



Securing today
and tomorrow

Nutrition Assistance Programs

Federal, state, and local governments provide many programs designed to help meet the nutritional needs of people with low incomes and their families.

Although Social Security doesn't manage any of the nutrition assistance programs discussed in this publication, we can provide general information and refer you to the agencies that do.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, helps low-income people buy the food needed for good health. SNAP benefits are provided on an electronic card, which operates like a debit card to buy food at most grocery stores.

To get SNAP benefits, your household must meet certain conditions and requirements. Your household includes everyone who lives with you, and who buys and prepares food together. If you are homeless, you can still get SNAP even if you do not have a permanent address or place to stay. For detailed information about SNAP eligibility requirements, you should also read *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Facts* (Publication No. 05-10101).

If you live in California and get Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

If you receive SSI payments in California, you are not generally eligible for the SNAP because the state includes extra money for food in the amount it adds to the SSI payment. However, in situations where your SSI payments are in suspense or you are waiting for a decision on your SSI claim, you may be able to receive SNAP. Contact your local SNAP office to file an application if you think you may be eligible.

How to apply for SNAP

Applications for SNAP benefits are available at any Social Security office. If you and everyone in your household are applying for or already getting SSI payments, **any Social Security office will help you fill out the application and send it to the local SNAP for you.** All other applicants, including those applying for or getting only Social Security benefits must take or send their SNAP application to the local SNAP office. You can use the online SNAP Pre-Screening Eligibility Tool at <https://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns> to see if you may be eligible for SNAP.

SNAP is just one of many nutrition programs available. The federal government and many state and local government agencies sponsor numerous programs that provide people with

information about, and access to, a more nutritious diet. Many of these programs also are set up to improve the health and eating habits of children, and people age 60 or older with low income. Two examples are the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

The WIC program provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, or non-breastfeeding postpartum women; and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. WIC is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five who meet certain requirements are eligible. These requirements include income eligibility and state residency. In addition, the applicant must be determined to be at “nutrition risk” by a health professional or a trained health official. Besides the benefits offered through WIC, the WIC Farmers’

Market Nutrition Program is available in some areas and provides WIC participants with coupons to purchase fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs at farmers' markets and roadside stands. For more information, contact your state or local health department or visit [***https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic***](https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic).

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP works to improve the health of low-income elderly persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA foods. CSFP is administered at the federal level by FNS, an agency of the USDA. Through CSFP, USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and Indian Tribal Organizations. State agencies store CSFP food and distribute it to public and non-profit private local agencies. Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and provide nutrition education. For more information about this program, visit [***https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program-csfp***](https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program-csfp).

Other nutrition programs available

The USDA administers other food programs:

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

CACFP reimburses eligible day care centers, family day care homes, and other care centers that offer meals and snacks to children as well as to functionally impaired adults and elderly people in day care situations.

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

NSLP and SBP reimburses participating schools for offering meals to children during the school day. Low-income households may apply for children to receive these meals free or at a reduced price, while other children have access to reasonably priced meals.

- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP offers free meals and snacks to needy children during the months when school is not in session.

- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**

SFMNP awards grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, by providing emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. It provides food and administrative funds to states to supplement the diets of these groups. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens, food pantries, and community action agencies.

For more information about these nutrition programs administered by USDA, contact your local social services, health or agriculture department, state aging office, Indian tribal organization offices, school, or visit [***https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs***](https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs).

Contacting Social Security

The most convenient way to contact us anytime, anywhere is to visit **www.socialsecurity.gov**. There, you can: apply for benefits; open a *my* Social Security account, which you can use to review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information, request a replacement Medicare card, and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S; obtain valuable information; find publications; get answers to frequently asked questions; and much more.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing.

If you need to speak to a person, we can answer your calls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask for your patience during busy periods since you may experience a higher than usual rate of busy signals and longer hold times to speak to us. We look forward to serving you.

SNAP

Getting or applying only for Social Security?

You can get a SNAP application and information about SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs at any Social Security office.

You must either fill out the application and submit it to the SNAP office or go to the SNAP office to apply.

Getting or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

You can apply for SNAP benefits at any Social Security office if you and everyone in your household get or apply for SSI.

We will help you fill out the SNAP application. You do not have to go to the SNAP office to apply.

Social Security Administration

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