

## **RECEIVING AND USING YOUR SNAP BENEFITS**

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You will be issued an Electronic Benefits 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. SNAP benefits may only be used for food and/or plants and seeds to grow food for your household.

## **REPORTING CHANGES IN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES**

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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 these 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 seven (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 (3).**

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If disqualified, the first disqualification period is for one (1) year; the second disqualification period is for two (2) years; and the third disqualification period is permanent disqualification from the program.

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

- Disqualified for two (2) years for the first offense and permanently for second offense involving the sale of illegal drugs for benefits.
- Permanently disqualified for the first offense involving the sale of firearms, ammunition, explosives for benefits or trafficking SNAP benefits of \$500 or more.
- Disqualified for 10 years, if determined by a court or 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.
- Permanent disqualification for persons convicted of a drug-related felony that occurred since 8-22-96.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Under the Food and Nutrition Act and USDA policy, discrimination is prohibited also on the basis of religion or political beliefs.

To file a complaint of discrimination, contact USDA or HHS. Write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). Write HHS, Director, Office for Civil Rights, Room 506-F, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 or call (202) 619-0403 (voice) or (202) 619-3257 (TTY). USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.

# **FACTS ABOUT THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**



**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF FIELD OPERATIONS  
P. O. BOX 352  
JACKSON, MS 39205**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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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; (5) are not a fleeing felon or in violation of probation or parole; (6) have not been convicted of a drug-related felony committed since August 22, 1996.

The amount of SNAP benefits a household can receive is based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Thrifty Food Plan which is 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.

If your household meets the program eligibility tests, the amount of SNAP benefits you receive will depend on the number of people in your household and the amount of monthly income left after certain deductions are allowed.

## HOW DO I APPLY FOR SNAP BENEFITS?

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You will receive 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 Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Economic Assistance 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 seven (7) days if your household has little or no money and you verify your identity. The information on Page 1 of the application determines if you qualify for faster service.

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

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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 interview for you. The worker will ask for proof of certain information that has been provided.

If you are 60 years or older or disabled and you cannot find anyone to go to the county office for you, contact your local MDHS office. A worker will arrange a telephone or home interview.

## MEETING ELIGIBILITY RULES

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**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 the MDHS, Division of Field Operations (DFO), 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 DFO 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 individual who is between age 18 to 50, without a dependent child living in the home, must register for work or meet a work program exemption.

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

First Violation: Two (2) months

Third Violation: One (1) year

Second Violation: Six (6) months

Fourth Violation: Permanent

A disqualification continues until an exemption is met or the penalty is served, 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 six (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 \$2,000 worth of countable resources. Households may have up to \$3,250 if at least one (1) member is age 60 or older and/or disabled.

**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 your entire household's countable income, certain deductions will be subtracted. The total must be less than 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) earned income deduction from the income you earn; (3) deduction for the actual costs of dependent care; (4) court-ordered child support payments to non-household members; (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 medical costs more than \$35 a month (however, these costs are not deductible if covered by insurance, a government program or some other source); (2) an extra deduction for high shelter costs.

**Students:** Some college students may be eligible to receive SNAP benefits. Able-bodied students between age 18 and 50, who are enrolled in college or other institution of higher education at least halftime, 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

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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.