



# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

## What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help you get the food you need for sound nutrition and well-balanced meals. The program issues electronic benefits that can help stretch your food budget.

The program, formerly known as food stamps, is not intended to meet all of your food budget needs. Benefits can be spent like cash in most food stores or some farmers markets. 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 agency must have all the facts about your situation before a final decision can be made on your request for benefits.

## Who can get help?

You may get benefits if you meet the following guidelines:

- Your monthly income is within the gross and net income limits; most types of income are counted, though there are many deductions from income that are allowed under the program; your worker can give you more information on income limits and deductions
- You register for work if you are asked to
- You provide a Social Security number for each person in your home applying for benefits; your 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 benefits you can get is based on income, expenses and number of people in your household.

## How do I apply?

You can apply by mail, phone, in person or online. Ask your county human services agency for an application or apply online at [www.applymn.dhs.mn.gov](http://www.applymn.dhs.mn.gov).

If you are age 60 and older and are applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program only, use the “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application for Seniors” (DHS-5223F).

There are several steps that you must follow to apply.

- Fill out the application as accurately and completely as you can.
- Submit the completed application with verifications to the agency. Meet with your worker to explain your situation and discuss any questions you have about the application or the program; in some cases your worker may arrange to interview you by phone. Verify information requested by your worker.

You may authorize an adult friend or relative who knows your situation to apply on your behalf.

Be sure to apply for benefits as soon as you need help. Submit an application as soon as you can to your county human services agency because your benefits may be issued based on the date you submit the application. Your human services agency will accept the application on the same day you turn it in, even if they cannot interview you on that day.

The agency cannot decide if you will get benefits until you submit the entire application and required verifications.

If you qualify for benefits, you will get them no later than 30 days from the date you submitted your application.

## What information is needed?

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

- Identification for the applicant and the authorized representative, if there is one
- 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 benefits
- Proof of your monthly earnings, such as recent pay stubs
- Proof of your monthly unearned income, such as benefit statements
- Proof of housing 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 need help right away, you may qualify to have your benefits issued quickly. You may get benefits right away if:

- Your liquid assets do not exceed \$100 and your monthly gross income is less than \$150, or
- Your liquid assets and gross income for the month are less than your housing costs.

Some migrant and seasonal farmworker households may also get benefits quickly. Submit a completed application to your human services agency to see if you can get one-day service.

## Employment and Training

The goal of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) program is to help you prepare for and become employed.

### Eligibility

Able-bodied adults without dependents between the ages of 18 and 50 may be required to participate in employment and training services.

You may be excused from participating in employment and training services if you:

- Live with minor children
- Care for a minor child or incapacitated person
- Are pregnant

- Are a refugee or asylee receiving Matching Grant Program services
- Receive unemployment benefits
- Participate in a chemical dependency treatment program
- Work 30 or more hours per week
- Participate in an approved school or training program
- Are unfit for work or receive disability services.

### Services

If required, you may need to attend an orientation to learn more about program services. You may need to complete an individual assessment and employment plan. If needed, help with transportation or other supportive services can be provided.

## 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)
- MNsure (health care)

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 agency to find out about these programs.

## What is considered illegal use of SNAP benefits?

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

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

If you use your benefits illegally, you may be disqualified from the SNAP program, fined and/or imprisoned.

## What are my rights to privacy?

Most of the time, the facts that human services agencies ask for are considered “private.” This means you can see the facts about yourself, but they are not available 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 to:



Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Attn: Privacy Official  
P.O. Box 64998  
St. Paul, MN  
55164-0998

## What am I responsible for?

- For any change you are required to report, you must tell your county worker by the 10th of the following month.
- If you live with others and they receive benefits from the Minnesota Family Investment Program, you must tell your county worker within 10 days of any changes.
- You must cooperate with state quality control workers if they choose your case for review. If you don't, your benefits may end until you 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 may see the policy manuals, rules and laws that give the reasons for the action. If you still do not agree, you may appeal. Your county worker will help you ask for an appeal hearing or you may submit an appeal online at <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-0033-ENG>. You can also submit an appeal to the Appeals Division at:

Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Appeals Division  
P.O. Box 64941  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0941  
Metro: 651-431-3600 (Voice)  
Greater Minnesota: 800-657-3510  
or use your preferred relay service  
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, relative, or a lawyer or another person. If you want a lawyer, ask your county worker for information about free legal services. You may be able to get legal advice or help with an appeal from your local legal aid office. To find your local legal aid office, ask your county worker for information about free legal services or go to [www.LawHelpMN.org](http://www.LawHelpMN.org) or call 888-354-5522.

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 recommend a decision in the case to a chief human services judge. A chief human services judge will then issue a final decision. You will get the decision in the mail.

If you are already getting benefits and would like your benefits to continue during the appeal process, you must appeal within 10 days of the date on the agency's notice of action letter or before the proposed action takes place. If you file your appeal on time, your benefits will continue until your appeal is decided, your certification period ends, or another change occurs which requires an adjustment. If you lose your appeal, you will have to pay back the benefits you received while your appeal was pending. You can ask the agency to end your benefits until the decision. If you end your benefits and then win your appeal, you will be paid back for benefits that you should have received. If you are still not satisfied after a decision is issued in your appeal, you have 30 days to request the Appeals Division reconsider the decision, or to appeal to the state district court.

## If you have questions

For questions about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, contact the human services agency in your county. To find out where to apply, call the Help Line at 800-657-3698.

**No English?**

[dhs.info@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.info@state.mn.us), call 651-431-4000



For accessible formats of this information, ask your county worker.  
For assistance with additional equal access to human services,  
contact your county's ADA coordinator. ADA4 (2-18)

## Civil Rights Notice

**Discrimination is against the law.** The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) does not discriminate because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sexual orientation, public assistance status, marital status, age, disability, sex or political beliefs.

## Civil Rights Complaints

You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by a human services agency.

Contact **DHS** directly only if you have a discrimination complaint:

Minnesota Department of Human Services  
 Equal Opportunity and Access Division  
 P.O. Box 64997  
 Saint Paul, MN 55164-0997  
 651-431-3040 (voice) or use your preferred relay service

### Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR)

In Minnesota, you have the right to file a complaint with the **MDHR** if you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sexual orientation, public assistance status, marital status, disability, sex or political beliefs.

Contact the **MDHR** directly to file a complaint:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
 Freeman Building, 625 North Robert Street  
 Saint Paul, MN 55155  
 651-539-1100 (voice)  
 800-657-3704 (toll free)  
 711 or 800-627-3529 (MN Relay)  
 651-296-9042 (fax)  
 Info.MDHR@state.mn.us (email)

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](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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