

FACT SHEET



Food Assistance Benefits

The Food Assistance Program – formerly called food stamps and known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – helps eligible low-income Ohioans stretch their food budgets and buy healthy food. Food assistance benefits are distributed electronically through the Ohio Direction Card, which is similar to a debit card.

Do I qualify for food assistance benefits?

You may qualify for benefits if your household's gross monthly income is at or under 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. These guidelines change yearly; you can find the current figures at aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines. Some households may qualify if they have incomes over the limit if someone in the household is elderly or disabled.

What can I buy with food assistance benefits?

You can use your benefits to buy most food products. Prohibited items include alcoholic beverages; tobacco; vitamins and/or medicines; hot food products that are made to be eaten immediately (including prepared food from grocery stores and restaurants); and non-food items (such as pet food, paper products, soaps and household supplies). You are not allowed to sell or trade food assistance benefits, buy non-food items with your benefits, or use your benefits to buy food for someone who is not a member of your household.

How can I apply for food assistance?

You may apply for food assistance online at Benefits.Ohio.gov, or by filling out the "Request for Cash, Food and Medical Assistance" (JFS 7200) form and submitting it to your county department of job and family services. You can get it at your county agency or at www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp. You can find the address and phone number of your county agency at jfs.ohio.gov/County or by calling 1-866-635-3748. (Follow the phone prompts for food assistance.) You also may file the application through your local Ohio Benefit Bank site. The Ohio Benefit Bank helps low- and moderate-income Ohioans apply for work supports such as tax credits and public benefits. You can find the site nearest you and get more information at ohiobenefits.org.

You will need proof of the following:

- Social Security number or proof that you've applied for one
- Income (from such things as pay stubs, tax records or child support notices)
- Identity (for example, a driver's license or state ID)
- Housing and utility costs
- Any child care or dependent care costs
- Any child support you pay for children not living with you
- Any medical expenses (including prescriptions) for those with disabilities or for those over age 60

Your county agency may verify the information that you provide by contacting other agencies or people. The county agency also may ask you to provide other documents. If you need help getting any documents, be sure to tell your caseworker.

Be sure to get the "Your Rights" (JFS 8000) and "Program Enrollment and Benefit Information" (JFS 07501) brochures from your county agency or online at www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp for more information.

How much are payments?

Benefit amounts are determined based on household size, expenses and, in some situations, resources. Household size includes the number of people in your household who purchase and prepare food together. Household expenses include your rent or mortgage, gas, electric, water, sewer, phone and medical expenses, as well as any child support or child care payments. Household resources include cash, savings and stocks. In May 2018, the average monthly SNAP payment per recipient was approximately \$121.

When will I receive my food assistance benefits?

If you qualify and started receiving benefits after April 1, 2014, your monthly benefit will be loaded onto your Ohio Direction Card on a regular assigned date sometime between the first and the 20th of the month.

Nutrition Education Classes

In most counties, Ohioans who receive SNAP benefits can take free classes that help them make healthier food choices, learn thrifty shopping tips and choose physically active lifestyles. Classes are available for adults and youth through a partnership between the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio State University (OSU) Extension. The program is called SNAP-Ed, for SNAP Education. For more information about this program, you can go to OSU Extension's webpage, fcs.osu.edu/nutrition/snap-ed. From there, click on "OSU Extension County Office Directory." This will give you the phone numbers and websites for the counties that offer SNAP-Ed programs near you.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the nation's SNAP program.

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 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 one of the following methods:

- Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- Fax:
(202) 690-7442; or
- Email:
program.intake@usda.gov

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