

NOTICE OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF CLASS ACTION CONCERNING THE TIMELY PROCESSING OF FOOD STAMPS AND MEDICAID APPLICATIONS

Have you applied for or tried to apply for food stamps or Medicaid in Suffolk County at any time since August 22, 2005? If so, you should read this notice because it gives you information about the settlement of a lawsuit regarding the processing of applications.

Background

In 2008, a lawsuit was brought challenging the failure of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (“SCDSS”) to timely process applications for food stamps and Medicaid. Plaintiffs asked the court to certify the case as a class action on behalf of Suffolk County residents who, since August 22, 2005, have or will apply for or seek to apply for food stamps and/or Medicaid. The plaintiffs and SCDSS have reached agreement on how to settle the case for the class.

Proposed Settlement

You can see the entire proposed settlement at the web sites for the Empire Justice Center, www.empirejustice.org and the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, www.nclej.org, or by visiting the offices of the EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER, Touro Law Center, 225 Eastview Drive, Room 222, Central Islip, NY 11722.

The basic terms of the settlement are:

1. **Timely Processing.** SCDSS will process applications for food stamps and Medicaid and decide whether applicants are eligible within the number of days that the law requires. If SCDSS decides an applicant is not eligible, it will give the applicant information about how to request a fair hearing.
2. **Special Processing.** SCDSS will take steps to make sure that persons who receive expedited food stamps service will not go without food stamps while waiting for a decision on their eligibility for regular food stamps. SCDSS will expedite the processing of Medicaid applications for people who show they have emergency medical needs and provide prescription vouchers to those who are qualified.
3. **Reporting and Training.** SCDSS will provide monthly reports to the plaintiffs’ attorneys that show how long it is taking to process the applications. SCDSS will also review sample cases every three months to see if they were timely processed and report to plaintiffs’ attorneys. SCDSS will train its employees to make sure they know what to do.
4. **Enforcement.** If plaintiffs’ attorneys do not believe SCDSS has complied with the Settlement, they may ask the Court to take further action.

Right to Object

Any class member has the right to let the Court, the attorneys, and the parties know if he or she objects to the proposed settlement. The Court has set a hearing on June 8, 2009 at 3 pm at the following address:

U. S. District Court
Eastern District of New York
Long Island Courthouse
Courtroom 920
100 Federal Plaza
Central Islip, NY 11722-4438

You may also object to the settlement by writing a letter by June 3, 2009 to the Court at the address listed above.

You may also call the following attorneys, who have represented the plaintiffs in this lawsuit, if you have any questions:

Linda Hassberg
Empire Justice Center
Tel. (631) 650-2306

Laura Redman
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
Tel. (212) 633-6967