New York State Comptroller
THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI
Office of the State Deputy Comptroller

Rahul Jain, Deputy Comptroller

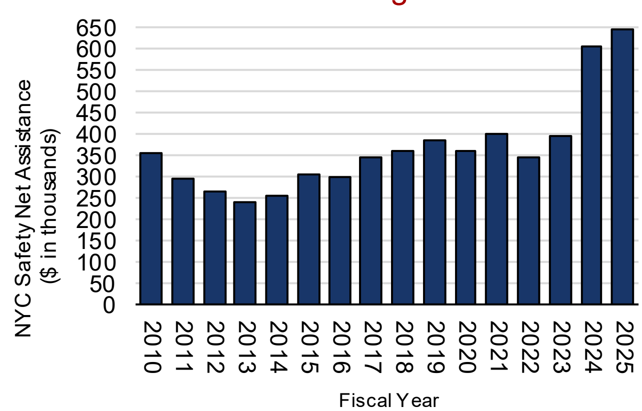
Safety Net Assistance

The Safety Net Assistance (SNA) program is one of New York State's two public assistance programs, which provide cash and non-cash assistance to State residents (Family Assistance, or FA, being the other). Both programs were created through the State Legislature's enactment of the Welfare Reform Act of 1997, following the federal government's passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), which implemented major changes to the United States' social welfare system. SNA provides cash assistance to eligible individuals and adult families who do not qualify for FA, as well as non-cash assistance, paid for using SNA funding (e.g., direct payments made to landlords, vouchers sent to utility companies, etc). Recipients must meet work requirements in order to maintain eligibility. The program's budget is based on enrollment, which grew 2.4 percent from FY 2025 to FY 2026, reaching an average of 439,000 recipients a month in FY 2026.

The FA and SNA programs are closely linked — FA recipients who reach the program's 60-month/five-year limit can receive continued assistance through SNA. However, while the federal government imposes a lifetime limit on FA, an SNA recipient can continue receiving assistance indefinitely, as long as they remain eligible. Additionally, per federal and State regulations, the City pays 15 percent of FA costs, with the federal government covering the other 85 percent, compared to 71 percent of SNA costs, with the State paying the remaining 29 percent. As a result, this shift in the caseload from FA to SNA over time has led to increased costs for the City and State.

SNA funding from the State to New York City more than doubled between FY 2010 and FY 2025 (see Figure 1), growing from $352.6 million in FY 2010 to $644.7 million in FY 2025. From FY 2013 to FY 2023, funding increased by more than half (58 percent) before rising sharply in just one year by roughly that amount (53 percent), between FY 2023 and FY 2024, as the State provided time-limited support to the City for asylum seeker costs.

FIGURE 1
Historical SNA State Funding to NYC



Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis

In FY 2026, New York City is expected to receive $717 million in SNA funding from the State (which would represent roughly 76 percent of the State's total allocation in the Enacted SFY 2027 Budget) — 11 percent more than it received in FY 2025. In FY 2027, that amount is expected to go down (by 13 percent) to $623 million, however this amount is more likely to rise, as enrollment remains elevated. The recent enactment of federal H.R. 1 legislation imposes new limits on the categories of non-citizens who are qualified to receive certain federal benefits (such as health care and nutrition assistance) under PRWORA, which may also affect enrollment, however.

Impact

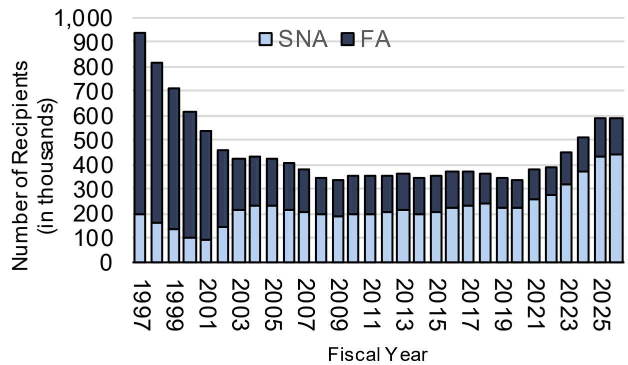
Of the roughly $623 million in SNA the City is expected to receive from the State in FY 2027, $528 million will go to the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and $94 million to the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), with the remainder going to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. More than 95 percent of SNA funding is directed toward three budget functions: Public Assistance Grants, Family Shelter Operations, and HIV and AIDS services.

Public Assistance Grants

Nearly three-quarters of the total SNA funding the City expects to receive in FY 2027 ($454 million, or 73 percent) will go toward Public Assistance Grants (administered by HRA). Over time, as recipients aged out of the FA program and transitioned to SNA, a larger share of the total caseload (FA and SNA combined) has become comprised of SNA participants (see Figure 2), leading to higher costs for both the State and the City. Since FY 2003, when the share of FA-to-SNA recipients was nearly even, the number of people receiving FA has decreased by more than a quarter (57,000 people) as SNA recipients doubled (growing by 223,000 people). As of June 2026, about three-quarters of the total caseload was made up of SNA recipients, compared to about three-fifths in FY 2016, leading to larger share funded by the City and State.

FIGURE 2

SNA and FA Caseloads



Note: Figures display the monthly average for the year; FY 2026 incorporates year-to-date data through March.
Sources: NYC Human Resources Administration; OSC analysis

Family Shelter Operations

Out of the SNA funding the City expects to receive in FY 2027, 13 percent (or $83.4 million) will fund Family Shelter Operations (overseen by DHS). However, SNA provides just 7 percent of the $1.2 billion budgeted for Family Shelter Operations in FY 2027, with federal funding (38 percent) and the City (55 percent) making up the lion's share of funding. Given the chronic underbudgeting issues for shelter in recent years, that 7 percent remains a key source of support for 57,500 people who stayed in family shelters in May 2026.

HIV and AIDS Services

Of the FY 2027 SNA funding, 10 percent ($58.9 million) would go to the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) at HRA — which represents less than a fifth (18 percent) of HASA's $333.7 million budget. HASA assists individuals living with AIDS or HIV by providing intensive case management, housing and rental assistance and help accessing an array of public benefits. Since FY 2016, the monthly HASA caseload has averaged roughly 34,000 people.