



Portage County Job & Family Services — Programs, Phone Numbers & Online Help

Your County Office, Its Programs, and the Online Tools

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1782** —————

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. Portage County Job & Family Services, on the second floor at 449 South Meridian Street in Ravenna, is your local office for food assistance, Medicaid, cash help, and child care aid. You can apply, renew, and report changes online at the state website benefits.ohio.gov, and your Portage County caseworker handles the file behind the scenes. For questions about your case, call Public Assistance at (330) 297-3750; for statewide online help, call 1-844-640-6446. Other needs have their own lines — rides to medical appointments, child support, and jobs and training each have a number in this guide. The office is open weekdays, and you can always go in person. If any of this feels tangled, that is exactly the kind of thing I help neighbors with, and you can call me.

1. What Portage County JFS Does

Your local office for food, health, and family help.

Portage County Job & Family Services, often shortened to JFS or DJFS, is the county office that connects local families with the state's safety-net programs. It is where the paperwork for food assistance, Medicaid, cash help, and child care aid is received, reviewed, and decided for people who live in Portage County.

Think of it as the local front door to programs that the State of Ohio funds. The rules and most of the money come from the state and federal government, but a caseworker right here in the county reviews your situation and manages your file. That is why you apply through a statewide website yet still deal with a local office for your particular case.

- Food assistance, often called SNAP.
- Medicaid, which is health coverage.
- Cash assistance for families who qualify.
- Help paying for child care.
- Rides to medical appointments and emergency help in a crisis.

GOOD TO KNOW

This guide is about the county office and its programs. A separate guide walks through the online application at benefits.ohio.gov step by step, so here I focus on who does what and which number to call.

2. The Office in Ravenna

Where to go and when it is open.

The main Public Assistance office is in Ravenna, the county seat. You will find it on the second floor of the county administration building at 449 South Meridian Street, Ravenna, Ohio 44266. It is the same building that houses several other county offices, so look for the Job & Family Services signs once inside.

The office keeps regular weekday hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon, and is closed on the major holidays. If you would rather handle things in person than online, you are always welcome to walk in during those hours.

- Address: 449 S. Meridian St., second floor, Ravenna, Ohio 44266.
- Open weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Closed on major holidays.
- Public Assistance main line: (330) 297-3750.

TIP

If parking or stairs are a concern, call ahead at (330) 297-3750 and ask about the nearest accessible entrance and elevator. The staff would much rather you ask than struggle on arrival.

3. The Numbers at a Glance

One short list of who to call for what.

Different needs have different phone numbers, and calling the right one saves you from being transferred around. Keep this short list near the phone. Each of these numbers is explained in its own chapter later, but having them in one place is handy.

- Public Assistance, for food, cash, Medicaid, and child care questions: (330) 297-3750.
- Non-Emergency Transportation for medical rides: (330) 297-3785.
- Child Support Enforcement: (330) 297-3791.
- OhioMeansJobs Portage County, for jobs and training: (330) 296-2841.
- Statewide Ohio Benefits online help line: 1-844-640-6446.
- To report child abuse or neglect: (330) 296-CARE.

When in doubt, the Public Assistance line at (330) 297-3750 is a good starting point. If it is not the right desk for your question, they can point you to the one that is.

GOOD TO KNOW

A real county worker will never ask you to pay a fee by gift card or wire transfer to receive benefits. If a caller does, hang up and call the county number yourself.

4. Food Assistance, or SNAP

Help buying groceries each month.

Food assistance, widely known by its federal name SNAP, helps eligible households buy groceries. In Ohio the benefit lands on a card called the Ohio Direction Card, which works like a debit card at the checkout for approved food items. Portage County JFS decides who qualifies based on the state's rules about income and household size.

You apply for food assistance the same way you apply for the other main programs: online at benefits.ohio.gov, by phone, or in person at the Ravenna office. The county reviews your application and sends a decision by mail. If you are approved, you will receive your card and instructions for using it.

TIP

Checking a card balance and using the card is a separate topic with its own guide. This chapter is about the help itself; once you are approved, that guide covers reading your balance and spotting fraud on the card.

5. Cash Assistance (Ohio Works First)

Temporary cash help for eligible families.

Cash assistance in Ohio is called Ohio Works First, sometimes shortened to OWF. It provides temporary monthly cash payments to very low-income families with children, usually alongside requirements to look for work or take part in training. Like the other programs, Portage County JFS handles the local cases.

Because cash assistance has work-related rules attached, a caseworker will often talk with you about your situation and what steps are expected. This is meant to help you move toward steady income, not to trip you up, and your worker can explain exactly what applies to your household.

- Apply at benefits.ohio.gov, by phone, or in person.
- Payments are temporary and tied to program rules.

- A caseworker explains any work or training steps.
- Ask the county line, (330) 297-3750, about your specific case.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the rules feel confusing, that is normal. Ask your caseworker to walk you through what is required and by when, and write the answer down so you can refer back to it.

6. Medicaid Through the County

Health coverage, applied for locally.

Medicaid is health coverage for people who meet Ohio's income and eligibility rules, including many seniors, people with disabilities, and families. You apply through the same statewide system, and Portage County JFS processes your application and keeps your case current with any changes you report.

Medicaid has several paths, and some long-term-care and nursing-home situations have extra steps. You do not need to know which path fits before you apply. The application and the caseworker sort that out, and you can always call the county for guidance about which questions apply to you.

TIP

For Medicaid questions specifically, the state also runs a Medicaid Consumer Hotline. The Ohio Benefits online help line, 1-844-640-6446, can point you to the right place if you are unsure where to turn.

Once you are enrolled, keep an eye out for renewal notices in the mail. Medicaid is reviewed periodically, and returning your paperwork on time keeps your coverage from lapsing.

7. Help Paying for Child Care

Assistance so parents can work or train.

Publicly funded child care helps eligible working or training parents cover the cost of care for their children. Portage County JFS handles these applications locally, checking income and work or school activity against the state's rules, and connecting approved families with participating providers.

This program matters to grandparents too. Many older adults in Portage County are raising grandchildren or helping care for them, and child care assistance may be available depending on the household's situation. If that is you, it is worth asking rather than assuming you would not qualify.

- Apply at benefits.ohio.gov or at the county office.
- Helps cover the cost of approved child care.
- Based on income and work or training activity.
- Grandparents raising grandchildren may qualify — ask.

GOOD TO KNOW

Eligibility rules change from time to time, so the surest answer about whether you qualify comes from the county. Call (330) 297-3750 and describe your household.

8. How County and State Share the Work

The website takes it in; the county decides.

One thing that confuses many people is why they apply on a statewide website but then hear from a county office. Ohio runs a single online system for all eighty-eight counties, so everyone applies in the same place. Behind the scenes, your application is routed to the county where you live.

So the website at benefits.ohio.gov is like a shared front counter for the whole state. Portage County is the office in the back that actually reads your file, asks any follow-up questions, and mails your decision. Both are real and official; they simply do different parts of the job.

- The state website receives and stores your application.
- Your Portage County caseworker reviews and decides it.
- Letters and interviews usually come from the county.
- Online help lines handle website trouble, not case decisions.

TIP

Match your question to the right helper. Trouble with the website or signing in? Call the state line, 1-844-640-6446. A question about your actual case? Call the county, (330) 297-3750.

9. Getting to the Real Website

Type the address yourself.

When you do go online, the single most important habit is starting at the genuine address. The state's self-service portal is at benefits.ohio.gov. Type that into the address bar at the top of your browser yourself, rather than clicking a link from an email or a text message.

Ohio's official sites end in dot gov, which is reserved for real government. The county's own site is portagecounty-oh.gov, with the Job & Family Services pages under it. Copycats often end in dot com or dot net, or use a small misspelling, hoping you land there by mistake and hand over personal details.

WATCH OUT

No real Ohio office will text you a link saying your benefits are suspended and you must click immediately to fix it. That urgency is the tell. Go to benefits.ohio.gov on your own, or call the county instead.

10. What You Can Do Online

The everyday tasks the website handles.

The online portal is built to save you a trip for the routine tasks. Once you have an account and are signed in, most of the things you used to do only by mail or in person can be done from home at your own pace.

- Apply for food assistance, Medicaid, cash help, or child care.
- Renew or recertify benefits when they are due.
- Report a change, such as a new address, job, or household size.
- Upload documents the county has asked for.
- See messages and the status of your case.

What the website cannot do is make a judgment call about your particular situation. For that, there is no substitute for a conversation with your caseworker, who can look at the whole picture and explain what a rule means for you.

GOOD TO KNOW

You do not have to do everything online. Every task here can also be handled by phone or in person. The website is an option, not a requirement.

11. Reporting a Change to Your Case

Keep the county up to date.

When something in your life changes, the county needs to know so your benefits stay correct. Common changes include a move, a new phone number, a change in who lives with you, or a change in income from a job starting or ending. Reporting promptly keeps your case accurate and avoids surprises later.

- 1 Sign in at benefits.ohio.gov, or call the county at (330) 297-3750.
- 2 Find the option to report a change to your case.
- 3 Enter the change clearly and completely.
- 4 Upload or mail any proof the county asks for.
- 5 Keep a note of the date you reported it.

If you are more comfortable, you can report a change by phone or in person instead of online. The important thing is that the county hears about it, not the method you use to tell them.

WATCH OUT

Reporting a drop in income can sometimes increase help you qualify for, so do not put it off thinking it only cuts benefits. Tell the county either way.

12. Renewing Your Benefits

Keep what you have from lapsing.

Most benefits do not last forever on their own. Periodically the county reviews your case to confirm you still qualify, a step usually called renewal or recertification. You will receive a notice telling you it is time and what to return. Acting on that notice keeps your benefits from stopping.

You can complete a renewal online at benefits.ohio.gov, by phone, or on paper. Whichever way you choose, the county may ask for updated proof of income or household details. Returning everything by the date on the notice is the single best way to avoid a gap in your help.

- Watch your mail for a renewal or recertification notice.
- Note the due date the moment it arrives.
- Renew online, by phone, or by returning the paper form.
- Send any requested proof before the deadline.

WATCH OUT

Missing a renewal deadline is the most common reason benefits stop. If a notice confuses you, call the county right away rather than setting it aside.

13. The Ohio Benefits Help Line

Statewide help with the website and applications.

If your trouble is with the online system itself — trouble signing in, a page that will not load, or a question about how to finish an application — Ohio runs a statewide help line at 1-844-640-6446. The people there assist with the website and the application process across all counties.

This line is different from the county office. It is the right call for website and how-to questions. For a decision about your actual case, or a question only your caseworker can answer, the county number, (330) 297-3750, is still the one you want.

GOOD TO KNOW

The statewide line keeps weekday business hours. If you reach it outside those hours, try again during the day rather than assuming something is wrong.

Keep both numbers handy and you will rarely be stuck. One is for the computer and the paperwork; the other is for your personal case. Knowing which is which turns a frustrating afternoon into a quick call.

14. Rides to Medical Appointments (NET)

Non-emergency transportation for Medicaid members.

Getting to the doctor can be a real hurdle, especially if you no longer drive. Portage County JFS runs a Non-Emergency Transportation program, usually called NET, that helps Medicaid-eligible residents get to covered medical visits such as doctor, dental, hearing, and counseling appointments. The number to arrange it is (330) 297-3785.

Rides must be scheduled ahead of time, not called for at the last minute, so plan to contact them several days before your appointment. If you are in a Medicaid managed care plan, your plan may also offer a set number of rides, so it is worth checking the number on your insurance card as well.

- For Medicaid-eligible residents going to covered medical visits.
- Call (330) 297-3785 to arrange a ride.
- Schedule well ahead — days in advance, not the morning of.
- Managed care plan members may have rides through their plan too.

TIP

If you must cancel, call as early as you can. Repeated no-shows can affect your ability to use the service, so a quick cancellation call protects your rides.

15. Emergency Help (PRC)

Short-term help over a sudden barrier.

Sometimes a family hits a sudden obstacle — a crisis that threatens their ability to work or stay housed. Portage County offers a program called Prevention, Retention and Contingency, or PRC, which can provide short-term help to families with children to get past an immediate barrier to self-sufficiency.

PRC is not an ongoing monthly benefit; it is targeted help for a specific situation, and eligibility depends on income and household makeup. Because every case is different, the surest way to learn whether PRC can help is to call the Public Assistance office and describe what you are facing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ask about PRC at the Public Assistance line, (330) 297-3750. Describe the specific barrier — the staff can tell you whether this program or another is the right fit.

If PRC is not the answer, the county often knows of other local resources. Making the call opens the door to help you might not have known existed, so it is worth the few minutes.

16. Child Support Enforcement

A separate desk with its own number.

Child support is handled by its own division within Portage County JFS, the Child Support Enforcement Agency. It helps establish, collect, and manage child support orders. You can reach it directly at (330) 297-3791, and it is located at the same address on South Meridian Street in Ravenna.

This matters to grandparents and other caregivers too, not only parents. If you are raising a grandchild or another relative's child, the child support office can explain what options exist in your situation. As always, the local staff can tell you what applies to your case.

- Establishes and manages child support orders.
- Direct line: (330) 297-3791.
- Located at 449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna.
- Relevant to caregivers and grandparents, not just parents.

TIP

Ohio has a statewide online child support portal as well, but for a question about your specific order, calling the county office first is usually the quickest way to a clear answer.

17. Jobs and Training (OhioMeansJobs)

Free local help finding work.

OhioMeansJobs Portage County is the local career center, and it is free to use. Staff there help with job searching, resumes, training programs, and connecting to employers. The Portage County office can be reached at (330) 296-2841, and it works hand in hand with the broader state career website.

This is a good resource for anyone re-entering the workforce, including older adults looking for part-time or flexible work. There is no shame in asking for help with a resume or an online job application — that is exactly what the center is there for, at no cost to you.

GOOD TO KNOW

The statewide career website, OhioMeansJobs.com, has a resume builder and job search tools you can use from home. A separate guide covers that site and Ohio's unemployment system in detail.

If a program like cash assistance asks you to take part in work or training activities, OhioMeansJobs is often where that support comes from. The two connect, so you are not navigating it alone.

18. Reporting Abuse or Neglect

How to speak up for a child at risk.

Portage County JFS includes Children Services, which responds to concerns about children who may be abused or neglected. If you are worried about a child's safety, you can call the county's round-the-clock reporting line at (330) 296-CARE, which spells out to (330) 296-2273 on the phone keypad.

You do not need proof or certainty to make a report — a genuine concern is enough, and you can share what you have seen or heard. Trained staff decide what happens next. Making the call can be the thing that gets a family the help it needs.

- Call (330) 296-CARE, which is (330) 296-2273.
- The line is answered around the clock.
- You do not need proof, only a real concern.
- In an immediate emergency, call 911 first.

WATCH OUT

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 right away. The (330) 296-CARE line is for concerns that are not a split-second emergency.

19. Applying in Person

When you would rather do it face to face.

Not everyone wants to apply on a computer, and you never have to. You are welcome to walk into the Ravenna office during weekday hours and apply in person. Staff can hand you a paper application or help you work through the process at the counter, at a pace that suits you.

Going in person can be reassuring for a first application, because you can ask questions as you go and know you have handed your paperwork directly to someone. Bring what documents you have, and do not worry if you are missing something — they will tell you what else is needed.

- 1 Go to 449 S. Meridian St., second floor, Ravenna, on a weekday.
- 2 Tell the front desk which program you are applying for.
- 3 Fill out the application with help if you want it.
- 4 Hand in the documents you have gathered.
- 5 Ask for a receipt or confirmation of what you submitted.

TIP

Arrive earlier in the day when you can, so you are not rushed by the 4:30 closing time. Bring a book or a bit of patience in case there is a wait.

20. Applying by Phone

A middle path between online and in person.

If going online feels daunting but a trip to Ravenna is hard to manage, applying by phone is a fine middle path. You can call the Public Assistance office at (330) 297-3750, or the statewide help line at 1-844-640-6446, and work through an application with someone guiding you.

Have a quiet spot and your basic information within reach — names, dates of birth, and a rough idea of household income. The person on the line will ask the questions and record your answers, so you do not have to wrestle with a form yourself.

GOOD TO KNOW

Phone lines are busiest early in the morning and right after lunch. Calling mid-morning or mid-afternoon sometimes means a shorter wait.

After a phone application, the county may still need to see a few documents. They will tell you how to send them, whether by mail, in person, or uploaded online later with a family member's help.

21. What to Have Ready

Gathering your papers before you start.

Whatever way you apply, having a few documents in reach makes it smoother. You will not always need every item, and you can often submit missing pieces afterward, but gathering the basics first saves back-and-forth and speeds up a decision.

- Proof of who you are, such as a driver's license or state ID.
- Social Security numbers for people in the household.
- Proof of income, like recent pay stubs or benefit letters.
- Proof of where you live, such as a utility bill or lease.
- Information about any current health coverage, for Medicaid.

Do not let a missing paper stop you from starting. It is better to apply and then supply what is needed than to wait until everything is perfect. The county will send a clear list of anything still required.

TIP

Keep your gathered documents together in one folder or envelope. You will likely need the same papers again at renewal, and a ready folder turns that into a quick task.

22. Sending in Your Documents

Three ways to get paperwork to the county.

After you apply, the county often asks to see proof of the things you reported. You have more than one way to get those documents to them, so pick whichever is easiest. The goal is simply that the county receives clear, readable copies by the date they request.

- Upload them through your account at benefits.ohio.gov.
- Mail copies to the office at 449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna.
- Drop them off in person at the office during weekday hours.
- Keep the originals; send copies whenever you can.

Uploading is quickest if you are comfortable with it — you take a clear photo or scan and attach it to your case. If that is not your thing, mailing or dropping off works just as well and has for decades.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you take photos of documents with a phone, make sure the whole page is in the frame and the writing is readable before you send them, so nothing has to be redone.

23. The Benefits Interview

What that phone call or visit is for.

For some programs, part of the process is a short interview with a caseworker, often by phone. This is a normal step, not a test you can fail. The worker confirms the details on your application, asks any clarifying questions, and makes sure nothing was missed.

You will usually be told when to expect the call or when to come in. Keep your phone handy around that time, and have your application details and documents nearby so you can answer easily. If you miss the call, follow up promptly so your case keeps moving.

TIP

If a scheduled interview time will not work for you, call the county ahead to reschedule rather than simply missing it. A quick heads-up keeps your application on track.

Answer honestly and completely. If you are unsure about a question, it is perfectly fine to say so and ask the worker to explain — that is far better than guessing at an answer.

24. Reading a Letter From the County

Why official mail matters here.

The county communicates important decisions by mail. A letter might tell you that you were approved, that you need to send something, that it is time to renew, or that a benefit is changing. These letters are worth opening and reading promptly, because many of them have a deadline.

- Open mail from Job & Family Services the day it arrives.
- Look for any date by which you must act.
- Note what, if anything, you are asked to send or do.
- Call the county if the letter is unclear.

If a letter uses words you do not recognize or asks for something you do not understand, that is a good reason to call (330) 297-3750. The staff can translate the official language into plain terms and tell you exactly what to do next.

WATCH OUT

Compare any letter against what you see when you sign in at benefits.ohio.gov. A notice that pressures you to call an unfamiliar number or pay a fee does not match how the county really works.

25. If You Disagree With a Decision

Your right to ask for a review.

If you believe a decision about your benefits is wrong, you have the right to ask the state to review it. This is called a state hearing or an appeal. The decision letter you receive will explain how to request one and by when, so read it carefully and keep it.

Asking for a hearing does not mean a confrontation. It is a fair process where you can explain your side and present any documents that support it. If the deadline on the letter is

short, act quickly, because missing it can limit your options.

GOOD TO KNOW

The deadline to request a hearing is on your decision letter. If you are unsure how to proceed, call the county at (330) 297-3750 and ask them to walk you through the steps.

You are allowed to bring someone with you to help, whether a family member or an advocate. Having a second set of ears can make the process feel much less overwhelming.

26. Applying From a Smartphone

The whole process fits in your pocket.

You do not need a full computer to handle benefits online. Ohio's system is built to work from a smartphone, so you can apply, renew, recertify, and report changes right from the phone in your pocket. For many people, snapping a photo of a document to upload is actually easier on a phone.

Open your phone's web browser, type benefits.ohio.gov yourself, and sign in. The screens rearrange to fit the smaller display, but every step is the same as on a computer. Take your time, and use the phone's ability to enlarge text if the print feels small.

WATCH OUT

If typing on a phone is fiddly, tap the little eye icon where a site lets you show your password, so you can see exactly what you are entering and avoid a frustrating sign-in error.

A phone is also handy for photographing documents the county requests. Just make sure the whole page is in the picture and the writing is clear before you send it.

27. Using a Library or Public Computer

No home computer needed.

If you do not have a computer at home, that is no barrier at all. The Portage County District Library and many senior centers have computers you can use for free, and handling your benefits on one is fine — with a little extra care to protect your personal information.

- Sign out of your account completely when you finish.

- Do not let the browser remember your password on a shared machine.
- Close the browser window before you walk away.
- Never leave printed pages with personal details at the printer.

A public computer is perfectly safe for this as long as you sign out and do not save your password on it. Librarians are used to helping and will not mind a question about where to click or how to print.

WATCH OUT

If a shared computer offers to save your login, choose No. Saving a password is for your own devices at home, never for a public one.

28. Making the Text Bigger

Set the screen where your eyes are happy.

If the print on these websites feels small, you are not stuck with it. Every browser can enlarge a page, and the change sticks for that site until you undo it. There is no penalty for making things larger — it only changes how comfortably you can read.

- On a computer, hold Ctrl (or Command on a Mac) and press the plus key to zoom in.
- On a phone or tablet, spread two fingers apart to enlarge most pages.
- Your device's accessibility settings can raise text size everywhere at once.
- Press Ctrl and zero to return to the normal size if you overshoot.

Enlarging the page will not change how the application works or risk your information. It simply makes the words easier to read, which means fewer mistakes from squinting at a small screen.

GOOD TO KNOW

If reading screens is a daily struggle, the county staff can help you in person or by phone, so you never have to depend on the screen alone.

29. Signing In to the State Portal

Where your online account lives.

To do things online, you sign in to the Ohio Benefits self-service portal at benefits.ohio.gov. You create an account once, with an email and a password, and then reuse it each time. This is the account that holds your application and lets you see messages and your case status.

Keep your username and password somewhere safe at home, like a notebook by the computer. There is no shame in writing them down, as long as the paper stays in your house. The real danger is forgetting them and being locked out when you need in.

TIP

If you forget your password, look for a Forgot Password link on the sign-in screen. It sends a code to your email or phone so you can set a new one yourself, without calling anyone.

A separate guide walks through the state's single sign-in system in detail. For benefits, the essential thing is to keep your login details safe and start only at the real benefits.ohio.gov address.

30. Keeping Copies and Confirmations

Proof of what you did and when.

Whenever you finish something important — submitting an application, sending a document, completing a renewal — keep a record of it. A confirmation number, a printed page, or even a note of the date can save real worry if a question comes up later about what you did.

- Print or save the confirmation page after you submit online.
- Write down any reference number the system gives you.
- Note the date you mailed or dropped off documents.
- Keep county letters in one folder.

A simple folder, paper or digital, where all of this lives is one of the most reassuring habits with any government program. You will be glad to have it if you ever need to show what you submitted and when.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you apply in person or by phone, ask for a confirmation or receipt. Having proof that you applied protects you if a document is ever misplaced.

31. Scams That Target Benefits

Knowing the tricks makes them easy to ignore.

Because benefits involve money and personal details, they attract scammers. Knowing the shapes these tricks take makes them easy to spot. The county and the state will never operate the way a scammer does, so the differences are your best protection.

- A text saying your benefits are suspended — click now to fix. (Fake.)
- A caller asking for your card number or PIN to reactivate benefits. (Fake.)
- Anyone demanding a fee or a gift card to approve your application. (Always a scam.)
- An email with a link to a site that is not benefits.ohio.gov. (Suspicious.)

The common thread is pressure — act immediately or lose something. Real government mail gives you time and does not ask for card numbers or payment to receive help. When in doubt, stop and call the county yourself, or call me.

WATCH OUT

The real county never charges a fee to apply for or receive benefits. Any demand for payment to get help is a scam, every single time.

32. Protecting Your Personal Information

Guarding the details scammers want.

Applying for benefits means sharing sensitive details — Social Security numbers, income, where you live. That information is valuable to thieves, so a few simple habits keep it safe without making your life harder. The same care you would give a bank account applies here.

- Share personal details only on the real benefits.ohio.gov or with the county directly.
- Never give your Social Security number to someone who called you.
- Shred old paperwork with personal details rather than tossing it whole.
- Keep your account password private and written only at home.

If someone contacts you claiming to be from the county and something feels off, it is always fine to hang up and call the county back at (330) 297-3750. A real worker will

understand completely and will not be offended.

WATCH OUT

When in doubt about who is really calling, do not confirm any personal details. Say you will call the office back, then dial the number yourself from this guide.

33. Helping a Family Member

Lending a hand without taking over.

Many people help a parent, spouse, or neighbor apply for benefits, and that is a kind thing to do. The key is that the case belongs to that person, with their information and their consent. Sit together and help them through it rather than doing it entirely behind the scenes.

If you will be speaking to the county on someone else's behalf regularly, the office can tell you what is needed to be recognized as an authorized helper. That keeps everything above board and means the county can actually talk with you about the case.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you manage affairs under a power of attorney, bring or mention that documentation. The county has a process for authorized representatives so you can act on a loved one's behalf properly.

Whatever you do, let the person keep their own login details and understand their own case as much as they are able. That way they are not helpless the next time something comes up and you are not there.

34. County Office or State Line?

Choosing who to call in a few seconds.

People waste the most time by calling the wrong place. A quick rule sorts it out: if your question is about your particular case or a specific program, call the county. If your question is about the website or the general application process, call the statewide line.

- Case questions, decisions, documents: county, (330) 297-3750.
- Website trouble, how-to, signing in: state, 1-844-640-6446.
- Medical rides: NET, (330) 297-3785.

- Child support: (330) 297-3791.
- Jobs and training: OhioMeansJobs, (330) 296-2841.

When you truly cannot tell which applies, start with the county. They know the local landscape and can send you to the right place if your question belongs elsewhere. A single good call often settles the whole matter.

TIP

Keep this list taped near the phone. Half the frustration people feel comes from not knowing which number fits, and a glance at this list removes that in a second.

35. Plain Questions and Answers

The things neighbors ask me most.

Q: Do I have to apply online? A: No. You can apply online at benefits.ohio.gov, by phone, or in person at the Ravenna office. Online is an option, not a requirement.

Q: Does it cost anything to apply? A: No. Applying for and receiving benefits is free. Anyone charging you a fee to apply is not the real thing.

Q: I applied online but a county worker called me. Is that normal? A: Yes. You apply through a statewide website, and your Portage County office handles the case, so the county often follows up.

Q: Can I get help with a medical ride? A: If you are Medicaid-eligible, call NET at (330) 297-3785 to arrange transportation to covered appointments.

TIP

If the question keeping you stuck is not here, that is a perfect thing to call me about. A few minutes on the phone often clears it up.

36. Each Program and Its Online Tool

A map from the program to where you handle it.

It helps to see all the pieces together. Here is how each main program lines up with the website and the phone number that goes with it, so you always know where to turn without hunting through the whole guide.

- Food assistance, Medicaid, cash help, child care: apply and renew at benefits.ohio.gov; case questions to (330) 297-3750.
- Medical rides (NET): call (330) 297-3785.
- Emergency help (PRC): ask at (330) 297-3750.
- Child support: (330) 297-3791.
- Jobs and training: OhioMeansJobs.com; local office (330) 296-2841.
- Website and application help: 1-844-640-6446.

Most people only ever use one or two of these, so do not feel you must master them all. Find the program that fits your need, use the matching tool or number, and set the rest aside until you need it.

GOOD TO KNOW

The county office at 449 S. Meridian St. in Ravenna can point you to any of these in person if a phone tree or website leaves you unsure.

37. A Calm Word About Asking for Help

There is no shame in using these programs.

Some people hesitate to apply for benefits out of pride or worry about what others might think. I want to gently set that aside. These programs exist precisely so that neighbors can get through a hard stretch, and using them when you qualify is exactly what they are for.

The process is meant to be done slowly, and nothing here is a race. Every screen can be re-read, every form can be checked, and the county staff would rather you ask a question than struggle in silence. You will not break anything by clicking the wrong button.

Most people find that once they make the first call or finish the first application, the rest feels far less daunting. Getting over that first step is usually the hardest part, and it is a part you do not have to face alone.

TIP

If you would rather not do the first application alone, that is exactly the sort of thing I help with. We can sit down together, at your pace, and get it done.

CHEAT SHEET**Everyday Cheat Sheet**

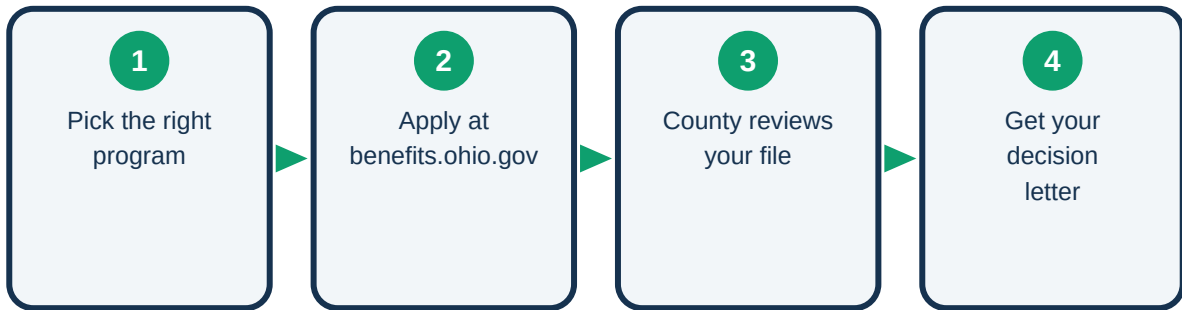
Keep this by the computer. I want to... Apply or renew benefits: go to benefits.ohio.gov. Ask about my case: call Public Assistance at (330) 297-3750. Get statewide online help: call 1-844-640-6446. Arrange a ride to a medical visit: call NET at (330) 297-3785. Reach child support: call (330) 297-3791. Find jobs or training: call OhioMeansJobs Portage at (330) 296-2841. Report child abuse or neglect: call (330) 296-CARE. Visit in person: 449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna, second floor, weekdays. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

How County Help Works

You apply online or in person; the county handles your case.



The state website takes it in; Portage County works the case.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Program to Tool to Phone

Each county program and where to handle it.

Online	Website	Call County
Food aid Medicaid Cash help Child care	benefits. ohio.gov apply & renew	297-3750 assistance 297-3785 NET 297-3791 kids

Apply online; call the county with case questions.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.