

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Facts



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, helps low-income people buy food. Although it is a federal government program, it is run by state or local agencies.

Who can get SNAP?

Anyone can apply for SNAP, but you and the other people in your household must meet certain conditions. Everyone who is applying in your household must have or apply for a Social Security number and be either a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or have status as a qualified alien.

The following qualified aliens are eligible for SNAP without a waiting period:

- Legal immigrant children under age 18;
- Blind or disabled legal immigrants who receive disability assistance or benefits;
- Individuals born on or before August 22, 1931, and who legally resided in the United States on August 22, 1996;
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) with a military connection (includes Hmong or Highland Laotian tribes that helped the U.S. military during the Vietnam era, veterans, active duty, or a spouse or a child of a veteran or active duty service member);
- Refugees admitted under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);
- Asylees under section 208 of the INA;
- Immigrants whose deportation or removal is withheld under section 243(h) or 241(b)(3) of the INA;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants under section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980;
- Amerasian immigrants under section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1988.

The following legal aliens are eligible without a waiting period even if they are not “qualified aliens”:

- Hmong or Highland Laotian tribal members (including their spouses and children) who helped the U.S. military during the Vietnam era;

- American Indians born in Canada;
- Members of Indian tribes under section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b(e)).

The following qualified aliens are eligible if they have lived in the U.S. for five years from date of entry or if they have sufficient work history (40 work credits) to qualify:

- LPRs (they may be eligible sooner than five years if they have 40 work credits);
- Parolees (paroled for at least one year under section 212(d)(5) of INA);
- Conditional entrants under 203(a)(7) of INA in effect prior to April 1, 1980;
- A battered spouse, battered child or parent or child of a battered person with a petition pending under 204(a)(1)(A) or (B) or 244(a)(3) of INA.

Most able-bodied people between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for work to qualify for SNAP. Many people may be required to participate in an employment or training program. Some college students also may be eligible.

Resources (things you own)

Generally, your household cannot have more than \$2,000 in resources (things you own). But, if your household includes a person age 60 or older or who is disabled, the limit is \$3,000. Resources of people who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are not counted for SNAP purposes. Resources include cash, bank accounts and other property.

Not all resources you own count. For example, your home and the land it is on do not count for SNAP eligibility. A car or truck counts differently depending on how it is used. Most states now use TANF rules in place of SNAP vehicle rules if the TANF rules are more beneficial to the SNAP household.

Most households also must meet an income limit. Certain things do not count as income and can be subtracted from your income.

(over)

Your household may qualify for other income exclusions if it includes a person age 60 or older or disabled. The income limits vary by household size and may change each year.

How can you apply for SNAP?

SNAP applications are available at any Social Security office. If you and everyone in your household are **applying** for or already **getting SSI** payments, any Social Security office will help you fill out the SNAP application and send it to the local SNAP office for you.

All others, including those **applying** for or **getting only Social Security**, must take or send their SNAP applications to the local SNAP office or to any Social Security office where a SNAP representative works.

When you are interviewed, you also should have:

- Identification such as a driver's license, state ID, birth certificate or alien card;
- Proof of income for each member of your household, such as pay stubs or records that show if Social Security, SSI or a pension for each member of your household is received;
- Proof of how much you spend for child care;
- Rent receipts or proof of your mortgage payments;
- Records of your utility costs; and
- Medical bills for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who receive government payments such as Social Security or SSI because they are disabled.

How much can you get?

You can find out how much you may be able to get online through the SNAP Pre-Screening Tool at www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov.

Contacting Social Security

Contact your Social Security or local SNAP office for more information about SNAP and eligibility rules. Remember, Social Security does not decide if you are eligible for SNAP.

For more information and to find copies of our publications, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free, **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We treat all calls confidentially. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call during the week after Tuesday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.