



We're Asking New Yorkers on Cash Assistance About Their Experience:

Here's What They've Shared

FPWA, in partnership with Cash Assistance advocates across the state, is working on a **Cash Assistance Story Collection Series** in which we are conducting interviews with recipients in New York to learn more about their experience with the program.

A recurring sentiment is that recipients are unable to meet even their most basic needs on Cash Assistance. **Many participants spoke about going without food or essentials for their children.**

Here's what they shared about how they get by in their own words:

“ I make sure [my son] eats foods, but I will skip meals sometimes...[I go without] hygiene products, and...basic self-care items I probably just do without...clothes too, I've just been making do with what I have.

When I first got [Cash Assistance], of course I had to be grateful for what I had, but it was just a very small amount. It was barely enough to get diapers...I don't have anything extra...I'm freaking out because Christmas is coming, and I'd love to be able to get [my son] more toys. Those are the things that I think about every day. ”

— *This participant is a 44-year-old mom who is the full-time caretaker for her son, who has a disability. She began receiving Cash Assistance after her son was born to help cover their basic needs.*

“ In total, [Cash Assistance] would be about \$300 a month, but that could barely get you a metro card... even with food stamps ...it doesn't cover the whole month. I can't survive off that. ”

— *This participant is a 28-year-old mom, who is caring for her 3-year-old daughter who was diagnosed with autism.*

“ I can't even afford to buy myself a pair of sneakers...my doctor felt so bad for me that he gave a gift card to be able to buy something...I have 3 children, and 5 grandchildren. And I'm trying to help them out as well. ”

— *This participant is a 57-year-old parent of three adult children, who struggles with some health conditions that limit her ability to work.*

“ [Trying to get by] is miserable...I don't know how I'm doing it. I don't know how to survive. I try to stretch it. By the end of the month, we're just clinging there, just hanging until [the benefits come]. The kids are growing, they're hungry...they have nothing, and they want [food]...It's really hard.

[My kids'] school has uniforms...it says the school should provide, but the school says no...And the kids don't want to show up to school looking different than anyone...they want to look equal. So, I have to spend cash assistance for uniforms, and it's really expensive...and I have to spend money [on metro cards] for the three of us. So I couldn't spend it on anything else...I'm not asking for anything extra. Its' just necessary, every tasks. ”

— *This participant is a 53-year-old mom of two teenage girls. She is a domestic violence survivor and is living in an emergency shelter. She is unable to work because of her immigration status and she is ineligible for Cash Assistance, but she receives it for her kids, which she uses to help meet their basic needs.*

“ The amount that they were giving [in Cash Assistance], it wasn't even enough to pay for Pampers and laundry.

[When I got kicked off benefits], I ended up going to re-apply...I don't even know [how I paid for things I needed on a day-to-day basis]. I think I went to food pantries. I really had no help...I would try to put together a little something [for my kids to eat], even if it was rice and beans...They never went without eating. I did, but they didn't. But that was a really rough time. ”

— *This participant is a 49-year-old mom who has six children, three of whom are under 18 and living with her, one of whom has autism. The participant is now working full-time as a case manager at a non-profit and no longer qualifies for Cash Assistance, but still struggles to make ends meet.*

It's clear that Cash Assistance, at its current level, is inadequate and does not provide enough for New Yorkers to meet their basic needs.

To learn more and take action, visit our coalition page at fpwa.org/get-involved

A comprehensive report with the findings from this project will be released by FPWA later this year. For more information, contact FPWA Policy Analyst, Julia Casey, at jcasey@fpwa.org

“ What are you going to do with \$20 [biweekly]? Especially when you are homeless, and you don't have much of anything. I needed basic things, and I couldn't afford it.

My biggest worry is food, because even with food stamps, everything is just costing more and more. And even with careful budgeting, I still don't have enough at the end of the month... Sometimes if I can't eat, I'll just not eat that day.

[A higher cash assistance amount] would definitely help with bills. It would definitely help with...basic essentials. Then with whatever is left over, I could save it...that way, if there is an emergency, it's there. ”

— *This participant is a 27-year old man with no children. Formerly homeless and currently struggling with PTSD and depression, he receives Cash Assistance to help meet basic needs.*

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