



## **Summary of Food Stamp Provisions Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996**

**NOTE:** The following is a general summary of the provisions of the welfare reform bill (H.R. 3734) which affect the food stamp program. The summary is not intended to represent a legal interpretation of the various provisions summarized and may not include all provisions that may have a food stamp impact. The provisions are effective upon enactment unless stated otherwise in the summary.

The summaries of provisions pertaining to aliens (Sec. 401 through 432) are intended to reflect the effect of these provisions on the Food Stamp Program only, not on all programs affected by the various provisions.

### **Sec. 801: Definition of Certification Period**

- Limits certification periods to 12 months, except that the certification period may be up to 24 months if all adult household members are elderly or disabled. States must have at least one contact with each certified household every 12 months.

### **Sec. 802: Definition of Coupon**

- Includes in the definition of "coupon" authorization cards, cash or checks issued in lieu of coupons, and "access devices" for EBT systems (including EBT cards and personal identification numbers).

### **Sec. 803: Treatment of Children Living at Home**

- Deletes a current exemption so that children under 22 years old who live with their parents and their own children or spouses must be included in the same household with their parents.

### **Sec. 804: Adjustment of Thrifty Food Plan**

- Requires that annual adjustments to maximum allotments reflect the actual change in the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) rather than 103% of the change, beginning with FY 97.

### **Sec. 805: Definition of Homeless Individual**

- Provides that persons whose primary nighttime residence is a temporary accommodation in the home of another may only be considered homeless if the accommodation is for no more than 90 days.

### **Sec. 806: State Option for Eligibility Standards**

- Permits variations from national eligibility standards for other provisions in the law.

### **Sec. 807: Earnings of Students**

- Limits exclusion to the earnings of elementary and secondary school students who are 17 or younger.

### **Sec. 808: Energy Assistance**

- Limits energy assistance exclusion to (1) Federal energy assistance and (2) Federal or State one-time assistance for weatherization or emergency repair or replacement of heating or cooling devices.
- Retains the provision in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act that requires that all expenses met with LIHEAA payments be regarded as out-of-pocket expenses qualifying for standard utility allowances (SUAs).
- Provides specific income inclusion for assistance under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act (welfare block grant) if provided as energy assistance.

- Specifically excludes State or local general assistance which (under State law) cannot be provided in cash directly to households.
- Considers all energy costs met with State energy assistance as out-of-pocket expenses that qualify for SUAs.

#### **Sec. 809: Deductions from Income**

- Indefinitely freezes the standard deduction for the 48 States and D.C. at \$134 and makes similar reductions for other areas.
- Disallows an earned income deduction for any income not reported in a timely manner and for the public assistance portion of income earned under a work supplementation/support program.
- Indefinitely freezes the maximum homeless shelter allowance at its present level (\$143). States may use it in calculating an excess shelter expense deduction (without regard to actual costs) and may prohibit its use for households with extremely low shelter costs.
- Sets the shelter deduction cap at \$247 until December 31, 1996, \$250 for January 1, 1997 through September 30, 1998, \$275 for FYs 1999 and 2000, and \$300 from FY 2001 on.
- Permits States to make use of standard utility allowances mandatory for all households if (1) the State has developed separate standards that do and do not include the cost of heating and cooling and (2) USDA finds that the standards will not result in increased Federal costs. In States without mandatory SUAs, eliminates households' entitlement to switch between the SUA and actual expenses during certification periods.

#### **Sec. 810: Vehicle Allowance**

- Sets the limit at \$4650 as of October 1, 1996 with no future adjustments.

#### **Sec. 811: Vendor Payments for Transitional Housing Counted as Income**

- Removes the exception for vendor payments for transitional housing for the homeless.

#### **Sec. 812: Simplified Calculation of Income for the Self-Employed**

- Requires USDA, by 1 year after enactment, to establish a procedure (designed not to increase Federal costs) whereby States can submit a method to be approved by USDA for determining reasonable estimates, instead of the actual costs, of producing self-employment income.

#### **Sec. 813: Doubled Penalties for Violating Food Stamp Program Requirements**

- Doubles penalties for recipient fraud from 6 months to 1 year for the first violation and 1 to 2 years for the second violation (and the first violation involving trading of a controlled substance).

#### **Sec. 814: Disqualification of Convicted Individuals**

- Permanently disqualifies persons convicted of trafficking in food stamp benefits of \$500 or more.

#### **Sec. 815: Disqualification**

- Makes ineligible (1) individuals who refuse without good cause to provide sufficient information to allow a determination of their employment status or job availability, (2) all individuals (in addition to heads of households) who voluntarily and without good cause quit a job, and (3) individuals who voluntarily and without good cause reduce their work effort (and, after the reduction, are working less than 30 hours a week). Deletes lack of adequate child care as an explicit good cause exemption for refusal to meet work requirements.
- Provides a State option to disqualify the household if the head of household is disqualified under a work rule for a period determined by the State that cannot exceed the lesser of the duration of the individual's ineligibility or 180 days.
- Establishes new mandatory minimum disqualification periods for individuals who fail to comply with work or workfare requirements:

- For the first violation, until the later of the date they comply with work rules, 1 month, or a period determined by the State not to exceed 3 months.
- For the second violation, until the later of the date they fulfill work rules, 3 months, or a period determined by the State not to exceed 6 months.
- For a third or subsequent violation, until the later of the date they fulfil work rules, 6 months, a date determined by the State, or, at State option, permanently.
- Requires USDA to determine the meaning of good cause, voluntarily quitting, and reducing work effort.
- Requires States to determine (1) meaning of other terms, (2) procedures for establishing compliance, and (3) whether individuals are complying. None of States' determinations can be less restrictive than comparable determinations under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act.

#### **Sec. 816: Caretaker Exemption**

- Permits States, which have had waivers denied by August 1, 1996, to lower the age at which a child exempts a parent/caretaker from food stamp work rules from 6 years old to not under 1 year old for a period of not more than 3 years.

#### **Sec. 817: Employment and Training**

- Streamlines administrative requirements for States by (1) requiring E&T components to be delivered through a Statewide workforce development system, if available; (2) expanding the existing State option to apply work rules to applicants to include all work requirements (now limited to job search); (3) removing the requirement that job search components be comparable to those under Title IV-A; (4) removing requirements that E&T components serve a useful public purpose and use recipients' prior training and experience; (5) removing specific Federal rules as to States' authority to exempt categories of individuals and individuals from E&T requirements; (6) removing the requirement to serve volunteers in E&T programs; (7) removing the requirement for conciliation procedures for resolution of disputes involving participation in an E&T program; (8) removing the requirement that reimbursements for dependent care are at least as high as the dependent care deduction cap; and (9) removing requirements for E&T performance standards.
- Other provisions make clear that work is a purpose of E&T programs and limit E&T funding for services to Title IV-A recipients to the amount used by the State for AFDC recipients in FY 95.
- E&T funding is as follows: FY 96--\$75 million, FY 97--\$79 million, FY 98--\$81 million, FY 99--\$84 million, FY 00--\$86 million, FY 01--\$88 million, and FY 02--\$90 million.
- Requires that States' allocations of 100% E&T funds be based on a reasonable formula determined by USDA that considers each State's population of individuals subject to the new work requirement.
- Extends 50% E&T funding to costs for case management or casework to facilitate the transition from economic dependency to self-sufficiency through work.

#### **Sec. 818: Food Stamp Eligibility**

- Provides States the option to count all of the income of aliens ineligible under the Food Stamp Act as available to their households.

#### **Sec. 819: Comparable Treatment for Disqualification**

- Allows States the option to extend disqualifications for failure to perform actions required by other means-tested programs to the FSP.

#### **Sec. 820: Disqualification for Receipt of Multiple Food Stamp Benefits**

- Makes ineligible for 10 years individuals that fraudulently misrepresented their identity or residence in order to receive multiple food stamp benefits.

#### **Sec. 821: Disqualification of Fleeing Felons**

- Makes fleeing felons and probation/parole violators ineligible for the program.

#### **Sec. 822: Cooperation with Child Support Agencies**

- Permits States to require cooperation with the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Program as a condition of eligibility for the FSP for applicants or participants who live with and exercise parental control over children under 18 years of age who have absent parents that are not providing appropriate support. Cooperation entails establishing paternity of the children and obtaining support for themselves or the child.
- Permits States to establish payment of legally-obligated child support as a condition of food stamp eligibility for non-custodial parents.
- Food stamp State agencies would have to develop safeguards to restrict the use of information obtained from Title IV-D agencies.
- Neither custodial nor non-custodial parents could be charged a fee or other cost for CSE services.
- The food stamp State agency would determine whether custodial parents have good cause for not cooperating and develop procedures for determining refusal to cooperate by non-custodial parents using guidelines developed by USDA in consultation with DHHS.

#### **Sec. 823: Disqualification Relating to Child Support Arrears**

- Provides States an option to disqualify individuals who are in arrears in court-ordered child support unless a court is allowing delayed payments or payments are being made in accordance with a court- or CSE-approved payment plan.

#### **Sec. 824: Work Requirement**

- Establishes new work requirement under which non-exempt individuals would be ineligible to continue to receive food stamps if they receive food stamps for 3 months in a preceding 36-month period while they did not work at least 20 hours per week (averaged monthly), participate in a workfare or approved E&T program, or did not participate in a work program for at least 20 hours a week.
- Exempts individuals who are: (1) under 18 or over 50 years of age, (2) medically certified as unfit physically or mentally for employment, (3) members of households responsible for dependent children, (4) pregnant, or (5) otherwise exempt from work requirements.
- Individuals denied eligibility under the new work rule can regain eligibility by working or participating in work programs 80 hours in a 30-day period or complying with a workfare program for 30 days. If individuals lose this employment or cease participation in work or workfare programs, participation can continue for up to 3 consecutive months from the date the State is notified that work has ended after which the only cure during the 36-month period will be to comply with the work requirement or to become exempt under other provisions of the requirement.
- This provision is not applicable until the earlier of 3 months after enactment or the date States notify covered individuals (e.g., at certification or recertification or by mass mailings or media announcements).
- On a State's request, USDA may waive application of the new work requirement to any group of individuals if USDA determines that the area where they reside (1) has an unemployment rate over 10 percent or (2) does not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide them employment. USDA must report the basis for any waiver to Congress.

#### **Sec. 825: Encouragement of Electronic Benefit Transfer Systems**

- Provides that States must implement EBT systems before October 1, 2002, unless USDA waives the requirement because a State faces unusual barriers to implementation.
- Permits States (subject to Federal standards) to procure and implement an EBT system under the terms, conditions, and design the State considers appropriate, adds a new requirement for Federal procurement standards, and deletes the requirement for USDA's prior approval.
- Adds a provision that EBT systems should follow generally accepted operating rules based on commercial technology, the need to permit interstate operation and law enforcement monitoring, and the need to permit

monitoring and investigations by law enforcement agencies.

- Deletes the requirement the EBT systems be cost neutral in any 1 year and be on-line systems.
- Adds requirements that USDA's standards include (1) measures to maximize security and (2) effective not later than 2 years after enactment and to the extent practicable, measures to permit EBT systems to differentiate among eligible and ineligible food items.
- Adds a requirement that regulations regarding the replacement of benefits and liability for replacement under an EBT system be similar to those in effect for a paper food stamp issuance system.
- Permits States to collect a charge for replacing EBT cards by reducing allotments.
- Permits States to require that EBT cards contain a photograph of one or more household members and requires that, if a State requires a photograph, it must establish procedures to ensure that other appropriate members of the household and authorized representatives may use the card.
- Exempts food stamp EBT systems from Regulation E.
- Prohibits companies from providing EBT services on condition that customers obtain, or not obtain, some additional point-of-sale service from the company or any affiliate. Requires consultation with the Federal Reserve before promulgating regulations.
- Endorses States operating EBT systems that are compatible with other States' systems.

#### **Sec. 826: Value of Minimum Allotment**

- Eliminates the periodic adjustment in the minimum benefit.

#### **Sec. 827: Benefits on Recertification**

- Requires proration of allotments following any break in participation.

#### **Sec. 828: Optional Combined Allotment for Expedited Households**

- Makes the issuing of combined allotments (pro-rated first month's allotment plus full second month's allotment) to regular and expedited service applicants a State option.

#### **Sec. 829: Failure to Comply with Other Means-Tested Public Assistance Programs**

- Prohibits an increase in food stamp benefits when a household's income is reduced because of a penalty imposed under a Federal, State, or local means-tested public assistance program for failure to perform a required action. Provides a State option to reduce allotments 25% or less. If the allotment is reduced for failure to perform an action required under a Title IV-A program, the State may use the rules of that program to reduce the food stamp allotment.

#### **Sec. 830: Allotments for Households Residing in Centers**

- Permits States to divide a month's food stamp benefits between a drug or alcoholic treatment center and a resident if the resident leaves the center.
- Permits States to require the resident to designate the treatment center as his/her authorized representative.

#### **Sec. 831: Condition Precedent for Approval of Retail Food Stores and Wholesale Food Concerns**

- Requires that USDA, or State or local officials designated by USDA, conduct pre-authorization visits to firms selected by USDA based on factors including size, location, and types of items sold.

#### **Sec. 832: Authority to Establish Authorization Periods**

- Requires USDA to establish specific time periods during which retailers' and wholesalers' authorizations to accept

and redeem food stamp benefits will be valid.

#### **Sec. 833: Information for Verifying Eligibility for Authorization**

- Authorizes requiring applicant retailers and wholesalers to submit relevant income and sales tax filing documents.
- Permits regulations requiring retailers and wholesalers to provide written authorization for USDA to verify all relevant tax filings.

#### **Sec. 834: Waiting Period for Stores That Fail to Meet Authorization Criteria**

- Requires retailers or wholesalers that are denied approval to accept and redeem food stamp benefits because they do not meet approval criteria to wait at least 6 months before submitting a new application. USDA may establish a longer time period, including permanent disqualification, that reflects the severity of the basis for the denial.

#### **Sec. 835: Operation of Food Stamp Offices**

- Replaces many current client service requirements with broad requirements that States establish procedures that best serve households in the State including households with special needs (elderly, disabled, rural poor, homeless, households on reservations, and people who do not speak or read English); provide timely, accurate, and fair customer service to all applicants and recipients; and develop applications containing necessary information.
- Permits States to establish operating procedures that vary for local food stamp offices.
- Makes clear that nothing in the Food Stamp Act prohibits electronic storage of application and other information, including signatures.
- Deletes requirements for a uniform national application, placing information about rights and responsibilities on the application, waiving office interviews for elderly or disabled applicants and households with transportation or other difficulties, and providing telephone or mail information to households that have transportation difficulties or similar hardships.
- Deletes requirements that States (1) inform applicants how to cooperate in completing the application process including obtaining verification, (2) assist applicants in obtaining verification and completing applications, (3) use current verified information already available, and (4) not deny applications for failure of non-household members to cooperate.
- Deletes requirements that States provide a description of reporting requirements at certification and recertification; and provide a toll-free, local, or collect telephone number that households may use to reach the State.
- Deletes requirements for displaying posters and providing materials in food stamp and PA offices about nutrition and eligibility for other USDA nutrition programs, using mail issuance in rural areas or other areas where low-income households face transportation problems, conducting a single interview when households apply for both food stamps and AFDC, combining food stamp applications with PA and Statewide general assistance (GA) applications, providing food stamp applications and information at local GA offices if the same agency administers GA and PA, and using verified information available in PA/GA files.

#### **Sec. 836: State Employee and Training Standards**

- Deletes Federal requirements for States' employee training.

#### **Sec. 837: Exchange of Law Enforcement Information**

- Requires States to provide households' addresses, social security numbers, or photographs to law enforcement officers to assist them in locating fugitive felons or probation/parole violators.

#### **Sec. 838: Expedited Coupon Service**

- Increases the number of days which States have to provide expedited service from 5 to 7 calendar days.
- Eliminates households consisting entirely of homeless people from those categories of households entitled to receive expedited service.

### **Sec. 839: Withdrawing Fair Hearing Requests**

- At State option, permits households to withdraw (orally or in writing) requests for fair hearings. States must follow-up oral requests with a written notice providing households with an opportunity to request a hearing.

### **Sec. 840: Income, Eligibility, and Immigration Status Verification Systems**

- Makes use of the income and eligibility verification system (IEVS) and the immigration status verification system (SAVE) optional.

### **Sec. 841: Investigations**

- Requires USDA to issue regulations to authorize as bases for retailer disqualifications evidence of violations obtained other than through on-site investigations; such as, inconsistent redemption data, or evidence obtained through a transaction report under an EBT system.

### **Sec. 842: Disqualification of Retailers who Intentionally Submit Falsified Applications**

- Disqualifies (up to permanently) retailers who knowingly submit applications for authorization that contains false information about substantive matters.

### **Sec. 843: Disqualification of Retailers who are Disqualified Under the WIC Program**

- Disqualifies from the FSP retailers and wholesalers that are disqualified from the WIC Program. Disqualification must be for the same period as under WIC, may begin at a later date, and would not be subject to food stamp administrative/ judicial review procedures.

### **Sec. 844: Collection of Overissuances**

- Replaces existing overissuance collection rules with provisions requiring States to collect any overissuance by allotment reduction, withholding unemployment compensation, recovering from Federal pay or income tax refunds, or any other means unless the State demonstrates that all of the means are not cost effective.
- Limits benefit reductions for non-fraud and State error claims to the greater of 10% of the monthly allotment or \$10 a month.
- Requires States to establish requirements for notice, electing a means of payment, and setting a schedule for payment.
- Permits States to retain 20% of nonfraud collections other than those arising from State error and 35% of fraud collections.

### **Sec. 845: Authority to Suspend Stores Violating Program Requirements Pending Administrative and Judicial Review**

- Requires that permanent disqualification of a retailer or wholesaler be effective from the date of receipt of the notice of disqualification. USDA is not liable for the value of lost sales if the disqualification is reversed through administrative or judicial review.

### **Sec. 846: Expanded Criminal Forfeiture for Violations**

- Requires forfeiture of all property (real and personal) used in a transaction (or attempted transaction) to commit (or facilitate the commission of) a trafficking violation (other than a misdemeanor). Proceeds traceable to the violation would also be subject to forfeiture. An owner's property interest would not be subject to forfeiture if the owner establishes that the violation was committed without the owner's knowledge or consent.
- Requires that the proceeds from any sale of forfeited property and any money forfeited be used to reimburse first, DOJ; second, OIG; and, third, Federal and State law enforcement agencies for costs and, finally, to carry out FCS' authorization and compliance activities.

### **Sec. 847: Limitation on Federal Match**

- Terminates the Federal share for any outreach "recruitment activities".

#### **Sec. 848: Standards for Administration**

- Removes redundant requirements that USDA establish standards for efficient and effective program administration.

#### **Sec. 849: Work Supplementation or Support Program**

- Provides a State option to use a PA household's food stamp benefits to subsidize a job for a household member in the State's WSSP. The household would not receive an allotment for the period during which the member participates in WSSP.
- The program must adhere to standards set by USDA, be available for new employees only, and not displace employment of those who are not supplemented/supported.
- The food stamp benefit portion of the supplement could not be considered income for other purposes.
- States must describe in their State plans how recipients in the program will, within a specific period of time, be moved to non-WSSP employment.

#### **Sec. 850: Waiver Authority**

- Permits USDA to waive Food Stamp Act requirements to conduct pilot or experimental projects that are consistent with the program's goal of providing food to increase the level of nutrition of needy families. USDA is permitted to conduct projects that will improve administration of the program, increase self-sufficiency of participants, test innovative welfare reform strategies, or allow greater conformity between programs.
- Limits projects that reduce benefits more than 20% for more than 5% of households in the area subject to the project to (1) including no more than 15% of the State's food stamp caseload and (2) running for a maximum of 5 years (unless USDA approves an extension).
- Projects must be evaluated and limited to specific time periods.
- Prohibits waivers that would cash-out benefits (beyond those approved prior to enactment), substantially transfer program funds to other public assistance programs, or use food stamp funds for any purpose other than food, program administration, or E&T.
- Requires that waivers must be consistent with the following provisions of the Food Stamp Act:
  - household definition: eligibility/ineligibility of institutionalized individuals
  - disqualification for nonfinancial eligibility criteria other than those related to work, behavior, or conduct
  - gross income limits for non-elderly/disabled
  - work requirements: exemption based on care of a child under 6 or an incapacitated person, required hours of E&T participation, funding limit for services to Title IV-A recipients set at the amount used by the State for AFDC recipients in FY 95
  - exclusion of the value of benefits for the purpose of computing income/resources for other assistance programs or taxation
  - provision of timely, accurate, and fair service
  - development of applications with necessary information
  - ability to apply at first contact with food stamp office
  - same-day application filing

- certifications by adult household representatives as to truth of application information and citizenship status
- participation by homeless
- variable office procedures to reflect differences within States
- 30-day processing of applications
- administrative cost sharing and QC
- limitation on demonstration project authority
- workfare authority and funding
- Prohibits waivers that increase shelter deductions for households with no out-of-pocket housing costs or costs that are small relative to income.
- Prohibits waivers that absolve States from acting with reasonable promptness on substantial reported changes in income or household size (but not deduction changes).
- Prohibits waivers of Simplified Food Stamp Program (SFSP) provisions.

#### **Sec. 851: Response to Waivers**

- Requires USDA to approve, deny, or request clarification of waivers within 60 days or legal waivers will be deemed approved.
- Requires USDA to provide copies of denied waivers and grounds for denial to Congressional Committees.

#### **Sec. 852: Employment Initiatives Program**

- Provides an option for States in which at least 50% of the food stamp caseload in the summer of 1993 also received AFDC to provide certain households with cash in lieu of food stamps.
- In such States, provides a household option to receive cash food stamp benefits if an adult member elects to participate and (1) has worked in unsubsidized employment at least the last 90 days, earned at least \$350 per month for at least the last 90 days, and is continuing to do so, and (2) is eligible for Title IV-A benefits or becomes ineligible because of earnings.
- Requires States to provide USDA a written evaluation (content determined by States with USDA's concurrence) of the impact of cash assistance after operating 2 years under this provision.
- Requires States that select this option to increase benefits to compensate for State or local sales taxes on food purchases and to pay the cost of increased benefits.

#### **Sec. 853: Reauthorization**

- Reauthorizes the FSP through FY 2002.

#### **Sec. 854: Simplified Food Stamp Program**

- Allows States to operate an SFSP throughout the State or in political subdivisions of a State for households in which all members receive Title IV-A. Such households are categorically eligible for the SFSP unless USDA determines that households with income above 130% of the poverty guidelines are eligible for Title IV-A. Under SFSPs, food stamp benefits would be determined using Title IV-A rules and procedures, regular FSP rules and procedures, or a combination of the two. Non public assistance (NPA) households cannot be included in SFSPs and mixed NPA/public assistance households can only be included with USDA approval.
- To operate a SFSP, the State must have a plan for operation of the program approved by USDA. USDA is required to approve plans that (1) comply with certain rules of the Food Stamp Act, and (2) would not increase Federal costs

for any fiscal year.

- Requires USDA to determine if a SFSP is increasing Federal costs but prohibits USDA from requiring States to report information on households not included in SFSPs. Authorizes USDA to approve State requests to use alternative accounting periods.
- If a State's SFSP is determined to be increasing Federal costs and the State does not submit and/or carry out a corrective action plan, USDA is required to end the SFSP. States with terminated SFSPs are ineligible to operate SFSPs in the future.
- States can standardize deductions by considering work expenses, dependent care costs, and shelter costs.
- SFSPs must comply with the following statutory FSP requirements:
  - issuance procedures, except for staggering of benefits
  - use of TFP as the basis of benefits, calculation of benefits using the 30% benefit reduction rate, and provision of a minimum allotment to one- and two-person households
  - prohibitions against counting food stamp benefits as income or resources under any other Federal, State, or local law and against increasing a household's benefit due to a decrease in other public assistance or welfare benefits caused by the household's intentional violation of the rules of another public assistance or welfare program;
  - States' responsibility for certification, issuance, and record retention; anti-discrimination protections; submission and approval of plans of operation and administration of the FSP on Indian reservations; and measures to prevent receipt of duplicate benefits
  - limits on the use and disclosure of information about food stamp households; submission of required reports and other information; reporting illegal aliens to INS; optional use of IEVS and SAVE; optional extension of disqualifications of other means-tested programs; SFSP provisions
  - fair hearings
  - QC
- If a State elects to carry out an SFSP, its plans for operating the SFSP must include the rules and procedures to be followed in determining food stamp benefits, how the needs of households with high shelter costs will be addressed, and a description of its QC system.

#### **Sec. 855: Study of the Use of Food Stamps to Purchase Vitamins and Minerals**

- Requires USDA to study (in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention) the use of food stamps to purchase vitamins and minerals, including (1) an analysis of the scientific findings on the need for vitamins/minerals, (2) the cost of commercially-available vitamins/minerals, (3) the vitamin/mineral purchasing habits of low-income people, (4) the impact of purchasing vitamins/minerals on food purchases, and (5) the economic impact on agriculture of permitting the purchase of vitamins/minerals with food stamps. Requires report to Congress by 12/15/98.

#### **Sec. 103: Block Grants to States**

- Includes statements that States cannot be prohibited from sanctioning adults in food stamp households who fail to ensure that their minor dependent children attend school as required by State law or are themselves 21-50 years old and do not have, or are not working toward, a high school diploma or recognized equivalent unless such adult has been determined medically unable to do so.

#### **Sec. 115: Denial of Assistance and Benefits for Certain Drug-Related Convictions**

- Makes ineligible individuals convicted of Federal or State felonies for possession, use, or distribution of illegal drugs after the date of enactment.
- Does not consider disqualified individuals to be household members but attributes their income and resources to their households.

- Requires applicants to state, in writing, whether any household member has been convicted of drug felonies.
- Permits States to opt out of the provision by enacting laws after the date of the enactment exempting individuals or limiting the disqualification period.

**Sec. 911: Fraud Under Means-Tested Welfare and Public Assistance Programs**

- Prohibits increasing benefits to individuals whose income decreases due to fraud under a Federal, State, or local means-tested welfare or public assistance program.

**Sec. 401: Aliens Who Are Not Qualified Aliens Ineligible for Federal Public Benefits**

- Makes aliens who are not qualified aliens (defined in Sec. 431) ineligible for the Food Stamp Program.

**Sec. 402: Limited Eligibility of Qualified Aliens for Certain Federal Programs**

- Limits food stamp eligibility of qualified aliens to those that meet the following exceptions:
- for 5 years, certain refugees, certain aliens granted asylum, and aliens whose deportation is withheld
- permanent resident aliens who have worked for 40 qualifying quarters (for any quarters worked after January 1, 1997, aliens cannot have received any Federal means-tested public benefit)
- veterans with honorable discharges not related to their alien status and aliens on active duty or the spouses or unmarried dependent children of such veterans or aliens.
- Grandfathers currently-participating aliens until their recertifications or 1 year after the date of enactment, whichever is first.

**Sec. 404: Notification and Information Reporting**

- Requires notification to the public and to recipients of the alien eligibility changes in the legislation.

**Sec. 421: Federal Attribution of Sponsor's Income and Resources to Alien**

- Requires deeming an alien's sponsor's income and resources and the sponsor's spouse's income and resources to the alien until the alien becomes a citizen or works 40 qualifying quarters during which he/she does not receive any Federal mean-tested public benefit.
- Requires States to review the deemed income and resources each time an alien reapplies.
- Makes the deeming requirement effective for any eligibility determination or redetermination after enactment.

**Sec. 431: Definitions**

- Defines qualified aliens as:
- aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence
- certain aliens granted asylum
- certain refugees
- certain aliens paroled for a period of at least 1 year
- certain aliens whose deportation is being withheld
- certain aliens granted conditional entry.

**Sec. 432: Verification of Eligibility for Federal Public Benefits**

- Requires States to have in effect by 24 months after regulations are promulgated by DOJ (after consultation with DHHS) systems that can verify that alien applicants are qualified aliens eligible to receive food stamps.