

SNAP for College and Trade School Students in D.C.



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

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Introduction to D.C. Hunger Solutions

- ❑ Founded as an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center in 2002, D.C. Hunger Solutions seeks to create a hunger-free community and improve the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income District residents by:
 - ❑ Improving public policies to end hunger, reduce poverty, promote nutrition, and increase the availability of healthy, affordable food in low-income areas;
 - ❑ Maximizing participation in all federal nutrition programs; and
 - ❑ Educating the public about both the stark reality of hunger's existence in the midst of plenty and the real opportunities for effective solutions.



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Agenda

- ❑ Hunger and SNAP in the District
- ❑ SNAP Refresher
- ❑ Student Rules and FAQs
- ❑ Other Supports for Students
- ❑ Q+A

Student Food Insecurity

- ❑ D.C. is home to over 100,000 students enrolled in institutions of higher education.
- ❑ Nationally, according to the [Hope Center 2023-2024 Survey Report](#):
 - ❑ 3 in 5 students experienced basic needs insecurity.
 - ❑ 43% of students at two-year and 37% of students at four-year institutions experienced food insecurity.
 - ❑ rates are higher for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students.
 - ❑ rates are higher for LGBTQ+ students.



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Student Food Insecurity

Table 3: Basic Needs Insecurity by Institutional Characteristics

| | All institutions <i>n</i> =57,923 | 4-year <i>n</i> =16,072 | 2-year <i>n</i> =41,851 | MSI <i>n</i> =31,324 | NON- MSI <i>n</i> =26,599 | RSI <i>n</i> =11,540 | NON- RSI <i>n</i> =46,383 |
|--|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing | 59% | 54% | 61% | 62% | 56% | 58% | 60% |

NOTE. Four-year represents institutions primarily granting bachelor's degrees. Two-year indicates institutions primarily granting associate's or technical degrees. MSI = minority-serving institution. RSI = rural-serving institution. Students were classified as experiencing basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing if they reported one or more of the following: food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness. Students were classified as experiencing "at least one type of basic needs insecurity" if they reported food insecurity, housing insecurity, homelessness, anxiety/depression, childcare challenges, internet/technology challenges, and/or transportation challenges. *Ns* reflect the numbers of survey respondents who had available data on at least one type of basic needs insecurity.



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Student Food Insecurity

Table 5: Basic Needs Insecurity by Race and Ethnicity

| | Basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing | Food insecurity | Housing insecurity | Homeless |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Black (n=6,048) | 72% | 53% | 60% | 18% |
| Indigenous (n=1,564) | 74% | 55% | 64% | 24% |
| East Asian (n=1,846) | 53% | 34% | 41% | 12% |
| Filipinx (n=1,273) | 56% | 40% | 43% | 12% |
| Hispanic or Latine (n=14,089) | 62% | 43% | 51% | 13% |

Student Food Insecurity



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Table 5: Basic Needs Insecurity by Race and Ethnicity

| | Basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing | Food insecurity | Housing insecurity | Homeless |
|---|--|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Middle Eastern or North African or Arab (n=780) | 64% | 42% | 53% | 18% |
| Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian (n=428) | 67% | 51% | 51% | 21% |
| South Asian or Desi (n=1,367) | 59% | 39% | 48% | 17% |
| Southeast Asian (n=1,459) | 60% | 44% | 44% | 12% |
| White (n=23,688) | 55% | 36% | 44% | 13% |

Student Food Insecurity

- ❑ Federal nutrition and food programs are crucial to addressing food insecurity; however, many may forgo these programs due to myths about access, strict barriers, and lack of knowledge about the programs and their eligibility.
- ❑ The Hope Center cites a [GAO report](#): "two-thirds of students who are likely eligible for SNAP, and 6-in-10 students who are both food-insecure and likely eligible for the program, do not report receiving benefits."



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SNAP Refresher

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What is SNAP?

- ❑ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal nutrition program that provides monthly benefits on an EBT card to eligible individuals. It can be a useful tool to help households pay for groceries and maximize their budgets.
- ❑ SNAP can be used at most stores that sell food. It can be used to purchase non-prepared foods, as well as plants and seeds to grow your own food.



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SNAP in the District

- ❑ About 140,000 District residents participate in SNAP
- ❑ For every \$1 spent on SNAP, \$1.80 of economic activity is generated. SNAP is a **stimulus program**.



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What is a SNAP Household?

- ❑ A group of people who live together, buy food as a group, and prepare meals as a group. They do not have to be related.
- ❑ There are many scenarios in which more than one SNAP household can share the same residence.
- ❑ A SNAP household does not necessarily need a permanent mailing address.



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What is a SNAP Household? (cont.)

- ❑ The following people **must** be considered a household, even if they purchase food separately:
 - ❑ Spouses who live together
 - ❑ Parents and children under 22, even if the child is married or has a child of their own, who live together



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SNAP Income Guidelines

❑ Two income guidelines:

❑ Gross income: amount of income a household receives before taxes and deductions

❑ Must be below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines

❑ Households with older adults (60+) and people with disabilities are not subject to gross income limits

❑ Net income: amount of income a household has after taxes

❑ Must be below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines



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Earned v. Unearned Income

- ❑ Earned Income: income from a job
- ❑ Unearned Income: anything else, including cash assistance, Social Security, unemployment payments, retirement benefits, and child support
- ❑ This is an important distinction, as they are calculated differently.



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SNAP Income Guidelines – effective 10/1/2024 to 09/30/2025



| Household Size | Maximum Gross Monthly Income for Categorical Eligibility (200% FPL) | Maximum Net Monthly Income (100% FPL) | Maximum SNAP Allotment |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | \$2,510 | \$1,255 | \$292 |
| 2 | \$3,408 | \$1,704 | \$536 |
| 3 | \$4,304 | \$2,152 | \$768 |
| 4 | \$5,200 | \$2,600 | \$975 |
| 5 | \$6,098 | \$3,049 | \$1,158 |
| 6 | \$6,994 | \$3,497 | \$1,390 |
| 7 | \$7,890 | \$3,945 | \$1,536 |
| 8 | \$8,788 | \$4,394 | \$1,756 |
| Each Additional Member | +\$898 | +\$449 | +\$220 |

Deductions

- ❑ A household's benefit level is determined by net income.
- ❑ Net monthly income = gross income minus applicable deductions
- ❑ The more expenses you have, the more likely you are to be eligible and the higher your benefit level could be.



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SNAP Application and Recertification Process


- ❑ Prescreening
- ❑ Ways to Apply
- ❑ Required Documents
- ❑ Interviews
- ❑ Processing Timelines
- ❑ Certification Periods, Mid-Certifications, and Recertifications

Prescreening

- ❑ Before completing an application, you should prescreen households for eligibility.
- ❑ To do this, you can use D.C. Hunger Solutions' SNAP calculator at <https://www.dchunger.org/calculator/>



Prescreening

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1 Household

2 Income

3 Medical Deductions

4 Dependent Care

5 Child Support

6 Housing and Utilities

7 Benefits

Step 1: Household Size and Composition

Important Note for Immigrants

You can apply and get SNAP/food stamps for eligible family members, even if your family includes other members who are not eligible because of immigration status. For example, immigrant parents may apply for SNAP/ food stamps for their U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant children, even though the parents may not be eligible for benefits.

For more information, including a list of immigrant statuses that may qualify someone for benefits, click [here](#).

How many people total live in **your household** (include all members who buy and prepare food together)?

Are ALL members of the household receiving **SSI** or **TANF** benefits?

Ways to Apply

- ❑ After determining potential eligibility, you can apply in a few ways.
 - ❑ Online on the District Direct website (<https://districtdirect.dc.gov/>) or on the District Direct mobile app.
 - ❑ D.C. Hunger Solutions can help households fill out the application over the phone.
- ❑ In-person or via fax or mail after completing a paper application.
 - ❑ D.C. Hunger Solutions can submit an application on behalf of a household.
 - ❑ Applications can be mailed or dropped off at any open ESA Service Center.
 - ❑ Try to keep a copy of your application in case it is lost by a Service Center.

Benefits Timelines

- ❑ Regular Service: ESA has 30 days from the date they receive the application to process it.
 - ❑ ESA must provide the household with either SNAP benefits or a notice about its decision within those 30 days.
- ❑ Expedited Service: ESA has 7 days from the date they receive the application to process it.
 - ❑ Eligibility for Expedited Service:
 - ❑ Less than \$150 gross monthly income AND less than \$100 in liquid resources, OR
 - ❑ Shelter costs exceed resources

Certification Periods

- ❑ A certification process is how long a household will receive benefits before needing to complete a recertification form.
 - ❑ **12 months** for most households
 - ❑ **36 months** for households comprised entirely of people aged 60 or older or with disabilities AND with no earned income
 - ❑ **6 months** for households experiencing homelessness

SNAP for College and Trade School Students

- ❑ SNAP Rules for College and Trade School Students
- ❑ SNAP FAQs for College and Trade School Students

SNAP Rules for College and Trade School Students

- ❑ In addition to the income and immigration requirements, there is a requirement that students enrolled full-time in an institution of higher education (IHE) must **also** meet a student exemption.
- ❑ An individual is considered to be enrolled in an IHE if they are enrolled in:
 - ❑ A business, technical, trade, or vocational school and in a curriculum that normally requires a high school diploma or equivalent for enrollment, **OR**
 - ❑ A regular curriculum at a college or university that offers degrees regardless of whether a high school diploma is required.
- ❑ Students enrolled in an IHE less than half-time do not have to meet a student exemption.

Student Exemptions

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Demographic | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are under age 18 or are 50 or older.• Have a physical or mental disability. |
| Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work at least 20 hours per week in paid employment.• Participate in a state- or federally-financed work-study program.• Participate in an on-the-job training program. |
| TANF | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).• Are enrolled in a TANF Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. |
| Dependent Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care for a child under the age of 6.• Care for a child aged 6 to 11 and lack the necessary childcare enabling you to attend school and work 20 hours a week or participate in work-study.• Are a single parent caring for a child under 12. |
| Other Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend or assigned to participate in a college or other institution of higher education through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SNAP Employment & Training program• A program under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (PL 113-128)• A Trade Adjustment Assistance Program under Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974 |

SNAP FAQs – College and Trade School Students

- ❑ Can I get SNAP benefits if I live in a dorm? Can I get SNAP benefits if I participate in a meal plan?
 - ❑ To be eligible for SNAP, you cannot live in a dormitory AND participate in a meal plan that provides two or more meals per day. If you live in a dorm but do not get the majority of your meals through a meal plan, you may be eligible for SNAP.
- ❑ What state should I apply for benefits in if I'm an out-of-state student?
 - ❑ You should apply for SNAP benefits where you currently reside. For example, if your family lives in Virginia, but you live and attend school in D.C., you should apply for benefits in D.C.

SNAP FAQs – College and Trade School Students

- ❑ Can I get SNAP if I live with my parents?
 - ❑ If you live at home with your parents and are under age 22, you must apply for SNAP along with your parents, even if you buy and prepare food separately from them or have a child of your own.
- ❑ Can I get SNAP if I live with roommates?
 - ❑ If you regularly buy and prepare food with roommates, you should apply together. Otherwise, you can apply separately.



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SNAP FAQs – College and Trade School Students

- ❑ Are my student loans counted as income?
 - ❑ Educational loans funded through the Department of Education and some parts of other student grants, loans, scholarship, and fellowship are not counted as income for the purposes of determining SNAP eligibility. If you get private loans or scholarships, they may be counted as income.
- ❑ Can I use SNAP benefits on campus?
 - ❑ Campus stores can be approved to accept SNAP benefits if they meet certain requirements. SNAP cannot be used to pay for meals in a cafeteria.

Other Supports for Students

- ❑ Local Programs
- ❑ Strategies for Addressing Student Hunger

Local Programs

- ❑ Emergency Food/Food Banks
 - ❑ <https://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/>
 - ❑ Campus Food Pantries
- ❑ Local Community-Based Organizations
- ❑ Churches
- ❑ Mutual Aid Groups
- ❑ Students may be eligible to receive Medicaid through the District of Columbia.

Strategies for Addressing Student Hunger

- ❑ Establish a campus hunger office to serve as a one-stop shop to screen students for food insecurity and share resources with students experiencing food and/or basic needs insecurity.
 - ❑ Become a trusted messenger for students to address concerns and share information.
- ❑ Regularly share food resources and SNAP information with students through materials and resource guides that already go out (e.g., with housing packets, meal plan information).

Strategies for Addressing Student Hunger

- ❑ Establish meal swipe donation/swipe out hunger programs.
- ❑ Challenge narratives around student hunger (e.g., eating ramen and pizza is part of the college experience).
- ❑ Consider the experiences of off-campus students in addressing student hunger.

Federal updates

- ❑ In June 2025, Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Mark Takano (D-CA) re-introduced ["The Opportunity to Address Hunger Act"](#)
- ❑ If passed, colleges and universities would be required to tell students who are enrolled in federal work-study programs or are recipients of a Pell Grant that they might be eligible for SNAP AND "give qualifying students official documentation of their eligibility, overcoming a common hurdle students face when applying for SNAP benefits"

Questions?

www.dchunger.org - (202) 640-1088 - info@dchunger.org



References (con't)

- The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University - [Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 202324.pdf](#)
- DC Health Matters Population Data - [DC Health Matters :: Demographics :: City :: District of Columbia](#)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - Key Statistics and Research.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/key-statistics-and-research>
- SNAP for Students - [Students | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

References (con't)

- FRAC D.C. SNAP Fact Sheet - [SNAP FactSheets 022525 DC8.pdf](#)
- SNAP Eligibility for Non-Citizens: [SNAP Eligibility for Non-Citizens | Food and Nutrition Service](#)
- Economic Security Administration (ESA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Policy Manual (2025) <https://dhs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhs/publication/attachments/Final%20ESA%20SNAP%20Policy%20Manual%201.24.25.pdf>
- Recent legislation- [Bonamici, Takano Introduce Bill to Help College Students Access SNAP | Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici](#)



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