

FACT SHEET

Food Assistance Benefits

What is food assistance?

The Food Assistance Program – formerly the Food Stamp Program and known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – helps eligible low-income Ohioans stretch their food budgets and buy healthy food. A household may consist of an individual or a group of individuals who live together and usually purchase and prepare their food together.

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. Some households may qualify if they have incomes over the limit if someone in the household is elderly or disabled. If your household's income is under the limit, or if the limit does not apply, your benefit amount will be determined based on your household expenses. This includes your rent or mortgage costs, gas, electric, water, sewer, phone, medical expenses, and payments for child support and child care. Other factors in determining eligibility include the number of people in your household who purchase and prepare food together and, in some situations, resources such as cash, savings and stocks.

How can I apply for food assistance?

You may apply for food assistance online by going to <http://www.ODJFSBenefits.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 the form at your county department of job and family services or at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=07200>.

You can find the address and phone number of your county office at http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf or by calling 1-866-635-3748. (Follow the phone prompts for food assistance.) Be sure you get the Program Enrollment and Benefit Information (JFS 07501) booklet from your county office or at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/interfind.asp?formnum=07501>. This booklet will give you information about your rights and responsibilities, and how to apply for many types of benefits, including food assistance.

You may also file the application through your local Ohio Benefit Bank site. You can find the site nearest you and get more information at <http://ohiobenefits.org>. The Ohio Benefit Bank helps low- and moderate-income Ohioans apply for work supports such as tax credits and public benefits, including food assistance.

What will I need to apply for food assistance?

You will need proof of the following:

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

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

What can I buy with food assistance benefits?

You can use your food assistance benefits to buy most food or food products,. However, the following items may not be purchased:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Tobacco
- Vitamins and/or medicines
- Hot food products that are prepared to be eaten immediately
- 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, or use your food assistance benefits to buy food for someone who is not a member of your household.

What if I think my civil rights have been violated?

Your county department of child and family services and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) are public agencies that manage federal money. Laws do not allow discrimination in programs that use federal money. Discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or political beliefs is against the law. To file a complaint of discrimination with the ODJFS Bureau of Civil Rights, write to ODJFS, Bureau of Civil Rights, 30 E. Broad St., 37th floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215, or call (614) 644-2703 or toll-free 1-866-227-6353. If you are hearing impaired, call 1-866-221-6700. You also may fax a complaint to (614) 752-6381. To file a complaint of discrimination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), write to USDA Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD).