



Social Security

Nutrition Assistance Programs

www.socialsecurity.gov

Nutrition Assistance Programs

Federal, state, and local governments provide many programs to help meet the nutritional needs of people with low incomes and their families.

Although Social Security doesn't manage any of these programs, we can refer you to the agencies that do. We have a special working relationship with social service agencies that run the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. In some cases, we can even take a SNAP application.

What is the SNAP?

The SNAP helps low-income people buy the food they need for good health. SNAP benefits are not cash. SNAP benefits are provided on an electronic card that is used like an ATM or bank card to buy food at most grocery stores.

Can you get SNAP benefits?

You and everyone in your household must meet certain conditions to get SNAP benefits. Your household includes everyone who lives with you, and who buys and prepares food together.

If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in California, you aren't eligible for the SNAP because the state includes extra money in the amount it adds to the federal SSI payment.

Income

There are two income limits: gross and net. Your total income, before taxes or any other subtractions, is called your gross income. However, certain subtractions to your gross income, called deductions, are allowed. These deductions can be for things like housing costs, child support payments, child or dependent care payments, and monthly medical expenses over \$35 for people age 60 or older or disabled people. The amount left over after these deductions is called your net income.

Most households must meet both income limits. Households are considered income-eligible if everyone in the household receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Resources

In general, households may have \$2,250 in resources, such as a bank account, or \$3,250 in resources if at least one person is age 60 or older, or

is disabled. However, some states have different resource limits, and not all resources count. If you own your own home, it isn't counted as a resource. In some states, you may have at least one car. The resources of people who receive TANF or SSI do not count.

Work

Generally, able-bodied adults between 18 and 50, who don't have any dependent children, can get SNAP benefits only for 3 months in a 36-month period if they don't work or participate in a work fair, or employment and training program, other than their job search. This requirement is waived in some locations.

With some exceptions, able-bodied adults between the ages of 16 and 60 must register for work, accept suitable employment, and take part in an employment and training program to which they are referred by the local office. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in disqualification from the program.

If you receive SSI or SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), you are exempt from these work requirements.

Immigrants

You may get SNAP benefits if you're a legal immigrant. Most legal immigrants must wait 5 years before getting SNAP benefits. There is no wait for:

- children under 18,
- some elderly
- disabled people,
- refugees or asylees.

Some legal immigrants may get SNAP benefits if they have enough work history, and some may be eligible if they have a military connection.

If you are not eligible due to immigration status, your legal immigrant or citizen children may still qualify. You don't have to provide immigration information about yourself when you apply for your legal immigrant or citizen children.

What amount of SNAP benefits can you get?

If your household is eligible, the amount of SNAP benefits you get depends on your household size, monthly household income and expenses for such things as:

- Mortgage or rent;
- Utilities; and

- Child care or elder care needed to allow someone to work

Medical expenses of more than \$35 a month for people age 60 or older, or people who are disabled, are deducted from your household income if they aren't paid for by another party, such as Medicaid, Medicare, or an insurance company.

You can also find out how much you may be able to get online through the pre-screening tool at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns.

How to apply for SNAP benefits

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 application and send it to the SNAP for you.**

All others must take or send their SNAP application to the local SNAP office or to any Social Security office where a SNAP representative works.

As part of your SNAP application, you should also provide

- 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 is received;

- Proof of how much you spend for child or dependent care;
- Rent receipts, or proof of your rent or mortgage payments;
- Records of your utility costs; and
- Medical bills for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who get government payments, like Social Security or SSI because they are disabled.

You should find out if you're eligible within 30 days. Households eligible for expedited service get benefits within seven days. If you don't hear within 30 days, call or visit the SNAP office.

Homeless people and SNAP benefits

You can still get SNAP benefits even if you're homeless and don't have an address, a place to stay, or a place to cook meals. You're considered homeless if you don't have a fixed, regular nighttime residence or if your primary nighttime residence is a temporary accommodation in

- A supervised shelter;
- A halfway house;
- The residence of another person; or

- A place not designed for regular sleeping, such as a hallway, bus station, or lobby.

Other nutrition programs available

The SNAP is just one of many nutrition programs available. The federal government and many state and local government agencies sponsor numerous programs that provide people with information about, and access to, a more nutritious diet. Many of these programs also are set up to improve the health and eating habits of children. Here are two examples:

Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

The WIC program provides nutritious foods to supplement the diets of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breast-feeding women, infants, and children up to five years of age. The program also provides nutrition education and referrals to health services and other assistance programs.

The Department of Agriculture administers the WIC program through state health departments. Eligibility is based on income and on nutritional risk as determined by a health professional.

Contact your state or local health department for more information about this program.

Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)

NSIP (formerly Nutrition Program for the Elderly or NPE) is a food program run by the Department of Health and Human Services through the state agencies on aging to help older people. The NSIP is part of the Grants for State and Community Programs on Aging, which also authorizes in-home services for frail elderly people, support services, and senior center operations. The nutrition services program provides elderly Americans with nutritious meals.

- If you are age 60 or older, you're eligible for the program, and so is your spouse, even if he or she isn't 60 years old. Age is the only factor used to decide if you're eligible. You don't have to meet any income limits to get meals through the program.
- Neighborhood centers for the elderly serve well-balanced, hot or cold meals at least once a day, five days a week. When possible, transportation is offered to and from the sites for those who need it.

Home-delivered meals, usually called "Meals on Wheels," are provided to elderly people who are homebound.

For more information about this program, contact your local Office on Aging, or ask your local Social Security office.

More food programs

The Department of Agriculture administers other food programs.

Several food distribution programs give commodities to needy households or to organizations that provide meal service to low-income people, including soup kitchens, churches, and homeless shelters.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program offers meals and snacks to children in eligible day care centers, family day care homes, and other care centers, as well as to functionally impaired adults and elderly people in day care situations.

The School Lunch and Breakfast Programs offer meals to children at schools. Low-income children get these meals free, or at a reduced price, while other children have access to reasonably priced meals.

The Summer Food Service Program offers free meals and snacks to needy children during the months when school is not in session.

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides low-income seniors (people who are at least 60 years old) with coupons during the harvest season that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

For more information about these programs, contact your local social services, health, agriculture, aging office, or school.

Contacting Social Security

Visit www.socialsecurity.gov anytime to apply for benefits, open a **my Social Security** account, find publications, and get answers to frequently asked questions. Or, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer case-specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call after Tuesday. We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service, so a second Social Security representative monitors some telephone calls. We can provide general information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. And, remember, our website, www.socialsecurity.gov, is available to you anytime and anywhere!

SNAP

Getting or applying only for Social Security?

You can get a SNAP application and information at any Social Security office.

We can't process your SNAP applications if you're getting or applying only for Social Security.

Getting or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

You can apply for SNAP benefits at any Social Security office, if you and everyone in your household get or apply for SSI.

We'll help you fill out the SNAP application. You don't have to go to the SNAP office to apply.



Social Security Administration

SSA Publication No. 05-10100

ICN 468650

Unit of Issue - HD (one hundred)

June 2015 (Recycle prior editions)



Printed on recycled paper