

SNAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net. The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies administer the program at State and local levels. Their responsibilities include determining eligibility and distributing benefits.

Who is eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements can get SNAP benefits. Household income and other resources have to be under certain limits and are reviewed. The program allows for certain deductions like housing costs, child support, medical expenses, or child-care costs. A household may also have up to \$2000 in assets. Households with a member age 60 or older—or a disabled member—may have up to \$3000 in assets. Assets that do not count toward eligibility requirements include: a home, a vehicle to carry a physically disabled member of a household, the fair market value of one vehicle (up to \$4,650; higher limits in most States), and the resources of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Specific details are outlined in the FNS-313 brochure at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>.

Where can I go to find out if I'm eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

If you have access to a computer, you can quickly find out if you might qualify for SNAP benefits through the prescreening tool available on the USDA Web site, www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/. Local SNAP offices can provide information about eligibility, and USDA operates a toll-free number (1-800-221-5689) for people to call if they want to receive information about SNAP by mail. Most States also have a toll-free information/hotline number that can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm.

Some community organizations work closely with SNAP offices and can provide information on the application process.

What is the EBT card?

All 50 States have made the transition from paper coupons to the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card is like a debit card and can be used at USDA-authorized grocery stores across the country. At the cash register, the customer or cashier swipes the EBT card through the card reader at the point of sale and the customer enters a personal identification number to secure the transaction. The system deducts the exact dollar amount of the purchase from the customer's EBT account and deposits it into the retailer's bank account. Once the SNAP EBT transaction is complete, a receipt shows the amount of the SNAP purchase and the amount of SNAP benefits remaining in the EBT account.

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What are some of SNAP's benefits?

SNAP benefits provide much-needed help so that low-income people can put good, healthy food on the table. SNAP benefits help with the grocery bill. Households can use benefits to purchase breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products. Many States offer free nutrition education materials and programs for SNAP benefit recipients. *[Localize here if your State offers materials and/or classes.]*

SNAP benefits also help the local community. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Plus, SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars — so when everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.

Why is there a national SNAP outreach effort?

Currently, only about 65 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are enrolled. The goal of this national SNAP outreach effort is to raise awareness of SNAP eligibility and benefits. The campaign includes promoting a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) (or State toll-free lines where available) through a variety of English and Spanish radio advertisements in major population centers and in areas with large numbers of eligible but unenrolled people.

Who is involved in SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is a community-wide effort enlisting the help of State and local SNAP offices, faith-based groups, food banks, and others. Together, these groups play an important role in helping low-income families learn about and access SNAP. Community groups can help in many ways. For example, they can distribute informational materials, conduct prescreening for program eligibility, provide application assistance and forms, and help gather verification documents.

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups and other organizations are part of a group called the SNAP Outreach Coalition. The Coalition members also collaborate to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach to local antihunger projects.