewhere.

In response to this, we have listed some available resources to help students address these concerns. Contact each organization directly for more information.

- [Coalition for the Homeless](#) provides the steps to take and contact info to get into a shelter. They also have a [crisis intervention program](#) where you can walk in and get help, and provide support with eviction, disability issues, and more. This [searchable database from the Coalition for the Homeless](#) is a comprehensive catalog of emergency services in New York City.
- **Generation NYC: [Guide for Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)** provides a list of resources to find a place to stay as well as youth drop-in centers and resources for special populations such as LGBTQ youth.
- [This guide from the U.S. Department of Education](#) was created for college students who have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity.
- [CUCS \(Center for Urban Community Services\)](#) provides housing resources for families and individuals with mental health and other special needs.
- [For Families with Children, apply here for Temporary Housing.](#)

In addition, most CUNY campuses offer emergency grants that can be applied for housing emergencies, and some campus centers such as [The Transition Academy at Medgar Evers College](#) and [LaGuardia Cares at LaGuardia Community College](#), offer support and referrals for students dealing with homelessness. To find out about emergency grants and resources on your campus contact your campus Student Affairs Office.

## Financial Security

For many of us, our struggle to meet basic needs such as food and housing, comes down to not having enough money. In our survey, students reported that after the pandemic hit, they were worried about finances because either they or someone in their household had lost a job, or because their household expenses had increased – sometimes both. These worries can make it harder to focus on school.

These students described the stress of their financial insecurity:

“I need money for gas, Con Edison, rent of \$2,100. I’m extremely worried and overwhelmed. The rent is getting harder to pay, the money that we owe to the bank is getting harder to pay.

Price for daily basis things are going up & I lost my work because of the (pandemic). So it’s hard for me to manage all the expense in a little amount of money.

I used to work for 25 hours per week. But now I am working half of that hour per week and for that overall getting less money per week. Due to this unique COVID-19 situation I am working less hours.

For this guide, we have gathered some resources to help students directly address financial concerns. These and the resources listed in other the sections on basic needs and those for special populations are just some of the financial resources available to students. **We hope they will provide some relief and some ideas for where to look for financial assistance if you or a friend are experiencing a financial emergency or struggling to make ends meet.**



## CUNY Financial Resources

- **Emergency grants and loans:** For emergency grant and loan information, students should check with their individual campus Student Affairs office.
- **Financial Aid:** For information on financial aid services at CUNY, [click here](#). To find your campus financial aid office, [click here](#). For CUNY financial aid updates related to COVID-19, [click here](#) and scroll down to Financial Aid Updates.
- **Financial Literacy:** For CUNY Financial Literacy information and videos, [click here](#).
- Student jobs and internship opportunities For information about Federal Work Study, and links to more information about employment for CUNY students, [click here](#) or visit your campus career services office.

## City and Community Financial Resources

- **ACCESS HRA Client Portal:** New Yorkers can apply and recertify online for SNAP and Cash Assistance, view benefits, and much more. [Click here for more information](#).
- **ACCESSNYC** is a portal for NYC residents to determine their eligibility for

over 30 economic opportunity programs and benefits. It also includes a regularly updated list of COVID-19 response resources. For more information, [click here](#).

- **HRA Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP):** For more information and to apply for the HEAP grant, [click here](#).
- **Support for renters and tenants:** To find information and frequently asked questions for renters and tenants, [click here](#).
- **Temporary Aid to Needy Families Program (TANF):** offers cash assistance to NYC parents (living and caring for at least 1 child). [More information on TANF here:](#)
- **New York Disaster Interfaith Services COVID-19 Unmet Needs Roundtable (UNR)** provides emergency vouchers for food and prescription medication costs. Eligibility Criteria: Must live in NYC, provide proof of address, provide proof of food stamps and unemployment applications. Call (347) 694-7904, or [click here to fill out a brief intake form](#).
- **NYC Human Resources Administration** provides Burial Assistance For those who need financial assistance for burial, please [click here for more information](#).
- **Hebrew Free Loan Society** is offering interest-free Coronavirus Financial Impact Loans up to \$5,000 for low and moderate-income families throughout New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County.

## Unemployment Benefits

New York State Department of Labor is waiving the 7-day waiting period for Unemployment Insurance benefits for people who are out of work due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) closures or quarantines. For more information [visit the New York State Department of Labor website here](#).

For additional information not specifically for CUNY students see these guides:

- [BEYOND THE FOOD PANTRY: College During COVID-19: A #RealCollege Guide for Students](#): See sections on How to Get Money, How to Reduce Your Bills, and How to Find a Place to Live
- [7 Kinds of COVID-19 Relief for College Students](#)

## Financial Education, Training and Skill Building

- **NYPL Money Matters**: New York Public Library Financial Literacy Financial education programs and resources. [Click here for more information.](#)
- **NYC Department of Consumer Affairs** offers Free financial counseling, tax prep, and financial Education. [Click here for more information.](#)
- **Workforce Opportunity Services**: For Employment and Training Opportunities- Resume and interviewing workshops; skills-based training; connections to employment opportunities, [click here.](#)

# SPECIAL POPULATIONS

This section examines the distinct needs of key CUNY populations that are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. **These include students who are also parents of children under 18, immigrant students, international students (those who live in another country but came here to study), students with disabilities, LGBTQI students, and students who are also working, especially those working at low wage jobs or as essential workers.** In each section we present resources to meet their distinct needs and their rights.

## Student Parents

“My son is home all day and so I cook more often, wash dishes more often, have to help him with his online classes and technical issues. Is it mentally draining to have him all day because he has severe ADHD and he needs constant reminders and redirections and it takes more energy for me to be on top of what he has to do, I feel emotionally exhausted by the time I get around to do my work. “

It's pretty hard for us to concentrate on school, if we're worried about how to pay for our next meal, make rent, or find a job to support ourselves and our family. This section describes how CUNY students can meet some of our basic needs, especially during the current pandemic and economic crisis. **The focus is on helping students to overcome food, housing and economic challenges that can interfere with academic success, well-being, and a comfortable life.**

A college education and degree provide opportunity for economic security and greater lifetime earning potential. While CUNY has done more than most colleges to help students and their families to escape poverty, 2020 brings some new threats to keeping college enrollment affordable. [Cuts in State and Federal funds brought about by the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic threaten many of the safety net programs that have supported CUNY students and other low-income New Yorkers.](#) Moreover, more than a decade of tax cuts for the wealthy have made it harder for the city, state, and federal governments to generate the tax revenues to support existing programs, much less fund new ones.

“We have one computer and a little study place. So it is very difficult to study together. During the school times, my sons stayed at school to do all their homework before coming home, so that we will use our limited space for family time.” - CUNY student, Spring 2020.

Many community resources are available for student-parents and include resources for children with disabilities and other family members. [Click here for more information on such topics as:](#)

- How to keep your baby and you Healthy during COVID-19
- Free services for new mothers and families in need
- Baby Supplies:
- Early Intervention Service
- Care for disabled and special needs children
- Tutoring services for children
- Free or low-cost devices such as laptops, cell phones or iPad
- Elderly care services
- Advocacy for children

For more information on child care services on CUNY campuses, [see the list linked here.](#)

# Immigrant and International Students

CUNY values the many contributions that our diverse immigrant and international students bring to our university. We also recognize the unique challenges facing each of these groups.

The more than 85,000 CUNY students who were born outside the mainland United States but now live here face an array of practical, bureaucratic, and legal challenges. While immigrant students who lack documentation or have DACA status the face the most formidable challenges, current federal policies as well as anti-immigrant prejudices that have been stoked by nationalist groups and some politicians can affect all foreign borne students and even those perceived to be immigrants.

International students as the United States makes multiple and frequent changes to the policies that directly affect the more than 9,000 international students that come to CUNY from more than 100 countries. **Life has been stressful for everyone these days but it has been especially unpredictable for international students who were faced with changing rules for student visas and in-classroom instruction that have that had implications for enrollment eligibility, travel, healthcare, work, and life in the U.S. One student explained, “I went back to my country. Now I have 12 hours difference with NY, that I have to stay awake from 1:00am to 4:00am for my courses.”**

Despite these obstacles, the mission of CUNY remains the same: to provide a high quality, accessible education to all New Yorkers, regardless of our background.

## Resources for Immigrant and Undocumented Students at CUNY

- **The CUNY Financial Aid Office** offers insight on what it means to be an undocumented student and how to support undocumented students at CUNY. [Link to it here.](#)
- **[CUNY Citizenship Now!](#)** provides free, high quality, and confidential immigration law services to help individuals and families on their path to U.S. citizenship. Students can get a free consultation with an attorney or paralegal. Call or text for remote help with your citizenship, green card renewal, work authorization, and fee waiver applications. Call: 646-664-9400, or Text: 929-334-3784. [@CUNYCitizenship](#) on Twitter, [Citizenship Now!](#) on Facebook
- **[The CUNY Clear Project](#)** at the **CUNY School of Law** offers free legal representation and support to Muslim and all other communities in the New York City area and beyond that are targeted by the government under the guise of national security and counterterrorism. [@CUNY\\_CLEAR](#)

- **The New York State Youth Leadership Council** is compiling this live document [of resources in NYC around COVID-19](#) support efforts. They are prioritizing undocumented students.
- **DREAM ACT:** Review your DREAM [ACT eligibility here, and more.](#)
- **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** Advocates for equality in education and much more. [Learn more on their website linked here.](#)
- **US White House:** [Click here for a list](#) of presidential actions from the White House.

[Visit here to find additional resources for international students](#), including a list of the international adviser at each CUNY campus.

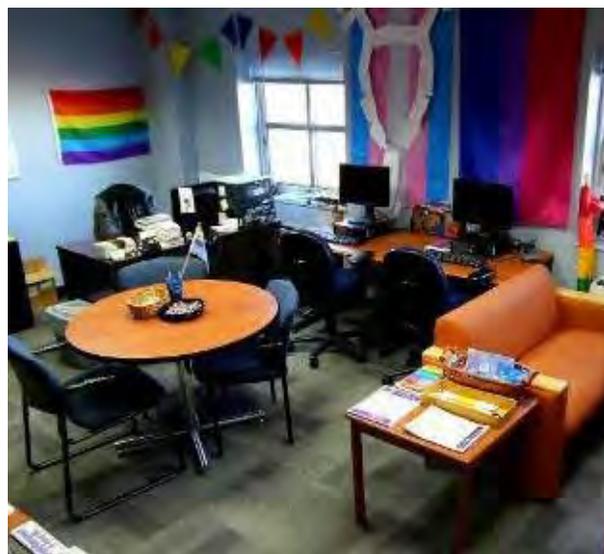
## LGBTQI+ Students

COVID-19 has increased all kinds of insecurities—housing, financial, food, for instance—for many students. **But we also need to recognize the particular challenges that the pandemic has posed for LGBTQI+ students.** Those reliant on campus housing have had to grapple with sudden dorm closures, while the transition to distance learning has meant the loss of physical spaces of belonging cultivated by LGBTQI+ student groups as well as LGBTQI+ research and resource centers. At the

same time, the sudden loss of a job, an inability to afford a doctor’s visit, and other barriers to care pose risks given the health disparities that disproportionately affect LGBTQI+ people.

Check out these articles from Boston University ([linked here](#)) and Ithaca College ([linked here](#)) to learn about how COVID-19 is affecting the LGBTQI+ college student community.

## CUNY and Community Resources for LGBTQI+ Students



*LGBTQ Resource Center at College of Staten Island*

[The NYC Unity Project](#) conducted a survey of NYC LGBTQ program and service providers to create an [up-to-date, comprehensive resource guide](#) on LGBTQ resources. This guide is organized by sections including [mental health](#), [physical health and wellness](#), [peer and community support](#), [food assistance](#), [legal help](#),

[housing and shelter](#) and [financial help](#). Each section provides a brief explanation of the services offered, as well as contact and website information.

- **CUNY campuses can also provide various degrees of support for LGBTQI+ students.** Some campuses have LGBTQI+ student groups, and research and resource centers including at [Brooklyn College](#), [Hunter College](#) and [City College](#). Check out your campus website to see what services your campus offers.
- CUNY Central has organized a resource page for LGBTQI+ students with information on CUNY policies and procedures, such as [policies on student requests for name and/or gender changes](#).
- **[LGBTQ National Hotline](#):** Anonymous and confidential hotline where callers can feel safe voicing issues and concerns that predominantly impact LGBTQ populations without fear of stigmatization. Call 888-843-4564 open Monday-Friday 4pm-midnight, Saturday noon-5pm or email: [help@LGBThotline.org](mailto:help@LGBThotline.org)

CUNY students who are homeless or forced to live in shelters report that they often feel invisible, struggling to get through each day but not easily finding the help they need at CUNY or elsewhere.



## Those Working While in School

Students who work while going to school --more than half of us who study at CUNY-- have to pay extra attention to balancing responsibilities and choosing priorities. Even before the pandemic, mixing work and school required extra time management, focus and sacrifice. Now, the many CUNY students who are essential workers at the front lines of this crisis, experience even more stress – and the anxiety and depression that this stress can trigger. In part this stress comes from having to put their own health and that of their families at risk because of their job. In part, as many health care and other essential workers report, taking care of or serving people who are sick, stressed out, or fearful every day puts its own burden on our emotional well-being. In the survey, working students reported difficulty keeping up with classwork and balancing all of their responsibilities. Schedules changing at work, difficult professors and uncertainty of the future created overlapping obligations and new stressors.

### SOME OF THEIR COMMENTS ON OUR SURVEY EXPLAIN THESE EXPERIENCES:

“Professors not being understanding, it really bothered me that my professor **didn’t** care that I am an essential worker, he also **won’t** give me extended time to complete missing **assignments**”

“**Class** work is more difficult to keep up with. Professors are using different platforms to teach (Slack) which makes it more complicated then needed. I am also an essential worker and I must go to work especially at a time where some family members are not. Some professors are still sticking to old school schedules as if nothing has changed. Many have added more work during this time and are very unclear as to what is happening in the class.”

“(I was) going from part-time work to full time being an essential worker and co-workers calling out.”

“I am stressed to complete my assignments and attend zoom classes along with teaching my children. I am an essential worker that is stressed at work and having to work at home most **days.**”

“(I was) an essential worker so I was never home, and my professors **didn’t** understand why I **couldn’t** complete assignments.”

## Resources for Students who are Working

- For helpful tips, visit [The Busy Student's Guide to Balancing Work and College](#).
- [For the Frontlines](#): Free crisis counseling text line for health care professionals and essential workers. Text "FRONTLINE" to 741741.



# Students with Disabilities

CUNY strives to ensure equal access and opportunity for students with disabilities through programs which support the academic success and personal development of students with disabilities. Each CUNY campus features an Office of Disability Services, managed by a director who coordinates the provision of reasonable accommodations and support services for students with disabilities. **Students' needs for reasonable accommodations and support services are verified by these offices. They also provide counseling and referrals, and arrange crucial auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology services, note takers, readers, sign language interpreter services, distance learning networks, priority registration, and alternative testing arrangements.**

The changes imposed by Covid-19 challenge students with disability in some distinct ways. Some may have trouble using online learning systems; others may have trouble getting around during the pandemic; and still others may miss the support they got from peers and friends of staff on campus.

This Fall, CUNY Campus Disability Services Centers are operating remotely until further notice for the safety of staff and students. For general inquiries, guidelines on remote procedures, and to submit documentation and accommodation requests, you can contact your campus office via email or phone. Campus contact information is listed at the [Directory to Campus Disability Services Centers](#).

Here are a few practical things people with disabilities can do to cope with the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Plan what you will do if you or your direct support provider gets sick. Create a contact list of family, friends, neighbors, and local service agencies that can provide support in case you or your direct support provider becomes ill or unavailable.
- Plan at least two ways of communicating from home and work that can be used rapidly in an emergency (e.g., landline phone, cell phone, text-messaging, email). Write down this information and keep it with you.
- Have enough household items and groceries so that you will be comfortable staying home for a few weeks, at least a 30-day supply of over the counter and prescription medicines and any medical equipment or supplies that you might need. Make a photocopy of prescriptions, as this may help in obtaining medications in an emergency situation.

**More resources for students with disabilities:**

- **CUNY Disability Services:** For information and resources for all CUNY students with disabilities, including CUNY programs and a reasonable accommodations guide, [visit here](#).
- **Economic and employment resources** for CUNY students with disabilities can be [found here](#).
- More tips from the CDC Find more information and tips for people with [disabilities here](#).

# OVERCOMING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Like others in this country, CUNY students experience old and new forms of systemic and other forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. The police murders of George Floyd and other African-Americans and the upswelling of the protests against these acts intersect with COVID-19 and other recent events to further challenge well-being, mental health, and academic success.

**This section of the Guide seeks to provide support and guidance for coping with these forces but also to reinforce the courage and determination of many CUNY students to join these mobilizations. It also seeks to understand the similarities and differences among the experiences of Black, Latinx, Asian American, female, recent immigrants and other groups that experience institutional and interpersonal discrimination and prejudice.** In particular, it seeks to help CUNY students find the support, resources and they need to cope with, respond to and ultimately dismantle these negative forces.

Racism and discrimination have long been an ugly part of our society. We've seen it in action in everyday life and many of us may have been victims of racist and discriminatory rhetoric both on and off campus. In recent years, perhaps attributable to the beliefs and rhetoric of political leaders, many have experienced increased discrimination – racism and xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination against LGBTQIA+ populations, and sexism.

And the pandemic has only exacerbated these issues. We've seen a rise in discrimination against Asian Americans who many, including our government leaders, wrongfully blame for COVID-19. And we've also now seen how disproportionately COVID-19 affects Black and Latinx populations – much of which can be attributed to the effects of systemic racism pre-COVID, like limited access to care and increased comorbidities.

**Similarly, individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ have experienced increased discrimination in recent years, including violent acts that have often resulted in death. In 2019, advocates reported 26 deaths of transgender or gender non-conforming people in the country, many of whom were Black transgender women.** And in 2020, we've already seen 27 transgender or gender non-conforming people killed, and this is likely an underestimate as many of these crimes go unreported or misreported. If you or someone you know is struggling and needs help, please consider using the hotline listed below and [visit the LGBTQIA+ section of this guide.](#)



**LGBTQ National Hotline:** Anonymous and confidential hotline where callers can feel safe voicing issues and concerns that predominantly impact LGBTQ populations without fear of stigmatization. Call 888-843-4564 open Monday-Friday 4pm-midnight, Saturday noon-5pm or email: [help@LGBThotline.org](mailto:help@LGBThotline.org)

Those who identify as women have also experienced increased stress due to sexism. From policies regulating women's bodies to unfounded judgements of women's capabilities, women have an uphill battle ahead. **A 2020 UN report found that 91% of men and 86% of women had at least one bias against gender equality across areas including, politics, economics, education, women's reproductive rights, and intimate partner violence.**

On top of all of this, recent events, such as the murder of George Floyd, have brought about a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and with it, racist opposition. We know how interrelated the health and social issues we've discussed in this guide are (e.g., mental health, educational success, parenting, etc.). And we know how taxing these issues can be in addition to the pressures of excelling in school, work, and home life. **It is our hope that this guide will provide you with resources and methods of combatting some of the detrimental effects of living in this time.**

## Other discrimination resources

Visit [NYC's Office for Prevention of Hate Crimes COVID-19](#) site for resources and phone number to report hate crimes, harassment or discrimination.

To report discrimination online, [please visit NYC's Commission on Human Rights website](#).

[Visit here](#) for information on how to report hate and bias incidents related to COVID-19 in NYC, and access victim and mental health support.

For more information on NYC's Commission on Human Rights resources on COVID-19-related discrimination, [please visit here](#).

For outreach videos in Mandarin, Cantonese, Fujianese, Tagalog, and Korean regarding increased discrimination, [please visit here](#).

**In addition to the above, we understand that the increased public attention on racism and police violence in our society may trigger stress, anxiety and anger, feelings that can be difficult to cope with.** We urge you to review the [mental health section of this guide](#) and contact a mental health professional should you experience symptoms that bother you for more than a week or two. At the same time, for some people these experiences provide a motivation to take action for change, [a topic discussed in the section on advocacy](#). Another useful resource is:

- [The Steve Fund](#): Helping students of color who are feeling depressed/stressed/overwhelmed. Text "STEVE" to 741741 to connect with a live crisis counselor 24/7 and email [info@stevefund.org](mailto:info@stevefund.org) with any questions.

Lastly, we at Healthy CUNY want you to know that we fully support BLM. However, we also understand that participation, whether physical or remote, may come with its own risks. To help we've provided some tips on some prevalent issues related to the BLM movement and police violence below.

While we know that the need to provide these kinds of tips should not exist, we also understand the need to be informed given the realities surrounding policing in today's society.

# Be Aware of Your Rights

First and foremost, it is important that we are all aware of our rights:

- **You have the right to remain silent** – If you wish to exercise this right, say so out loud
- **You do not have to consent to a search of yourself or your belongings**, but police may pat down your clothing if they suspect a weapon
- **If you are arrested, you have the right to a government-appointed lawyer** if you cannot afford one
- **You do not have to answer questions about where you were born**, whether you are a U.S. citizen, or how you entered the country

What do I do if I'm stopped by police?

- **Stay calm** and be polite
- **If they ask you to back up, comply**
- **Do not run, resist, or obstruct the officers**
- **Always make sure your hands are visible** and do not reach for anything without asking or notifying the officer(s)

[For more information on what to do if you are stopped by police, arrested, or witness police brutality, please visit ACLU.org.](#) For additional tips on protesting, [see here.](#)

## Students with Former Criminal Justice Involvement

We at Healthy CUNY know that having former or current involvement with the criminal justice system can make navigating the educational system and completing a degree or program more difficult. [There are several initiatives and programs aimed at helping individuals affected by the criminal justice system, including many at CUNY listed here.](#)



# ADVOCACY FOR SURVIVING AND THRIVING AT CUNY: Making Some “Good Trouble”



*Supporters of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program*

The late civil rights activist and Congressman from Georgia John Lewis encouraged people in this country, especially young people, to make some “good trouble” that made our country and our world a better place. This section of the Guide provides some information on making “good trouble” at CUNY that will make our university a better, healthier, more equitable institution.

CUNY leaders want to help students meet their needs during the pandemic and to overcome all the other challenges facing CUNY, New York City, the nation, and the world. The faculty and staff on your campus, from the professors teaching your class to the academic advisers to the mental health professionals in the Counseling Center, are also committed to helping you get the information, services and support you need to survive and thrive. **But one person knows best what you need to survive and thrive, one person knows best exactly how to help you, and one person has the lifetime commitment to helping you succeed. That person is you.**

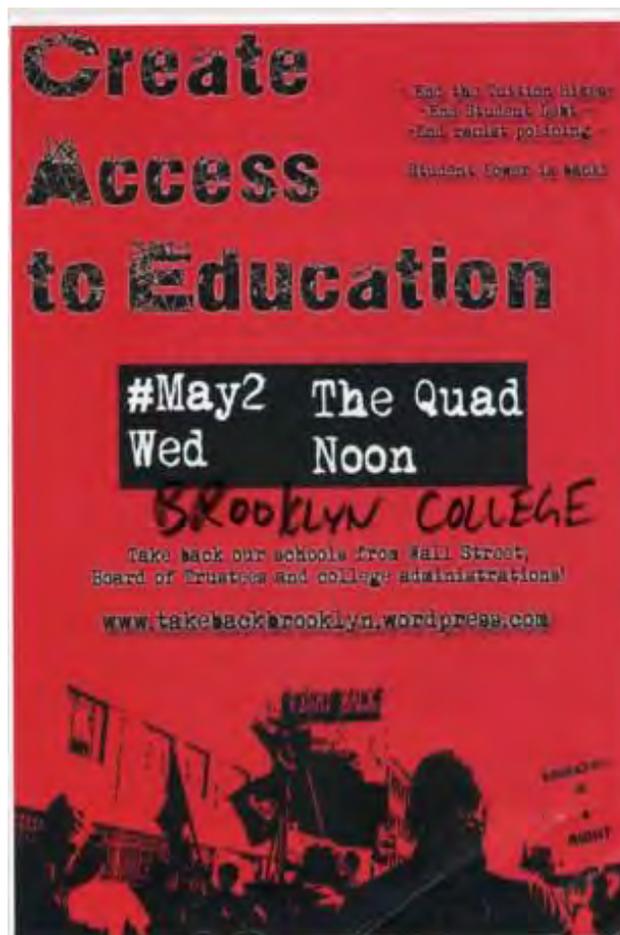
**This section provides information and resources that will help you to become your own advocate and to advocate for making CUNY a place where you and students like you can survive and succeed.**

An advocate speaks on behalf of those who feel they are not being heard or taken seriously. Advocates make the case for services, support, and respect for those who may lack one of these vital resources. By becoming an effective advocate for yourself and your peers, you achieve self-sufficiency and dignity, you increase your chances of getting what you, your peers, your family and your community need to succeed,

and you acquire skills that will serve you well throughout your life. [Watch a two minute video](#) in which a few students from around the country explain why they became advocates.

## A CUNY History of Advocacy

CUNY students have played a key role in advocating for programs and policies that better meet the needs of students, make CUNY and New York City a fairer and more equitable place, and improve conditions on campuses. **From the 1960s to today, CUNY students have organized, demonstrated, and demanded free tuition, open admissions, and more child care on campus; they have fought against tuition hikes and budget cuts. CUNY students have been leaders in movements to protect the rights of LGBTQI, immigrant, Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, those on public assistance, and others.** In many cases, students who had themselves experienced problems in pursuing their education organized to demand their own rights and the services they needed and also to respect the rights and meet the needs of other students facing similar problems.



*A poster for a 2011 demonstration at Brooklyn College. [Credit](#)*

## A CUNY Student Advocate Describes Her Experience

“As part of a Fellowship at my campus, I worked with 3 undergraduates and staff from the Student Affairs office during Spring 2020 to present a proposal on reducing food insecurity on our campus. Our goals, informed by our survey of the current state of food security efforts on my campus, were three-fold: to increase the visibility of existing food security initiatives; to combat food waste on and off-campus; and to lay the groundwork for more sustainable, long-term initiatives.

To identify strategies to improve campus food security, we coupled our campus scan with research on what other large, urban universities were doing to address student food insecurity. We met regularly with Student Affairs staff, relying on their campus-specific expertise to help us flesh out and refine our ideas. With their support, we were able to propose free and low-cost initiatives for each of our goals and presented our work to the Vice President of Student Affairs.



*City University students at Federal Hall in 1989 protesting a proposed tuition increase. [Credit](#)*

## What can student advocates at CUNY do to better their own and **others'** lives?

No single job description fits the role of every student advocate. But these are some common actions advocates engage in:

1. **Learn about the systems**, CUNY and other, that make it hard to meet needs and identify strategies to fix these problems.
2. **Find someone**—a staff person in your campus's Office of Student Affairs responsible for responding to student complaints –and explain your problem and ask for help in finding a solution.
3. **Identify others who share your problem** and bring them together to find common solutions and consider forming an ongoing group. You can also find individuals who can help plan—a faculty member, an experienced activist, an older sibling, or some of your classmates.
4. **Learn all you can about a specific issue** such as reducing food insecurity, getting treatment for depression or anxiety, finding Covid-related health services, and then educating others on your campus about what you have learned.
5. **Develop an educational campaign** on your campus that will help students find needed services such as emergency food, how to enroll in SNAP, where to get contraceptive , abortion and other sexual health services.
6. **Create safe spaces—virtual or physical** -- where students can meet, share concerns, and develop solutions for the problems they face.
7. **Run for student office** through the University Student Senate (see below for more).
8. **Vote in city, state and national elections** and encourage friends, family and co-workers to vote as well

## How Can I Become an Effective Advocate?

Successful advocates have learned that you make the road to advocacy by walking the advocacy path. Start by trying out some of the activities listed above. Some departments – including human services, community health, social work, and sociology--offer courses in advocacy. Check with your academic adviser to find options. In addition, the organizations listed below can provide training or support for students who want to be advocates.

## Why is Voting an Important Tool for Advocates?

This November 3, the nation had one of the most important elections in its history. The winners will now shape the future of our planet, country, higher education system, city, and CUNY. Whether you believe that voting, activism, or some other political strategy is more or less important, your vote can make the difference about who decides the future of our lives. To honor all those who have fought and died to win the right to vote, CUNY students can:

- Vote on Election Day or before.
- Sign up to be a poll worker. The NYC Board of Elections needs both volunteer and paid workers in the period leading up to an election. [For more information visit here.](#)

- Urge your family, friends, classmates, and co-workers to vote.
- Familiarize yourselves with the key issues in this election and help to educate others about these issues.
- Volunteer for one of the many organizations involved in voter registration, voter education and get out the vote campaigns.
- In Fall 2021, New York City will elect a new Mayor and City Council. CUNY students should play an active role in ensuring that all candidates express their opinions on the role of public higher education in our city.

For more information, visit:

- [CUNY VOTES](#) is a comprehensive, non-partisan initiative whose mission is to promote student voter registration, voter participation and voter awareness through campus-based activities, external partnerships and University- wide campaigns. Get help in registering to vote, filing an absentee ballot, and finding your voting place.
- [VOTE411](#), a project of the nonpartisan League of Women Voters, supported 10 million people in the United States through Election Day on November 3, with English and Spanish language hotlines. Having the resources in Spanish makes the information even more accessible. With so many changes to election information this cycle, VOTE411 is a useful tool to keep voters updated on the changes and to counter misinformation about elections. In the coming weeks, VOTE411 will have alerts in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) with any late changes that impact voters.



*CUNY Student Government leadership encouraged their classmates to vote in the 2020 presidential election*

## Some Organizations That Support Advocacy for CUNY Students

**CUNY University Student Senate** is the official student government at CUNY. It seeks to preserve the accessibility and affordability of higher education within CUNY. USS was created based on the notion that students must be linked school by school to have an effective voice in shaping university, city, state, and federal policy. USS includes student-delegates elected from each campus to represent the needs of their individual school. [For more information visit here.](#)



*CUNY USS and Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, a CUNY graduate, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer rally in 2019 to demand proper funding for CUNY. [Credit](#)*

**Young Invincibles** was founded in 2009 to give young people a voice in the national debate about health care reform. YI is now a national organization that takes on issues related to health care, higher education, and economic security. It aims to expand economic opportunity for young people ages 18 to 34 and make sure that their perspective is heard wherever decisions about their collective future are being made. At CUNY, Young Invincibles has worked on improving access to mental health care, trained students to be advocates, and worked to prevent cuts in the CUNY budget. To find out more, [visit here.](#)

**The CUNY Rising Alliance** is a broad coalition of student, labor and community groups advocating for a free and high-quality higher education. On May 8, 2020, CUNY students organized by the Alliance were joined by New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein to oppose new cuts to CUNY, demand a tuition freeze and call for increased taxes on the rich. Despite years of underfunding, CUNY is facing new cuts of up to \$110 million from the State and City.



*A CUNY Rising Alliance demonstration in 2016 to urge against cuts in CUNY's state budget. [Credit](#)*

**New York Public Interest Research Group** is a statewide student-directed, non-partisan, not for profit political organization founded in 1973. NYPIRG is directed by a student-run and student-elected Board of Directors that approves any issue that NYPIRG works on. NYPIRG is active in CUNY and SUNY and is addressing such issues as food insecurity, high prices of textbooks, and the COVID-19 pandemic. NYPIRG has contacts on nine CUNY campuses. To find the telephone number and website of the NYPIRG on your campus, [visit here](#).

## How do I decide what to advocate on?

Only your imagination is your limit. In the last few years CUNY students have joined Black Lives Matter, the Sunrise Movement fighting climate change, the Dreamers fighting for immigration reform, student groups opposing tuition hikes and added student fees. They have registered voters, combatted food insecurity, fought against discrimination against LGBTQI students, students with disabilities, and organized to support people coming out of incarceration or foster care. You can find a list and contacts for other recent national student advocacy campaigns [here](#).

Not all advocacy gets its supporters in trouble, as John Lewis would no doubt tell us. But it may be true if we look at the history of advocacy in the United States –and at CUNY—advocacy that leads to “good trouble” pressure on elected officials and university leaders encourage them to listen to voices they might not have heard, make changes which may be opposed by powerful special interests, and make CUNY a more equitable institution, those changes are most likely to come from the “good trouble” John Lewis described.

# SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDE

These supplementary sections include additional resources and link to and from the main sections of the guide.

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## Supplement #1: Writing a Note to Your Professor

Subject: **[Class and Section Number]**, Facilitating Online Study Groups

Dear Professor **[Last Name]**,

I hope you are well. I am interested in forming an online study group for the material covered in your class, and I was wondering if you could reserve some time during or after our next class to facilitate the exchange of contact information for students who would be interested.

If time does not permit during your class, I was wondering if you would be willing to facilitate this online instead, such as through the Blackboard discussion forum.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back.

Best,

**[Name]**

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Subject: **[Class and Section Number]**, Scheduling Call to Discuss Concerns About XXX

Dear Professor **[Last Name]**,

I hope you are well. I was wondering if we could schedule a 1-on-1 video call sometime during **[period of time, e.g., the next two weeks]** to discuss **[concerns]**. If **[period of time]** does not work, please let me know what times work best for you.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back.

Regards,

**[Name]**

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Subject: [Class and Section Number], Concerns About XXX

Dear Professor [Last Name],

I hope you are well.

Because the semester has just started, I wanted to be proactive and inform you of some concerns I have about [pre-existing issues: e.g., financial problems, caretaking responsibilities] that may affect my [aspect(s) of academics: e.g., ability to participate/engage in the classroom/hand in coursework on time/etc.]. [If you are able, a brief explanation of how you anticipate pre-existing issues might affect your academics]

It is important to me that [your goals for the class: e.g., I am able to learn, I am able to pass, I am able to do well] in your class. I wanted to let you know where I am to see if there are any accommodations that could be made.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back.

Regards,

[Your Name]

## Supplement #2

### [Zoom Tips: Virtual Background](#)

Before a call...

- **Sign into Zoom.**
- **From your toolbar, navigate to Preferences.** A new box titled Settings should open with a list of buttons to the left.
- **Click on the Virtual Background button.** You can choose from backgrounds provided by Zoom, or you can add your own background by pressing the plus symbol.

During a call...

- **Locate the Stop Video** button on the bottom left of the meeting screen.
- **Click on the “^” symbol** and select Choose Virtual Background. A new box titled Settings should open with the Virtual Background screen automatically selected.
- **You can choose from backgrounds** provided by Zoom, or you can add your own background by pressing the plus symbol.

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## Zoom Tips

Exiting a call will NOT reset your virtual background. If you use a virtual background during one call and then join a different call a few hours later, you will have the same virtual background that you used during the first call.

To remove your virtual background, locate the Settings box and the Virtual Background using the steps to the left; select the box that says “None.”

Don't forget to MUTE if you are not speaking to avoid interrupting someone else with any background noise; this especially goes for big classrooms but also small meetings if it's very noisy around you.

## [Zoom Tips: Study Groups](#)

### Before a call...

1. Sign into Zoom.
2. From your toolbar, navigate to **Preferences**. A new box titled **Settings** should open with a list of buttons to the left.
3. Click on the **Virtual Background** button. You can choose from backgrounds provided by Zoom, or you can add your own background by pressing the plus symbol.

### During a call...

1. Locate the **Stop Video** button on the bottom left of the meeting screen.
2. Click on the “^” symbol and select **Choose Virtual Background**. A new box titled **Settings** should open with the **Virtual Background** screen automatically selected.
3. You can choose from backgrounds provided by Zoom, or you can add your own background by pressing the plus symbol.

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### [Supplement #3 Other Forms of Therapy](#)

- **Pet/Animal Therapy**
  - Animals can be wonderful in helping relive stress and anxiety and increase self-worth.
- **Art Therapy**
  - Used to improve sensory and motor skills to allow for better self-esteem.
- **Music Therapy**
  - Creating and listening to music can be very therapeutic and assist with expressing and engaging with emotions that are difficult to articulate.
  - There are many more that could be added here, and we should also mention church-based counseling here

### [Supplement#4 List of Mental Health Counseling Resources](#)

- [NYC Well](#) - Provides free, confidential mental health support. Speak to a counselor via phone, text or chat and access mental health and substance abuse services available in over 200 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Call 1-888-692-9355, text “WELL” to 65173 or go to their website to chat live with a mental health professional. They also provide a free [digital mental health resource guide](#) for the duration of COVID-19.
- [Campus Counseling Centers](#) - CUNY campus counseling centers exist to support the academic success of students and the university by providing high quality counseling and mental health services to students along with consultative services for campus faculty and staff.
- [New York State’s Office of Mental Health Emotional Support Line](#) - Provides free, confidential crisis support for people experiencing anxiety due to COVID-19.
- [Mental Health Clinic Guide](#) - Provides list of Mental Health clinics in 4 boroughs along with a [map](#).
- [Queens Long Island Community Services](#) (no direct website available) - Psychotherapy services by phone or video conference. Call: 516-547-4318 or 718-461-6393 (local) Email: qlicscounseling@gmail.com
- [Connect to support](#) - For essential workers and their families without health insurance, NYC based network of 3000+ mental health professionals, life coaches, spiritual care providers, organizers, and crisis line operators free to offer support in this time of need. Submit a request form on their website.
- [Richmond University Medical Center Crisis Hotline, Staten Island](#) (no direct website available) - Call 718-818-5766 (local)
- [University of Nevada, Reno - Relaxation Room](#) - Counseling services available remotely for students call 775-784-4648
- [Mayor’s Office for ThriveNYC](#) - Mental Health, counseling and online resources.
- [Talkspace](#) - Find the right therapist for you in this network of thousands of licensed therapists. Start with an assessment where a matching therapist will identify your needs. Next choose a payment plan, minimum \$65/wk, but covered by insurance. Third, find the right therapist for you. And finally, begin talking to your therapist of choice. You can message them at any time via text, audio message, send pictures, videos, etc.

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## [Supplement #5 Quitting Smoking or Vaping Resources](#)

**If you smoke or vape, now is a great time to quit!** Smoking and vaping make most underlying medical conditions worse and increase your risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. For coaching, tips and tools, call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com). The Quitline also provides free starter kits of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to eligible New Yorkers. Services are free and confidential.

## [Supplement #6 Tips for Staying Healthy If You Have a Chronic Health Condition](#)

### High Blood Pressure, diabetes, and obesity

Having a heart condition, hypertension (high blood pressure), or having a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 30 may increase your risk of severe illness from COVID-19. In addition to avoiding COVID-19 infection, it is important to always take any medications exactly as prescribed and keep an extra 30-day supply on hand, so you don't run out. If you are diabetic it is important to maintain a healthy weight and blood sugar levels to lower your risk of COVID-19.

- **The American Heart Association** is a great place to go for [tips on how to manage your blood pressure during COVID-19](#), including stress reduction and tips for a healthy diet. Calculate your BMI [here](#).
- **American Diabetes Association** website is a great resource for information on how COVID-19 impacts people with diabetes and for tips on how to manage diabetes and stay healthy. Visit [here](#).

### Asthma/Upper Respiratory Issues

People with moderate to severe asthma may be at higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19. COVID-19 can affect your respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), cause an asthma attack, and possibly lead to pneumonia and acute respiratory disease.

- **Follow CDC guidelines** [here](#) to avoid contracting or spreading COVID-19.
- **Avoid common asthma triggers.** For a list of common asthma triggers click [here](#).
- **Have an asthma Action Plan!** Keep your asthma under control by following your asthma action plan. Learn more [here](#).
- Make sure you have a **30-day supply** of your current asthma medications on hand and don't stop taking the medications without talking to your health care provider.
- Watch this [video](#) from the CDC on **how to use your asthma inhaler** if you need a refresher.
- **In an emergency dial 911.**

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## [Supplement #7 More Resources on Health Care](#)

### [How to Safely Go to the Doctor During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

- **Men's Health** and COVID-19. [Articles about how to stay safe from coronavirus especially for men.](#)
- **Women's Health** and COVID-19 [Don't Postpone These Types of Preventive Care Due to Coronavirus -Learn which appointments are essential and which ones can wait.](#)
- **LGBTQ Coronavirus Resources – NYC Unity Project**

## [Supplement #8 Getting Help in Finding Documents for SNAP Applications](#)

### [For Help with SNAP Applications](#)

Please call before you make a visit. You can also find an explanation of how to replace a lost EBT card in the appendix.

#### **Manhattan:**

Community Kitchen of West Harlem

252 West 116<sup>th</sup> Street, NY, NY 10026

212-894-8060

Monday-Friday (9:00 AM- 4:00 PM)

#### **Bronx:**

Part Of The Solution (POTS)

2759 Webster Avenue, Bronx, NY 10458

718-220-4892 extension 101

#### **Queens:**

Urban Upbound of Long Island City

12-15 40<sup>th</sup> Ave, LIC, NY 11101

718-784-0877 ext. 318

Tues, Thursday and Friday (10:00 AM – 1:30 PM)

For more detailed information and additional locations, please go [here](#). Many Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance forms are available for the blind or visually impaired; for more information on alternative format forms, please see [here](#).

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#### If You Lost Your Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Card:

You can call the Toll-Free Customer Service at 1-888-328-6399, a replacement card will be mailed to your address within 7 to 10 business days. You can also visit an Over the Counter site to get a replacement card the same day. You will need a valid photo ID to receive the card; see site locations below.

- 300 Canal Place, Bronx, NY 10451
- 12 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011
- 109 E 16<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10003

You can also access your account information [online](#). For more information on EBT Cards, please go [here](#).

### [Supplement #9 More on WIC](#)

WIC participants can visit a WIC clinic if they are well and their local WIC office is open. Please contact your local office to confirm if they are open. [Click here for locations.](#)

- All appointments, including recertification and applications can be completed by phone.
- Families have a 30-day date range to use their WIC benefits once they receive it.
- WIC cards for new applicants can be mailed or offered as a “drive up” option

You can check your WIC benefit balance by:

- Checking your last store receipt
- Calling the eWIC card customer service at 1-844-540-3031
- Checking WIC2GO mobile app ([iOS app](#), [Android app](#))
- Visiting the WIC Connect site located [here](#)

How to apply for WIC:

- Find your local WIC [agencies](#), or call the hotline 800-522-5006
- Bring identity documents, income and residency with you
- Call your local agency to make an appointment
- A nutrition assessment will be completed by a WIC staff member
- For more information, visit [here](#).

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## [Supplement #10 Additional information on Child care and Head Start services](#)

Free and low-cost services. Call to determine the appropriate child care program for your child.

### Resource links

- [NYC Child Care Resource & Referral Consortium](#)
- [Child Care Aware of America](#) Statewide child care resource links.
- [Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program](#)
- NYC [Child Development Support Coalition](#)

### Free Services for New Mothers and Families in Need

#### Services

- Home visits for pregnant and new moms [Health Resources and Services Administration](#)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)  
For information about WIC and WIC centers in NYC [click here](#)  
To find out if you qualify [click here](#)
- The [Newborn Home Visiting Program](#) (PDF) provides cribs and safe-sleep education to families in need. Find more on [infant Safety and Help for New Parents here](#).
- Catholic Charities [Find Help](#)

#### Baby Supplies

- [Little Essentials](#) list of community organizations that help families with essential items
- [National Diaper Bank Network](#) provides technical assistance and resources to help establish sustainable diaper banks and pantries in your own community.
- [Guide2Free](#) Free sample baby items for low income families

Also check your local food pantry as some carry baby supplies and personal care items. [Find a food pantry here](#)

### Early Intervention Service

Offers support for families with children with disabilities and developmental delays (from birth to 3 or 5 years of age). The programs listed are free and available to all New York families regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or immigration status.

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[NYC Early Intervention Information and Referral](#)

[NY State Early Intervention Information and Referral](#)

[Bright Start](#) School and home-based services for NYC children with developmental delays and disabilities

### [Care for disabled and special needs children](#)

- [IncludeNYC](#) provides remote educational workshops and direct one-on-one assistance for parents whose children are disabled.
- [Advocates for Children of New York](#) Serves New York City students from birth through age 26, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are struggling in school or experiencing school discrimination of any kind, including suspensions, inappropriate class placement, or denial of necessary services.

### [Autism information and resources](#)

- [National Autism Association](#)
- [Autism Speaks](#)

### [Mental health and learning disorders](#)

- The [Child mind institute](#) - provides information to enhance hard and soft skill-sets, as well as helpful tips for parents and children. Behavioral strategies for parents; Children's mental health (101); Raising self-sufficient students

### Tutoring services for children

- [Tutor Nirvana](#)- free online tutoring from children 1st-8th grade
- New York Public Library- Offers [free remote tutoring services](#) in grades K- 12
- Free bedtime stories for children online

Links: [www.bedtimeshortstories.com](http://www.bedtimeshortstories.com)  
[storiestogrowby.org/bedtime-stories-kids-free\\_](http://storiestogrowby.org/bedtime-stories-kids-free_)

### Availability of remote devices

Any child, from **3K to grade 12**, who attends a NYC public school, DOE Pre-K or 3K program (NYCEE/C/FCC) or other **qualified program** and who needs a device is eligible to receive a device for remote learning. [For more information and a device request form, click here.](#)

### Elderly care services

- [NYC Department for the Aging](#) Help with caregiving and other services for NYC's elderly
- [Citymeals on Wheels](#)- Delivers nutritious meals at home to elderly New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs.
- [New York for Seniors](#)- Free meal delivery service for NYC seniors.
- [Food Bank for NYC: Find a food pantry or soup kitchen](#)

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## Advocacy

- [Advocates for Children of New York](#)
- [Advocacy tools from the World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) provide tips for parents to constructively interact with their children during COVID-19 pandemic.
- [NYC Department for the Aging](#)

## [Supplement #11 Child care resources by campus](#)

Click [here](#) for a list of child care centers by campus

### School/Campus: [Bronx Community College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** The Early Childhood is temporarily not open for visitors.
  - **The Infant Toddler Program** offers children ages 12 months to 2.9 years; Preschool Program offers curriculum for children from 2.10 to 5 years of age; Pre-K for All is a free program for four-year-old children, September through June, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
  - **The Extended Day Program** offers both an early childhood and school age component for children ages 3-12.
  - **Integrated Program** is provided by an organization which provides speech, occupational, physical and behavioral modification therapy in an integrated special needs classroom.
  - **The Saturday Program** provides enriching and developmentally appropriate recreational programs for children 3-12 years of age.
  - **Holiday Camp** is available for children ages 5-12 years of age, when the Department of Education is closed during winter & spring breaks.
  - **Summer Camp** offers children ages 5-12 a fun-filled summer of activities, such as trips, swimming, gym, arts and crafts, theme days and more!
- **Daycare contact:** BCC Child Development Center is located at 2155 University Avenue, Bronx, NY 10453. Their phone number is 718-289-546. For immediate assistance please email them at [jessica.manboadh@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:jessica.manboadh@bcc.cuny.edu)
- **“The Family Resource Room”** (Sept 2019-): Created by a grant from CUNY of \$500,001 over the next three years as part of a CUNY pilot project intended to support student-parents. Services for student-parents include life coaching, social groups, parent cafés, workshops on child development and parenting and Zumba and Pilates classes during midterms for pressured student-parents.

### School/Campus: [Borough of Manhattan Community College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** The Early Childhood Center is only working remotely. Parents can call (212) 220-8251 and leave a message. The Center is providing support via our Facebook page, Zoom calls and parent teacher conference calls. Please follow their [Facebook page](#).
- Service provided for children between the ages 2-12 years old
- **Parent Club:** The Early Childhood Center Parents Club meets every Wednesday from 2 – 4 p.m. This is a great opportunity to share information with other parents over coffee/tea and snacks. Learn more about the [Parents Club](#).
- **Daycare contact:** BMCC Early Childhood Center is located at 199 chambers ST, Room N-375. Their phone number is (212) 220-8250.

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- Resource link: <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/student-affairs/ecc/>
- **Parent club**- advocates for student parents and provides workshops & support around the joys and challenges of parenting.

#### School/Campus: [Manhattan Community College](#)

- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Laguardia Community College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Service provided for 2-12 years old
- **Daycare contact:** Early Childhood Learning Center is located at 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Rm. MB09, LIC, NY 11101. Their phone number is 718-482-5295.
- **\$1.5 M federal Grant received:** “Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program”, (4 year, from U.S. Department of Education, Oct 2018)
  - **Web link:** [here](#)
- **Pathways to Success:** Part of the Division of Student Affairs, the program provides academic, emotional, social and financial support (including emergency baby and child supplies, Emergency child care assistance, Lactation rooms, Educational workshops, Vouchers for books or food)
  - **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Hostos Community College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Daycare: 2-9 yrs old; Toddler: approximately 2 to 3 years of age; Pre-school children are 3 to 5 years of age; After-school children range in ages from 4 to 9 years of age.
  - Federal grant subsidy assistance available (need to apply every semester)
- **Daycare contact:** Children’s Center located at 475 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10451. Their phone number is 718-518-4176.
- **Daycare link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Kingsborough Community College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Subsidized rates are available to all parents that qualify when funds are available.
- **Daycare contact:** Child Development Center is located at 2001 Oriental Blvd. Room V105, Brooklyn, NY 11235. Their phone number is 718-368-5868.
- **Women’s Center:** offers services related parenting
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Queensborough Community College](#)

- **Daycare:** No Daycare on campus. Provides referral to daycare if requested.

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#### School/Campus: [College of Staten Island](#)

- **Daycare:** During the COVID pandemic the Center continued the children's learning opportunities remotely. Developmentally appropriate activities for all ages served, were offered via daily Zoom meetings, weekly News-letters and Activity calendars for Family participation, posts on our private Facebook page; including story-time, music and movement and cooking activities, virtual visits from: the Children's Librarian from the New York Public Library, music and movement with our music Specialist, and visit from The Wildside Zoo. All fees are subsidized and are subject to change. Some additional assistance with child care fees is available to income-eligible families through the Federal Child Care Block Grant.
- **Daycare contact:** The Children's Center is located at 2800 Victory Boulevard – 2R-104, Staten Island, NY 10314. Their phone number is 718-982-3190.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [City College](#)

- **Daycare:** Starting Spring 2020
- Services available for 2 to 5 years old. After school program (after 4pm) for ages 5 to 12. years
- **Subsidized tuition** for qualifying CCNY students
- **Daycare contact:** BCC Child Development Center

#### School/Campus: [Brooklyn College](#)

- **Daycare:** Available
- **Daycare contact:** The Early Childhood Center Programs is located at Bedford Avenue & Avenue H; 1604 James Hall, Brooklyn, NY 11210. Their phone number is 718-951-5431.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Baruch College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Early Learning Center is operating remotely
  - Toddler Program (children 2 – 3 years of age)
  - Preschool Program (children 3 – 4 years of age)
  - Pre-K for All Program (children born in 2012—4 years of age)
- **Daycare contact:** Early Learning Center is located at 104 East 19th Street, 2nd Floor (between Park Avenue & Irving Place), New York, NY 10010. Their phone numbers are 212-387-1420 or 212-387-1421.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [Hunter College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** The Children's Learning Center is temporarily closed to visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they can assist you online. Fees range from \$1 (if subsidized) to over \$250 per week.
- **Daycare contact:** The Children's Learning Center is located at 695 Park Avenue, Rm. 207N, New York, NY 10065. Their phone number is 212-772-4066. **Please email them at [rletelli@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:rletelli@hunter.cuny.edu).**  
**Web link:** [here](#)

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School/Campus: **John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 4 months to 4 years old
- **Daycare contact:** Children's Center is located at 860 11th Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Their phone number is 212-237-8310.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

School/Campus: **Lehman College**

- **Daycare Information:** Available for 2.5-6 years old
- **Daycare contact:** Child Care Center is located at 250 Bedford Park Blvd. West Bldg T-3, Bronx, NY 10468. Their phone number is 718-960-8746.
- **Daycare link:** [here](#)
- **Pathways to Success:** Part of the Division of Student Affairs, the program provides academic, emotional, social and financial support (including emergency baby and child supplies, Emergency child care assistance, Lactation rooms, Educational workshops, Vouchers for books or food). Web link: [here](#)

School/Campus: **Macaulay Honors College**

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 6 months to 9 years old.
- **Daycare contact:** Children's Center

School/Campus: **Medgar Evers College**

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 6 months – 4 years old
- **Daycare contact:** Child Development Center is located at 1150 Carroll Street, Room C103, Brooklyn, NY 11225. Their phone number is 718-270-6018.

School/Campus: **New York City College of Technology**

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 2.5 - 5 years old
- **Daycare contact:** Child Care Center is located at 300 Jay Street Room G-309 and Room NG14, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Their phone number are 718-260-5191 or 718-260-5192.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

School/Campus: **Queens College**

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 2-5 yrs old
- **Daycare contact:** Child Development Center is located at 65-30 Kissena Blvd, Kiely Hall, Room 245, Flushing, NY 11367. Their phone number is 718-997-5885.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

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#### School/Campus: [York College](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Available See Laguardia Daycare Information
- **Daycare contact:** Child Care Center York College is located at 94 – 20 Guy Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11451. Their phone number is 718-262-2930.
- **A Parent/staff resource room:** Including a children’s book library, lounge area, work area with one computer and space for meetings. Parents are able to borrow children’s books, sit for a few minutes in the lounge area before picking up their child or attending classes. Small workshops or presentations on specific topics related to parenting, careers or academics are held in the room.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Serving children ages 2-5 years old with enrollment priority given to CCNY Students; CCNY Faculty/Staff; Community families
- **Daycare contact:** CCNY Child Development Center

#### School/Campus: [CUNY Graduate Center](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 18 months-9 years old. The cost of CUNY Childcare is subsidized through the State Higher Education budget. \* Subsidized daycare tuition rates are available to all parents that qualify when funds are available. Parents pay a reduced fee of \$43.00 per day.
- **Daycare contact:** The Child Development and Learning Center is located at 365 Fifth Avenue, Suite 7301-04, New York, NY 10016. Their phone number is 212-817-7032.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

#### School/Campus: [CUNY School of Law](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 2.5 years to 12 years old.
  - Preschool Program for children ages 2.5 to age 6, and an After-school Program for children ages 6 – 12. It offers programs during the academic calendar, as well as during both summer sessions.
- **Daycare contact:** The CUNY School of Law is in partnership with LaGuardia Community College Child Care program, therefore, the Law School student parents receive child care services at the Early Learning Center at LaGuardia. Their phone number is 718-482-5295.

#### School/Campus: [CUNY School of Professional Studies](#)

- **Daycare Information:** Service available for 6 months - 5yrs old; Scholarship for daycare fee available
- **Daycare contact:** Children’s Center

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## Other Parenting Programs

**Empowering Student Parents (ESP)**- Their Mission is to assist expectant and parenting teens and young adults to complete their secondary & post-secondary education, to maintain healthy lifestyles, be self-sufficient, and be nurturing parents. In recognizing the need for services on campus we have extended the program to include all students who are parenting or expecting regardless of age.

- **Affiliated Educational Institution:** Hostos Community College
- **Location:** Bronx, New York, NY United States
- **On Campus?** Yes
- **Program Affiliation:** Hostos Community College
- **Program Services Offered:** Coaching/Counseling/Mentoring, Referrals to Support Services
- **Eligibility:** All students who are parenting or expecting regardless of age.
- **Contact Information:** Christeen Francis, LCSW, CCM, CHFrancis@hostos.cuny.edu, (718) 518-4474.
- **Web link:** [here](#)

**The CUNY Fatherhood Academy (CFA):** A free program designed to promote responsible parenting and economic stability for unemployed and underemployed fathers ages 18-30. Program provides academic and personal support including TASC (High School Equivalency test) preparation classes, tutoring, individualized counseling, parenting seminars, MTA Metrocards, and job preparation.

- **School/Campus:** Laguardia Community College, Hostos Community College, and Kingsborough community college
- **Web link:** [here](#)

## [Supplement # 12: Resources for Immigrant and International Students](#)

### Additional resources for Immigrant and International Students

**CUNY Citizenship Now!** provides free, high quality, and confidential immigration law services to help individuals and families on their path to U.S. citizenship. CUNY Citizenship Now! attorneys and paralegals offer one-on-one consultations to assess students' eligibility for legal benefits and assist them in applying when qualified.

You can get help with your citizenship, green card, DACA, or TPS application. To reach CUNY Citizenship Now!

- Call at 646-664-9400, or
- Text us at 929-334-3784
- Visit our website at: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now/about/contact-2/>
- [Citizenship Now! On Facebook](#)
- [@CUNY Citizenship](#)

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### More Resources

At this time, a temporary emergency exception is allowing international students to maintain their student visa despite remote education. However, federal and school policies could change.

- Refer to your [campus International Student Advisor](#), or visit the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs [International Student and Scholar Services](#) webpage to obtain the most up to date guidance on matters related to visas, travel, insurance coverage, work permits, and important COVID-19 updates that effect international students.
- [Study in the States](#) is a US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) webpage that has numerous resources for international and Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) students, including important updates related to COVID-19.

For information related to travel restrictions for specific countries or port of entries, please check out:

- [U.S. Department of State](#) Bureau of Consular Affairs website
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#): Visit [DHS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.dhs.gov/coronavirus) to learn about arrival restrictions and where flights from specified countries are being redirected to due to COVID-19.

### Supplement # 13: Tips on protesting

#### Protesting tips

- Wear non-descript, comfortable clothing and shoes
- Bring energy snacks and a water bottle with a squirt top
- Bring enough cash to cover food, transportation, and a pay-phone
- Turn off facial recognition lock mechanism on your phone
- Do not post or tag pictures of protestors' faces
- Wear a mask to protect against COVID-19

For more tips on protesting, please visit [amnestyusa.org](https://www.amnestyusa.org)

### Supplement # 14: Resources for those with Criminal Justice Involvement

#### New York Based Reentry Programs

- [The Fortune Society](#) – A “one-stop-shop” of services including assistance with housing, education, health, mental health, employment, substance use, and food and nutrition.
  - Contact info:
    - » Phone: (212) 691-7554
    - Email: [info@fortunesociety.org](mailto:info@fortunesociety.org)
- [College & Community Fellowship](#) – A program that enables women with criminal justice involvement to earn their college degrees and attain employment
  - Contact info:
    - » Phone: (646) 380-7777
    - » Email: [info@collegeandcommunity.org](mailto:info@collegeandcommunity.org)

- [Exodus](#) – A program that offers a broad spectrum of services for adults and youth affected by the criminal justice system
  - Contact Info:
    - » Complete intake form located [here](#).
- [The Osborne Association](#) – A program that offers a multitude of services assisting in, employment, substance use, court advocacy, young adult services, and wellness and prevention
  - Contact Info:
    - » Complete intake form located [here](#)
    - » Bronx Phone: 718-707-2600
    - » Brooklyn Phone: 718-637-6560
    - » Manhattan Phone: 212-324-5577
    - » Contact info for assistance with specific programs located [here](#)

### CUNY Specific Initiatives

- [Freedom Prep](#) – A college transition program for court-involved youth age 16-24. providing a supported, structured on-ramp to college for formerly incarcerated and court-involved young people
  - Contact Info:
    - Stephanie Gilman Project Director  
Phone: 917-202-3856  
Email: [stephanie.gilman@cuny.edu](mailto:stephanie.gilman@cuny.edu)
- [John Jay Institute for Justice and Opportunity](#) (formerly known as the Prisoner Reentry Institute) - The Institute opens doors and eliminates barriers to success for people who have been involved in the criminal legal system by creating access to higher education and pathways to satisfying careers
  - General Information Contact Info:
    - Matt Bond
      - » Phone: 212-393-6434
      - » Email: [mbond@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:mbond@jjay.cuny.edu)
    - Please find contact info for specific initiatives [here](#)

### [General Financial Assistance](#)

- Please see this section of our guide for general information on job postings, emergency grants, and financial aid (LINK TO BASIC NEEDS SECTION)

### Tips for applying for jobs with a criminal record

- Do not disclose more than requested in the application process
- Confirm whether or not the company you are applying for is running a background check (most do)
- Run your own background check to familiarize yourself with what employers are seeing and ensure the information is accurate
- Have trusted individuals review your resume and/or submit to a resume writing service
- If a background check is mandatory, be proactive in discussing your background with your potential employer
- Be confident, focus on the lessons you've learned, and your commitment to improvement

Sources: [Monster](#), [Glassdoor](#)