



The Emergency Food Assistance Program

What Is The Emergency Food Assistance Program?

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans including elderly people by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost.

Who Administers TEFAP?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers TEFAP at the Federal level. At the State level, TEFAP is administered by State distributing agencies that then work with local agencies to provide food to participants.

How Does TEFAP Work?

Through TEFAP, USDA purchases a variety of nutritious, domestically sourced and produced food, known as USDA Foods, and makes them available to State distributing agencies. States provide the food to their local agency partners, such as food banks, which in turn distribute the food directly to the public or to local organizations such as soup kitchens and food pantries. TEFAP receives food funding through a statutory funding formula to support TEFAP entitlement food. TEFAP also receives food from market support purchases (also known as bonus food or Section 32 purchases) and Food Purchase and Distribution Program food purchases.

How Can Participants Qualify for TEFAP?

Households that meet State-defined eligibility criteria may receive food for home use through TEFAP. States set income standards, which may, at the State’s discretion, be met through participation in other existing Federal, State, or local food, health, or welfare programs for which eligibility is based on income. States can adjust eligibility criteria to ensure that assistance is provided only to those households most in need.

Recipients of prepared meals, such as those served at a soup kitchen, are considered to be low income and are not subject to a means test.

Where Can I Go To Learn More About TEFAP?

Contact your State distributing agency for more information about TEFAP. A list of State contacts can be found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>.

Whom at FNS Can I Contact To Discuss TEFAP?

Please contact the FNS Division of External and Governmental Affairs at fns.govaffairs@usda.gov.

Key Emergency Food Assistance Program Data	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Entitlement Food Value (in millions)	\$296.6	\$296.4	\$289.7	\$260.3	\$254.5
Bonus Food Value (in millions)	\$302.9	\$305.5	\$268.6	\$308.9	\$403.2