



# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Fact Sheet

## Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) used to be known as the Food Stamp Program. Low-income people can use SNAP benefits in place of cash to buy food. Most people, however, must spend some cash with their SNAP benefits to buy enough food for the month.

## Eligibility

If you are a U.S. citizen or a legal alien, you may be able to receive SNAP benefits.

Unless everyone in your home gets Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, you must meet certain financial tests about your assets and income.

## Assets

Assets are things that you own. Examples are money (at home or in the bank), stocks, bonds, real estate, cars, and other types of vehicles.

## Income

The income of everyone who lives in your household is counted. This includes money from work, as well as money from TEA, Social Security, SSI, unemployment benefits, Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, and child support.

## Work Requirements

If you are an able-bodied adult without dependents and work fewer than 20 hours per week, you may only receive SNAP benefits for a total of three full months within a 36-month period.

If you are an able-bodied adult without dependents and you work 20 hours per week or more, the time limit does not apply to you.

## The work requirements do not apply to those who:

- receive SSI, VA pension, or work compensation
- have been certified as physically or mentally unfit for employment by a health professional
- have been homeless for a period of time

- are receiving or have applied for unemployment benefits
- are receiving or have applied for TEA
- are participating in a drug or alcohol treatment program or a mental health treatment program
- are students enrolled at least half time in high school or college
- live in a household with any child under 18
- are pregnant
- are providing care for a disabled person or frail elder

## Applying

Call the Department of Human Services (DHS) or go to the DHS office in any county and ask for an application form.

When you have completed the application, take it or mail it to the DHS office in the county where you live.

## After Applying

The DHS must talk to an adult member of your household. They will schedule a time for this interview. During the interview, a county worker will go over your application. Also, the worker will make sure they have all the information needed to see if you are eligible for SNAP benefits. Please, bring the following to your interview:

- I.D. showing your name
- proof of your address
- Social Security numbers for everyone in your household (if someone does not have a Social Security number, you must show they have applied for one—you can apply for Social Security numbers at the DHS office)
- proof of the amount of money you have in the bank
- proof of your household's income
- proof of legal alien status for anyone who is not a U.S. citizen
- medical bills for anyone who is age 60 or older or who receives a disability check



### Denial

If you disagree with why the DHS denied your application, you have the right to appeal. You can do so by going to your local county DHS office and filling out an appeal form. The DHS will let you know the time and date of your hearing.

### Timeline

If you are eligible, you will receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card within 30 days. You will use the EBT card to purchase food.

If you have little or no income or savings, you could have your EBT card within seven days.

If you are not eligible, a notice will be sent to you telling you why your application was denied.

### Benefits

The amount of SNAP benefits you get depends on the number of people in your household and your monthly net income.

#### Decreased or Cut-Off Benefits

You will receive a written notice from the DHS telling you what action has been taken. If you disagree with the action taken, you have the right to appeal. You must appeal in writing within 90 days of the date of the action.

As soon as you receive any notice you disagree with affecting your SNAP benefits, you should contact the Center for Arkansas Legal Services or Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., at 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).

#### Overpayment

An overpayment is when the DHS says they gave you more SNAP benefits than you were entitled to.

If you are overpaid SNAP benefits, you will be investigated. Even if it is determined that the mistake was made by the DHS, you will still have to pay the benefits back. A reduction in the amount of your monthly SNAP benefits may be necessary to repay the overpayment.

The DHS will open a fraud investigation if they determine that you gave false information or failed to report changes in your household income or size. The investigation can be by the local DHS office or by criminal authorities.

Criminal charges may be filed against you if you are found to have lied to the DHS to get more SNAP benefits than you were entitled to.

If you are found guilty of fraud, you may lose SNAP benefits for as little as one year or forever.

It is very important that you contact the Center for Arkansas Legal Services or Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., at 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243) if you are notified that you are being investigated for fraud.

### Change of Information

You should immediately contact your local DHS office and provide them proof of your income or household changes. You need to do this regardless of whether your income or household size increases or decreases.

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*This fact sheet is a collaboration of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. These nonprofit organizations provide free legal assistance to eligible Arkansans who meet income, asset, and other guidelines. Legal assistance may also include advice and counsel, brief services, or full representation depending on the situation. For more information about civil legal aid in Arkansas, please visit [arlegalservices.org](http://arlegalservices.org). For information specific to Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., visit [arlegalaid.org](http://arlegalaid.org). Apply for services online or by calling 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).*

*The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.*

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