

FACTS ABOUT THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly benefits that help low income households buy the food they need for good health. You may qualify for SNAP benefits if you (1) have little or no income, (2) work for low wages, (3) receive TANF, SSI or other assistance payments, (4) are elderly or disabled and live on a small income, and/or (5) are not a fleeing felon or in violation of probation or parole.

The amount of SNAP benefits a household can receive is based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Thrifty Food Plan, an estimate of how much it actually costs to provide your household with nutritious but inexpensive meals. The cost estimate is revised yearly to keep pace with food prices.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR SNAP BENEFITS?

You may apply online at <https://www.access.ms.gov>. If requested, you will be sent an application form on the same day you ask for one, either in person, over the phone, by mail, or someone else may get one for you.

Your local county Department of Human Services Economic Assistance Eligibility Office will accept the application on the same day you turn it in, even if an interview on that day is not possible.

You may be able to get SNAP benefits within 7 days if your household has little or no money and you verify your identity.

If you are applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), you may apply for SNAP benefits at the same time at the county office.

If you are applying for or receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, you may apply for SNAP benefits at your Social Security District Office.

HAVING AN INTERVIEW WITH A WORKER

After you have turned in your application, a worker will hold a private interview with you or another member of your household. An adult friend or relative who knows your circumstances may be interviewed for you. The worker will ask you for proof of certain information you have provided.

MEETING ELIGIBILITY RULES

Citizenship: U.S. citizens, and certain other qualified aliens.

Social Security Numbers: A Social Security Number (SSN) must be applied for or provided for each person for whom assistance is requested. SSNs will be verified and used for Federal and State data matches, including, but not limited to, Social Security, IRS, VA, Department of Employment Security, resource/income verifications, and Program disqualifications.

Child Support Requirements: If you are a natural or adoptive parent, or other individual who is living with and exercising parental control over a child under 18 years of age who has an absent parent, you must cooperate with MDHS Division of Child Support Enforcement to establish paternity and obtain support for the child(ren). Also, if you are an alleged father or non-custodial parent of a child under 18 years of age who is receiving SNAP benefits, you must cooperate with MDHS Division of Child Support Enforcement to establish paternity and obtain support for the child(ren).

Other Program Rules: If you are a recipient of a Federal or State means-tested public assistance program, you must cooperate with all the rules of that program to qualify for SNAP benefits without a penalty.

Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents: An ABAWD is an able-bodied adult without dependents. ABAWD eligibility for SNAP is limited to any 3 countable months in a 36-month period (considered the 3-month time limit) unless the individual meets the ABAWD work requirements (defined below). The 3-month time limit does not apply to individuals who are: 1) under 18 or 50 years of age or over; 2) medically certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment; 3) responsible for a dependent child or residing in a household where a household member is under age 18; 4) exempt from SNAP work requirements; or 5) pregnant. All other SNAP participants are considered ABAWDs.

Work Requirements: If you are between the ages of 16 and 60 and are physically and mentally fit for employment, you must register for work and accept an offer of suitable work.

Work Rules Requirements: You may be disqualified from participation in SNAP if you refuse to provide information to determine employment status or job availability, quit a job voluntarily, voluntarily reduce your work hours to less than 30 hours a week, or fail to comply with Employment & Training requirements. The disqualification periods for persons failing to comply with the work rules are:

- First Violation 3 Months and Compliance
- Second Violation 6 Months and Compliance
- Third Violation Permanently

A disqualification continues until the penalty is served and compliance is met, or the individual meets an exemption from work registration requirements, whichever occurs first. If the head of household fails to comply with work rules and does not have good cause, the entire household will be disqualified for up to 6 months.

Resources: Some resources are counted and some are not. The worker will explain this to you in detail. All households may have up to \$2,500 worth of countable resources. Households may have up to \$3,750 if at least one member is age 60 or older and/or disabled. Households receiving gambling or lottery winnings of \$3,750 or more must report this change within 10 days of receipt of the winnings.

Income: Under program rules, all income must be reported even though some income may be excluded. Only households with income at or below certain limits will qualify for benefits. You must provide proof of the income of all household members.

Deductions: After adding all your household's countable income, certain deductions will be subtracted. The total must fall below certain limits for your household to qualify for SNAP benefits. The following deductions are allowed for all households: (1) standard deduction, to cover basic household expenses, (2) an earned income deduction from the income you earn, (3) a deduction for the actual costs of dependent care, (4) court ordered child support payments to non-household members, and (5) a portion of higher shelter costs. There is a maximum on the amount of most expenses that may be deducted. Households with members who are disabled or age 60 or older may qualify for two extra deductions: (1) a deduction for actual out-of-pocket medical costs over \$35 a month; (2) an extra deduction for high shelter costs.

Students: Some college students may be eligible to receive SNAP benefits. Able-bodied students between the ages of 18 and 50 who are enrolled in college or other institution of higher education at least half-time are eligible only if they meet certain student requirements.

Labor Strike: Households with persons who are on strike because of labor dispute are eligible to participate in the SNAP only if the household was or would have been eligible immediately prior to the strike and continues to be eligible at the time of application.

FINDING OUT WHETHER YOU QUALIFY

After your interview, you will be sent a notice of approval or denial. If you do not qualify for SNAP benefits, the notice will explain why. If you do qualify, the notice will show the monthly amount and will tell you how many months you can receive benefits before you must reapply.

If you qualify, you will receive the SNAP benefits no later than 30 days from the date the office received your application, provided all verifications necessary to process your application are received within the 30-day period. You may request a fair hearing if you do not agree with the action taken by the office.

RECEIVING AND USING YOUR SNAP BENEFITS

You will be issued an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, along with instructions on the use of the card. Your EBT card works like a debit card and can be used to make food purchases at most grocery stores and some online grocery websites. SNAP benefits may only be used for food and for plants and seeds to grow food for your household.

REPORTING CHANGES IN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

If your household is eligible for SNAP benefits, you will be responsible for reporting certain household circumstances. You will be told what circumstances to report and when to report them. If you fail to report a change as required and your household receives extra SNAP benefits, you will owe the Program the value of those benefits.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Receive an application the same day you ask for it.
- Have your application accepted immediately.
- Receive your benefits within 30 days after you apply if you are eligible or within 7 days, if you qualify for faster service.
- Be notified if your benefits are being reduced or terminated because of a change in your circumstances.

- Have a Fair Hearing if you disagree with any action taken on your case.

YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Answer all questions completely and honestly.
- Provide proof that you are eligible.
- Report changes in your household circumstances as required to the local office.
- Not put your money or possessions in someone else's name in order to qualify for SNAP benefits.
- Not sell, trade, or give away your SNAP benefits or EBT card.
- Use SNAP benefits only to buy eligible items.

PEOPLE WHO BREAK PROGRAM RULES MAY BE DISQUALIFIED FROM THE PROGRAM, FINED, IMPRISONED, OR ALL THREE.

If disqualified, the time will be for 1 year, the second time will be for 2 years, and the third time will be permanent.

Individuals determined by a court to have committed the following violations will be subject to the following penalties.

- Disqualified for 2 years for the 1st offense and permanently for 2nd offense involving the sale of illegal drugs for benefits.
- Permanently disqualified for the 1st offense involving the sale of firearms, ammunition, explosives for benefits, or trafficking in SNAP benefits of \$500 or more.
- Disqualified for 10 years, if determined by a court or the State agency, that an individual has made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to identity and residence in order to receive multiple benefits simultaneously.

USDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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