ABE USER GUIDE
Tips for Immigrant Families

May 2019

ABE User Guide – Tips for Immigrant Families

The purpose of this document is provide quick tips for immigrants who are just starting to use ABE and Manage My Case.

- *ABE* **(Application for Benefit Eligibility)** is the online tool you can use to apply for medical, food or cash assistance with the State of Illinois – abe.illinois.gov.

- *Manage My Case* is an online system to manage your State of Illinois benefits like SNAP and Medicaid. Go to the ABE home page and click on the green button to create a Manage My Case account.

A complete User Guide and other resources can be found online at www.dhs.state.il.us/abe.

General Information

The ABE system is available in English and Spanish only.

The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) processes the applications submitted through ABE. DHS refers to applicants and people with benefits as customers.

Creating an ABE User Account

Refer to the complete ABE User Guide for step-by-step instructions to create an account.

User Name

Your User Name must be 5 to 20 letters and/or numbers.

> **~ IMPORTANT ~**
>
> This account is your personal account, not the account of anybody who may be helping you. The user name and password you create should be one that you can remember.

Password

Your password must be a minimum of 8 characters and contain at least three of the following:
- one capital letter,
- one lower case letter,
- one special character (! @ # $ % & *), and
- one number.

Passwords must be changed or reset every six months.

Secret Questions

You will also need to choose secret questions and answers to those questions. These questions will be used if you forget your password or if your password has expired. Your answers to the secret questions must be at least five (5) characters long.

If you use a date or phone number for an answer to one of the questions, make sure you remember how you enter the number.

Examples (Dates)	Examples (Phone Number)
October 21, 1967	(630) 495-2019
10/21/67	630-495-2019
10-21-1967	630.495.2019

Starting the Application

Step-by-step instructions for completing the application are available in the ABE User Guide www.dhs.state.il.us/abe.

After creating your account you will be asked to select which benefits you are requesting. Check the boxes for all of the benefits that may apply even if a particular benefit is not being requested for every person in your home.

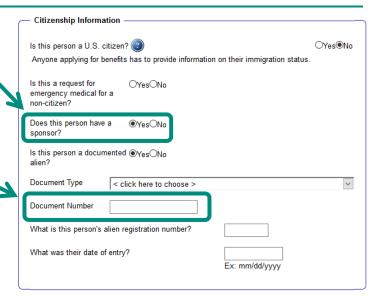You will also need to enter the number of people who live in your home.

- If you are applying for SNAP or cash, include yourself and everyone who lives with you.

- If you are applying for Medicaid, include anyone that lives in your home AND include anyone you claim as a dependent on your federal tax return (even if they do not live with you).

- If you are age 19 or older and you are only applying for Medicaid, always include yourself, your spouse and your children *if they live with you*. ONLY include your parents and others in the home IF they will claim you or you will claim them on your tax return.

Enter details about each person in the section called **"People in Your Home"**. This is where you will enter their social security numbers (SSN) and citizenship status.

You may need to provide information about people in your home who are not eligible for benefits or people you are not requesting benefits for. **You do <u>NOT</u> have to give a SSN for people who are not requesting benefits for themselves.**

Citizenship Information

- If you have a sponsor, be sure to check the box that says "Does this person have a sponsor?"

- If you have a lawful immigration status or are a documented noncitizen, enter your USICS number (or A#) and document number.

- You should also provide your sponsor's name in the comments section at the end of the application. In some cases, a sponsor's income may need to be included if your family is requesting SNAP or cash assistance. This is called Sponsor Liability.
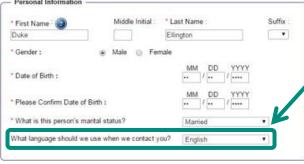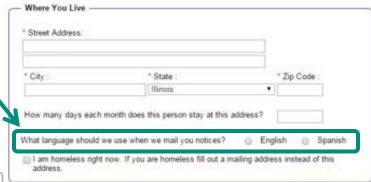

~ SPONSOR LIABILITY ~

Sponsor liability applies until an immigrant becomes a U.S. citizen or after the immigrant achieves 40 work credits. You may not know if you have enough work credits. When in doubt, provide the information in the application. DHS will notify you if the sponsor's income is needed.

Language

The application will ask you if the State should mail notices to you in English or Spanish. English and Spanish are the only options for written notices.

If you do not speak English well, make sure you choose what language the State should use when they contact you.

If your primary language is not English or Spanish, enter what language you prefer and indicate that you need an interpreter in the "Comments" section. Written notifications will be sent to you in English, but the State may be able to use an interpreter for other communications with you. The process to access interpreters may

vary by local office. It is best to note this as part of the application so appointments may be scheduled.
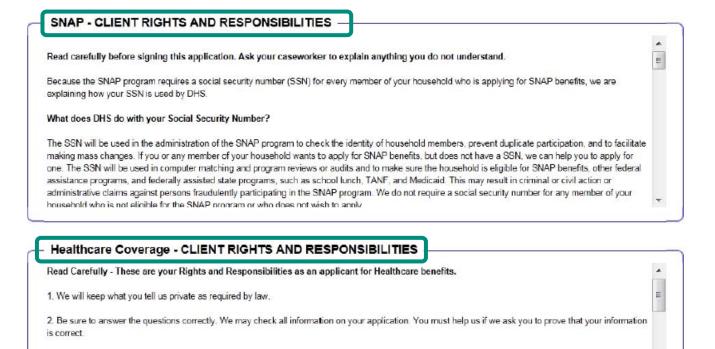
Voter Registration

The State offers voter registration as part of the application. It is important that immigrants do **NOT** complete this section of the application.

Finishing the Application

Complete each section of the application, entering information about income and household. Before you sign and submit your application, review the rights and responsibilities section.

SNAP - CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Read carefully before signing this application. Ask your caseworker to explain anything you do not understand.

Because the SNAP program requires a social security number (SSN) for every member of your household who is applying for SNAP benefits, we are explaining how your SSN is used by DHS.

What does DHS do with your Social Security Number?

The SSN will be used in the administration of the SNAP program to check the identity of household members, prevent duplicate participation, and to facilitate making mass changes. If you or any member of your household wants to apply for SNAP benefits, but does not have a SSN, we can help you to apply for one. The SSN will be used in computer matching and program reviews or audits and to make sure the household is eligible for SNAP benefits, other federal assistance programs, and federally assisted state programs, such as school lunch, TANF, and Medicaid. This may result in criminal or civil action or administrative claims against persons fraudulently participating in the SNAP program. We do not require a social security number for any member of your household who is not eligible for the SNAP program or who does not wish to apply.

Healthcare Coverage - CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Read Carefully - These are your Rights and Responsibilities as an applicant for Healthcare benefits.

1. We will keep what you tell us private as required by law.

2. Be sure to answer the questions correctly. We may check all information on your application. You must help us if we ask you to prove that your information is correct.

3. We will use the information you provided as well as information from other sources such as Social Security benefits, unemployment insurance, unearned income and wages from employment to decide if you qualify.

Identity Proofing

When applying for benefits, the ABE system will launch an electronic ID proofing process to verify your identity. You will be asked questions only you would know the answer to, such as past addresses, family member names, etc.

The ID proofing process uses a person's credit history. You may not be able to complete the electronic ID proofing process if you do not have a credit history or if you are unable to answer to the questions.

People who may not have enough credit history to complete the electronic ID proofing include:

- Immigrants who have recently relocated to the United States
- Children under age 18
- Persons who do not have bank accounts

It is strongly recommended that you try the electronic ID proofing first. If successful, you will be able to continue and link to your case. If you are not successful, you will receive a reference number and a message to call the Experian Help Desk to verify your identity over the phone.

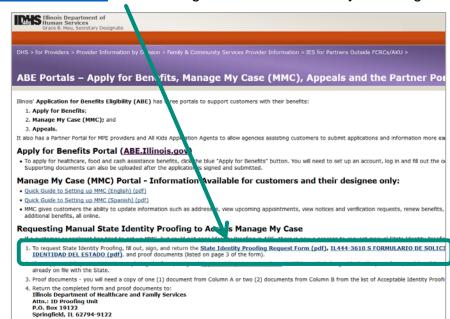ID proofing must be completed successfully in order for you to use '*Manage My Case'*.

~ IMPORTANT ~
You may still submit an online application even if you cannot complete the ID proofing process online or over the phone. Click "Verify Identity Later" to proceed with the application.

As of January 2019, you can request State Identity Proofing by going to http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=76721 and clicking on the State Identity Proofing Request Form (English or Spanish).

You must have an ABE User Account before returning this form to the state. Every section of the form must be completed or it will not be processed.

You will need to send copies of your proof documents to the ID Proofing Unit. Page three of the form lists the types of documents that will be accepted. You may send a copy of one (1) document from Column A or two (2) documents from Column B to the ID Proofing Unit. Allow 6-8 weeks to hear back from the state.

> Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services
> ATTN: ID Proofing Unit
> P.O. Box 19122
> Springfield, IL 62794-9122

After the State processes your request, you will receive a notice that states whether your request was approved or denied. If approved, you can log into ABE with the username you provided on the request form and enter your personal information in order to link your account to your case. The personal information includes your date of birth and your individual ID. If you do not know your Individual ID, you should be able to enter a Social Security number instead. Once you link your account, you will be able to use the 'Manage My Case' part of ABE.