

## Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)



As of Oct. 1, 2008, SNAP is the new name for the federal Food Stamp Program. It stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and reflects changes made to meet client's needs, including a focus on nutrition and an increase in benefit amounts.

### What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides a basic safety net to millions of people. The idea for the program was born in the late 1930s, with a limited program in effect from 1939 to 1943. It was revived as a pilot program in 1961 and was extended nationwide in 1974. The current program structure was implemented in 1977 with a goal of alleviating hunger and malnutrition by permitting low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet through normal channels of trade.

The program provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families which can be used to purchase food. Through the electronic benefit transfer systems (EBT) the use of food stamp "coupons" is no longer the means in which a client receives their benefits. EBT replaces paper coupons through use of a benefits card, similar to a bank card. USDA reports that all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico are now using EBT systems.

### Eligibility

Everyone has a right to apply for SNAP. Eligibility for SNAP is based on financial (income and resources) and non-financial (citizenship, social security number, work requirements) factors. The application process includes completing and filing an application form, being interviewed, and verifying facts crucial to determining eligibility. With certain exceptions, a household that meets the eligibility requirements is qualified to receive benefits. Legal immigrants who are children or disabled can now get supplemental nutrition assistance, as can legal immigrants who have legally resided in the United States for at least 5 years. Other legal immigrants and any undocumented immigrants are ineligible for SNAP benefits. Also, many able-bodied, childless, unemployed adults have time limits on their receipt of SNAP benefits.

A household is defined as a person or a group of people living together, but not necessarily related, who purchase and prepare food together. Households, except those with elderly or disabled members, must have gross incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line. All households must have net incomes below 100 percent of poverty to be eligible. Most households may have up to \$2,000 in countable resources (e.g., checking/savings account, cash, stocks/bonds). Households with at least one household member who is disabled or age 60 or older may have up to \$3,000 in resources. Currently, program benefits provide an average of nearly 90 cents a meal per person.



For more information: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap)

For eligibility requirements: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant\\_recipients/eligibility.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/eligibility.htm)

To apply for benefits: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant\\_recipients/apply.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/apply.htm)

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