



The Food Stamp Program helps low-income people buy food. Although it is a federal government program, it is run by state or local agencies.

Who can get food stamps?

Anyone can apply for food stamps. To get food stamps, you and the other people in your household must meet certain conditions. Everyone who is applying in your household must have or apply for a Social Security number and be either a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or have status as a qualified alien. The following qualified aliens are eligible for food stamps without a waiting period:

- Legal immigrant children under age 18;
- Blind or disabled legal immigrants who receive disability assistance or benefits;
- People who legally resided in the U.S. on August 22, 1996, and were age 65 or older on August 22, 1996;
- Lawful permanent residents who are active duty members or veterans of the U.S. armed forces or a spouse or a child of a veteran or active duty service member;
- Refugees admitted under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);
- Asylees under section 208 of the INA;
- Deportees or removal withheld under section 234(h) or 241(b)(3) of the INA;
- Cuban or Haitian entrants under section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980;
- Amerasian immigrants under section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1988.

The following legal aliens are eligible without a waiting period even if they are not qualified aliens:

- Hmong or Highland Laotian tribal members (including their spouses and children) who helped the U.S. military during the Vietnam era;
- American Indians born in Canada;
- Members of Indian tribes under section 450b(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

The following qualified aliens are eligible if they have lived in the U.S. for five years in qualified status:

- Lawful permanent residents (they may be eligible sooner than five years if they have 40 work credits);
- Parolees (paroled for at least one year under section 212(d)(5) of INA);
- Conditional entrants under 203(a)(7) of INA in effect prior to April 1, 1980;
- A battered spouse, battered child or parent or child of a battered person with a petition pending under 204(a)(1)(A) or (B) or 244(a)(3) of INA.

Most able-bodied people between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for work to qualify for food stamps. Many people may be required to participate in an employment or training program. Some college students also may be eligible.

Resources (things you own)

Generally, your household cannot have more than \$2,000 in resources. But, if your household includes a person age 60 or older or who is disabled, the limit is \$3,000. Resources of people who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are not counted for food stamp purposes. Resources include cash, bank accounts and other property.

Not all the things you own count. For example, your home and the land it is on do not count for food stamp eligibility. A car or truck counts differently depending on how it is used. Most states now use TANF rules in place of food stamp vehicle rules if the TANF rules are more beneficial to the food stamp household.

Most households also must meet an income limit. Certain things do not count as income and can be subtracted from your income. Your household may qualify for other income exclusions if it includes a person age 60 or older or disabled. The income limits vary by household size and may change each year.

(over)

How can you apply for food stamps?

Food stamp applications 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 food stamp application and send it to the food stamp office for you.

All others, including those **applying** for or **getting only Social Security**, must take or send their food stamp applications to the local food stamp office or to any Social Security office where a food stamp representative works.

When you are interviewed, you also should have:

- Identification such as a driver's license, state ID, birth certificate or alien card;
- Proof of income such as pay stubs, Social Security, SSI, or a pension for each member of your household;
- Proof of how much you spend for child care;
- Rent receipts or proof of your mortgage payments;
- Records of your utility costs; and
- Medical bills for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who receive government payments such as

Social Security or SSI because they are disabled.

How much can you get?

You can find out how much you may be able to get online through the Food Stamp Pre-Screening Tool at www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov.

Contacting Social Security

Contact your Social Security or local food stamp office for more information about the Food Stamp Program and eligibility rules. Remember, Social Security does not decide if you are eligible for food stamps.

For general information and to get copies of our publications, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free, **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

Food Stamps

Help, Information and Applications
Available at any Social Security Office

Getting or applying **only** for Social Security?

YOU CAN GET A FOOD STAMP APPLICATION AND INFORMATION AT ANY SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE.

We cannot take food stamp applications from people getting or applying only for Social Security.

Getting or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

YOU CAN APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS AT ANY SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE IF YOU AND EVERYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD GET OR APPLY FOR SSI.

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

www.socialsecurity.gov

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