What to Know About SNAP Benefits

What is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States. The goal of the program is to help combat food insecurity, which is when a person lacks enough food to eat. SNAP provides benefits to families and individuals with low incomes to help offset the cost of essential groceries. The groceries covered by SNAP provide important nutritional support for adults and promote healthy growth and development for children.



Who Uses SNAP Benefits?

- Approximately 1 in 8 Americans, or 41.7 million people, rely on SNAP benefits each month.
- 79% of SNAP households include either a child, an elderly individual, or an individual with a disability.
- About 39% of SNAP participants are children, 20% are elderly, and 10% are nonelderly individuals with a disability.
- 86% of all SNAP benefits go to households with gross monthly incomes at or below the poverty level.

What is the Average SNAP Benefit Amount and What Can Benefits Be Used For?

The average benefit amount is approximately $6 per day. Households with children typically receive slightly more. Each state has its own system for distributing benefits, which are loaded onto an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit card. These benefits can be used at SNAP-authorized retailers, like grocery stores and farmers markets.

SNAP benefits can be used for household food, including:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Dairy products
- Breads and cereals
- Other foods such as snacks and non-alcoholic beverages
- Seeds and plants to produce food

SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase:

- Beer, wine, and liquor
- Cigarettes and tobacco
- Food and drinks containing controlled substances
- Vitamins, medicines, and supplements
- Live animals, except shellfish and fish
- Foods that are hot at the point of sale (with exceptions in some states)

To learn more, visit: What can SNAP buy?

My SNAP Benefits Have Ended. Where Can I Find Food Assistance?

Some states have authorized emergency funding to help fill the gap in SNAP benefits. Check with your state's SNAP website, Department of Social Services, or Public Health Department to explore the benefits available. Local food banks and school communities may also be able to provide more immediate food assistance.

How Can I Help People Who Are Affected by SNAP Benefits Ending?

Consider donating to nonprofits and organizations that fight food insecurity. As the need for food assistance increases with the end of SNAP, local food banks will likely need to serve more people. Donating money or food can help meet this need.

Sources

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