

Food Support

What is Food Support?

The Food Support program is a county-run, federal program that helps Minnesotans with low incomes get the food they need for sound nutrition and well-balanced meals. The program issues electronic food support benefits that can help stretch your food budget.

The Food Support program is not intended to meet all of your food budget needs. Food support benefits can be spent like cash in most food stores. They can be used to buy food or plants and seeds to grow food to eat. They cannot be used to buy non-food items (such as paper products or household and personal hygiene supplies), alcoholic drinks, tobacco products, vitamins, medication, pet foods, foods eaten in the store or hot ready-to-eat “deli” food.

This information does not cover all program rules. Your county human services office must have all the facts about your situation before a final decision can be made on your request for Food Support.

Who can get Food Support?

You may get food support benefits if you meet the following guidelines:

- Your monthly income is within the gross and net income limits. Under Food Support rules, most types of income are counted. There are many deductions from income that are allowed under the Food Support program. A county worker can give you more information on income limits and deductions.
- Your assets are within Food Support limits. Assets include cash, bank accounts and vehicles. Your county worker can give you more information on what assets are counted.

- You register for work if you are asked to.
- You provide a Social Security number for each person in your home applying for food support benefits. Your county worker can help you with this process.
- You are a citizen of the United States or an eligible non-citizen.
- You do not take part in the Tribal Food Distribution Program in the same month.

How much can I get?

The amount of food support benefits your household can get is based on the income, expenses and number of people in your household.

How do I apply?

Request a Food Support application by mail, by phone or in person. There are several steps that you must follow to apply:

- Ask your county human services agency for the Combined Application Form - CAF.
- Fill out the form as accurately and completely as you can.
- Meet with your county worker to explain your situation and discuss any questions you have about the form or about the Food Support program.

Most meetings are held at the county human services office. If no one in your household can go to the office for a meeting, an adult friend or relative who knows your situation may go in your place. If that does not work out, in some cases a county worker may arrange to interview you at your home or by phone.

- Verify the items requested by the county worker.

Be sure to apply for the Food Support program as soon as you need help. Return the CAF as soon as you can to your county human services office because your food support benefits are issued based on the date you turn in a completed page one of the CAF. The county human services office will accept the application on the same day you turn it in, even if they cannot interview you on that day.

The county cannot decide if you will get food support benefits until you turn in the entire form and required verifications.

What information is needed?

The following items are often needed to decide if you will get Food Support:

- Identification showing your name and address
- A Social Security number for all household members applying for benefits. If you or a member of your household has not applied for a Social Security number, you must apply at the same time you apply for Food Support.
- Proof of your monthly earnings, such as recent pay stubs
- Copy of check or benefit statement from Social Security, pension, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other unearned income
- Proof of your household's assets
- Proof of housing and utility costs (needed before the agency can allow these costs as a deduction from your income)
- Proof of immigration status for all household members applying for benefits
- Medical bills of household members who are 60 years or older or have disabilities if these bills are not paid by insurance, Medical Assistance or Medicare (needed before the agency can allow these costs as a deduction from your income).

What is expedited service?

If you qualify for food support benefits, you will get them no later than 30 days from the date your county got your application. If you need help right away, you may qualify to have your food support benefits issued within one day. You may get food support benefits right away if:

- Your liquid assets do not exceed \$100 and your monthly gross income is less than \$150, or

- Your assets and gross income for the month are less than your housing costs.

Some migrant and seasonal farmworker households may also get food support benefits within one day. Fill in all of the CAF page one and turn it in to your county human services office to see if you can get one-day service.

What is considered illegal use of Food Support?

It is illegal to exchange or sell your food support benefits for cash!

If you use your food support benefits to buy anything other than eligible food items, you are breaking the law.

If you use your food support benefits illegally, you may be disqualified from the Food Support program, fined and/or imprisoned.

What other programs are available?

You may also be eligible for other assistance programs that help to pay the costs of food, shelter, medical and other needs. These programs include:

- General Assistance (GA)
- Diversionary Work Program (DWP)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA)
- Medical Assistance (MA)
- MinnesotaCare

There are also social services such as counseling, homemaking, family planning, services for unmarried parents, adoption services and programs for senior citizens.

Contact your county human services office to find out about these programs.

What are my rights to privacy?

Most of the time, the facts asked for by the human services office are called “private.” This means you can see the facts about yourself, but they are not open to the public. Some other government agencies may also be allowed to see them. You have the right to question what you think is wrong in your file. For more facts about data privacy, ask your county worker or write the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

What am I responsible for?

- You must tell your county human services office within 10 days or on a required monthly report of any changes in household members, income, vehicles, other resources or residency.
- You must cooperate with state quality control workers if they choose your case for review. If you don't, your food support benefits may end until you do cooperate.

How do I appeal?

If you don't agree with the action the county takes on your application, tell your county worker. Ask the worker to explain the reasons for the action.

You can see the policy manuals, rules and laws that give the reasons for the action. If you still do not agree, you can appeal. Your county worker will help you ask for an appeal hearing or contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Appeals Office
PO Box 64941
St. Paul, MN 55164-0941
Metro: (651) 431-3600 (Voice)
Outstate: (800) 657-3510
TTY: (800) 627-3529
Fax: (651) 431-7523

Bring any facts to the hearing that will help you explain why you do not agree. You may bring a friend or a lawyer. If you want a lawyer, ask your county worker for information about free legal services. You may bring people to the hearing to give information about the facts. After you and the county have talked about your case, the Human Services judge will decide the case. You will get the decision in the mail.

If you are already getting food support benefits and you file your appeal on time, your benefits will continue until your appeal is decided (unless you ask the county to end them). If you lose your appeal, you will have to pay back the benefits you received while your appeal was pending.

If you are still not satisfied, you have 30 days to appeal to the state district court.

If you have questions

For questions about Food Support, contact the human services office in your county. To find out where to apply, call the Food Support Help Line at (800) 657-3698.

For TTY service, call the Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529 and ask them to call your county human services office. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.

Your right to file a complaint

If you feel the county or the Minnesota Department of Human Services treated you differently in the handling of your public assistance application or benefits because of race, color, national origin, political beliefs, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, public assistance status, age or disability, including physical access to government buildings, you may file a complaint with your county agency or any of the following agencies.

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Office for Equal Opportunity
PO Box 64997
St. Paul, MN 55164-0997
(651) 431-3040 (Voice)
(866) 786-3945 (TTY)

Minnesota Department of Human Rights
190 East 5th St., Suite 700
St. Paul, MN 55101
(800) 657-3704 (Voice)
(651) 296-1283 (TTY)

In accordance with Federal law and U. S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Director, Office of Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
(800) 795-3272 (Voice)
(202) 720-6382 (TTY)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Attention. If you want free help translating this information, call the number below for your language.

ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية في ترجمة هذه المعلومات، فاتصل على الرقم 1-800-358-0377.

កំណត់សំគាល់ បើអ្នកចង់បានជំនួយបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះដោយមិនគិតថ្លៃ សូមទូរស័ព្ទទៅលេខ 1-888-468-3787 ។

Pažnja. Ako vam je potrebna besplatna pomoć za prevod ove informacije, nazovite 1-888-234-3785.

Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 1-888-486-8377.

ໂປຼດຊາບ. ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຟຣີ, ຈົ່ງໂທຫາຕາມເລກໂທ 1-888-487-8251.

Hubaddhu. Yoo akka odeeffannoon kun sii hiikamu gargaarsa tolaa feeta ta'e, lakkoofsa kana bilbili 1-888-234-3798.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в переводе этой информации, позвоните по следующему телефону 1-888-562-5877.

Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la'aan ah, wac lambarkan 1-888-547-8829.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame al 1-888-428-3438.

Chú Ý. Nếu quý vị cần dịch thông-tin này miễn phí, xin gọi số 1-888-554-8759.

LB3-0001 (1-08)

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling your county worker. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call (877) 627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services benefits, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.

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