

D.C. SNAP 101



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

Maggie Snow

Anti-Hunger Program Associate, SNAP

msnow@dchunger.org

(202) 640-1088 ext. 3042

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

- ❑ Overview of Food Insecurity
- ❑ D.C. Landscape
- ❑ SNAP Basics
- ❑ Application and Recertification Process
- ❑ Recent Changes
- ❑ FAQs

Food Insecurity in the U.S.

❑ The USDA defines food insecurity as, "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food."
(Rabbitt, M. P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L. J., & Burke, M. P. (2024)

❑ In 2023,

- Roughly 14% of households in the US reported experiencing food insecurity at least once during the year
- Among households with children, roughly 18% reported food insecurity
- Households made up of Black and Latino individuals experienced higher food insecurity than other groups at 23.3% and 21.9% respectively

Food Insecurity in D.C.

- ❑ Grocery store access, public transportation access, housing costs, racism, and historic disinvestment all affect food insecurity rates in D.C. (Jones, L.N. (2024))
- ❑ About 700,000 people live in the District
- ❑ In 2023, roughly 9% of households in D.C. were food insecure



D.C. Landscape

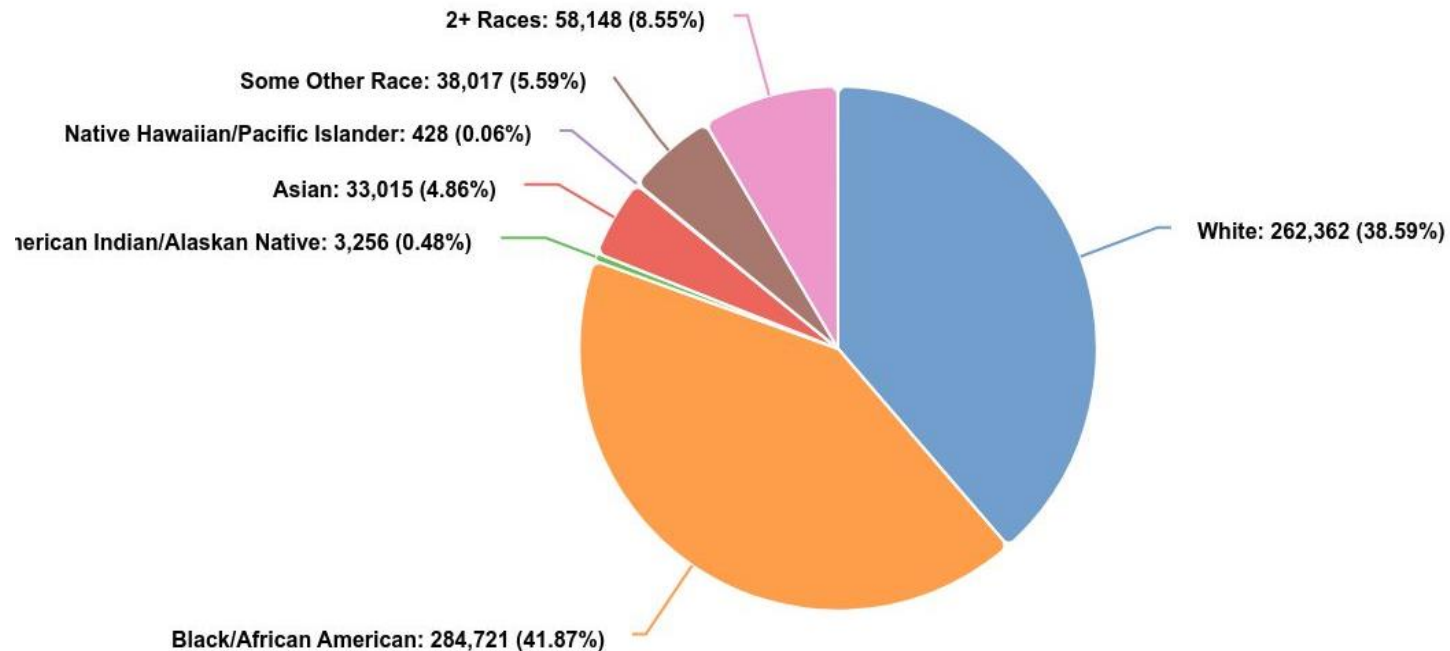
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D.C.'s Population by Race

Population by Race

City: District of Columbia



Claritas, 2024. www.dchealthmatters.org

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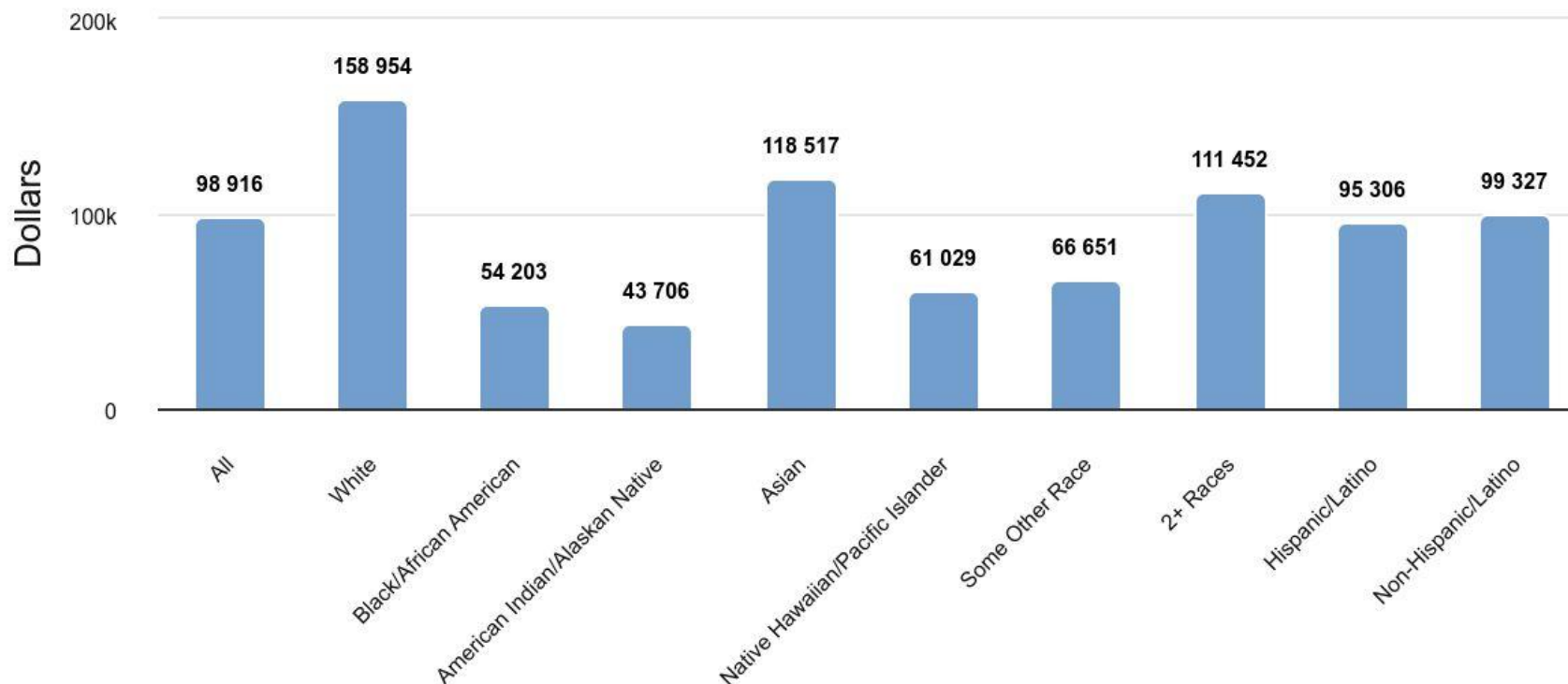
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D.C.'s Wealth Gap

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity

City: District of Columbia



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D.C.'s Grocery Stores

- ❑ As of 2025, Ward 3 has 16 full-service grocery stores while Ward 8 only has 4 full-service grocery stores
 - Giant, Harris Teeter, Whole Foods plus the newest addition: Marion Barry Avenue Market and Cafe
- ❑ While grocery stores continue to be built in other wards, Wards 7 and 8 have been left behind



Overview of SNAP

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 10/1/2025 to 09/30/2026)

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income for Categorical Eligibility (200% FPL)	Maximum Net Monthly Income (100% FPL)	Maximum SNAP Allotment
1	\$2,610	\$1,305	\$298
2	\$3,526	\$1,763	\$546
3	\$4,442	\$2,221	\$785
4	\$5,360	\$2,680	\$994
5	\$6,276	\$3,138	\$1,183
6	\$7,192	\$3,596	\$1,421
7	\$8,110	\$4,055	\$1,571
8	\$9,026	\$4,513	\$1,789
Each Additional Member	+\$918	+\$459	+\$218

SNAP Assets Guidelines

- ❑ Most District residents applying for SNAP are determined categorically eligible and do not have a limit on resources; however, applicants will be asked to complete this section on the application.
- ❑ Assets include cash, money in the bank, investments, and property.



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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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Deductions

- ❑ Earned Income Deduction: 20% of earnings from a job
- ❑ Dependent Care Deduction: out-of-pocket dependent care expenses that are necessary for a household member to work or go to school
- ❑ Excess Shelter Deduction: for housing costs exceeding half of net income (capped at \$744 unless at least one household member is an older adult or a person with a disability)



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Deductions

- ❑ Child Support Deduction: for legally-obligated child support a household member pays
- ❑ Medical Expense Deduction: for out-of-pocket medical expenses greater than \$35/month (only for older adults and people with disabilities)
- ❑ Standard Utility Allowance Deduction: for households who pay utilities such as gas, electric, water, and phone
- ❑ Standard Deduction: all households – accounts for basic costs



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SNAP Application and Recertification Process

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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

- ❑ Questions about household size, income, expenses, and potential deductions will show a preliminary estimate of eligibility and benefit size.
- ❑ Note: the calculator is just a preliminary assessment of eligibility. Only DHS can determine eligibility and benefit levels

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.

District Direct



District Direct

[Home](#)

[Create Account](#)

[Log in](#)

[English](#)

[Español](#)

[አማርኛ](#)

Welcome to District of Columbia Benefits Portal

Apply for SNAP, TANF/Cash Assistance and Medical Benefits or learn more about all our offered benefits

[Apply Now](#)

[Learn More About Benefits](#)

Paper Applications

- ❑ Available in English, Spanish, and Amharic
- ❑ Can be used to apply for SNAP, TANF, and Medical Assistance
- ❑ Can be obtained online [here](#) or at an ESA Service Center:

Anacostia	2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Fort Davis	3851 Alabama Avenue, SE
Congress Heights	4049 South Capitol Street, SW
H Street**	645 H Street, NE***
Taylor Street	1207 Taylor Street, NW



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Human Services (DHS)
Economic Security Administration (ESA) 

Combined Application for Food, Medical, & Cash Benefits

This is a combined application for food benefits, medical, and cash assistance. We can provide information about other helpful services in your community. You can answer ONLY the questions related to the program(s) you are applying for. If you answer ALL the questions on the Assistance Application, we can see if you are eligible for all programs. A friend, relative, or anyone that you wish, may help you complete this application.



Food

Monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits to put towards groceries.



Medical

(Doctors, hospitals, prescriptions, labs, and x-rays)

- free or low-cost insurance from Medicaid
- free or low-cost insurance from the D.C. Healthcare Alliance or Immigrant Children's Program
- affordable, private health insurance plans through the Marketplace
- a tax credit that can immediately help pay your premiums for health coverage.



Cash

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or other cash assistance benefits for households with needy children, and individuals waiting for a decision on their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applications.



NOTE:

If you would like to apply for long-term care services, you will need to complete the Long-Term Care Program Medical Assistance Application. For an application, please contact the Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL) for Elderly and Persons with Physical Disabilities (EPD) waiver at (202) 724-5626, the Department on Disability Services (DDS) for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) waiver at 202.730.1700, or if you are in a Nursing Facility or Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), contact your facility administrator for assistance.

You can also pick up this application at your nearest service center or call (202) 727-5355 to have one mailed to your home.

Service Center Locations

Monday – Friday | 7:30am – 4:45pm

Anacostia Service Center

2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20020
Fax: (202) 727-3527

Taylor Street Service Center

1207 Taylor St., NW
Washington, DC 20011
Fax: (202) 576-8740

H Street Service Center

645 H St., NE
Washington, DC 20002
Fax: (202) 724-8964

Congress Heights Service Center

4049 South Capitol St. SW
Washington, DC 20032
Fax: (202) 645-4524

Fort Davis Service Center

3851 Alabama Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20020
Fax: (202) 645-6205

 Customers may call the ESA Call Center at (202) 727-5355 to learn which Service Center serves their address

Verification Documents

- ☐ Proof of Identity
- ☐ Proof of D.C. Residency
- ☐ Proof of Social Security number
- ☐ Proof of Income
- ☐ Proof of Shelter Expenses
- ☐ Proof of Medical Expenses (for older adults and people with disabilities)
- ☐ Proof of Dependent Care Expenses
- ☐ Proof of Immigration Status (if not a U.S.-born citizen)

Interview Process



DHS IS RESUMING SNAP INTERVIEWS

STARTING DECEMBER 1, 2024: DHS is resuming interviews for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits! An interview is now required when applying for new or recertifying SNAP benefits.

*Elderly Simplified Application Program customers (**ESAP** - households in which all adults are 60+ and/or disabled with no earned income) **do not** have to complete an interview at recertification.



HOW CAN I COMPLETE AN INTERVIEW?

- **Calling** the DHS Economic Security Administration (ESA) Public Benefits Call Center at **(202) 727-5355**, if hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD **711**.
- **Visiting** one of DHS's five (5) Service Centers: bit.ly/dhsservicecenter



Documents needed
for the interview:



Scan
me



Learn more about
interviews:



Scan
me



DEPARTMENT of
HUMAN SERVICES



GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

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

Mid-Certifications

- ❑ A mid-certification is a process in which households must complete a form with simple questions about any changes in circumstances.
 - ❑ Households can complete this form online or by mail.
 - ❑ This will need to be completed every 5-6 months for most households.
 - ❑ Households **MUST** complete and return this form, even if nothing has changed.
 - ❑ Households should attach proof of any changes.
- ❑ An interim communication will be sent to households with 36-month certification periods reminding them to report any changes.

Recertifications

- ❑ A recertification is a process in which households must complete a form and interview at the end of their certification period to continue receiving benefits.
- ❑ Households will receive a notice from ESA 60 days prior to the end of their certification period.
- ❑ This form can be completed online, on the mobile app, or on paper.

Recent Changes

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Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) have been defined as...

□ People who are...

- between the ages of 18 and 54;
- do not have anyone under age 18 living with them;
- have no medical or physical barriers to employment; or
- are not pregnant



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Work Requirements

- ❑ Clients can meet the requirement by working a traditional job, enrolling in SNAP Employment and Training (E&T), or volunteering for at least 20 hours per week (or 80 hours/month on average).
- ❑ If clients do not meet these requirements, they are only eligible to receive SNAP benefits for up to 3 full months in a 36-month period.



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D.C.'s ABAWD Waiver

- ❑ USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) can approve waivers for states that have high unemployment rates or few jobs available.
- ❑ D.C. has had a longstanding [ABAWD waiver](#) in place, which means that SNAP clients have not been subject to work requirements.
- ❑ D.C.'s current waiver will expire in December 2025.



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Budget reconciliation law (H.R. 1) Changes

- ❑ Raises the age limit for older adults from 54 to 64.
- ❑ Decreases the maximum age for a dependent from 18 to 14.
- ❑ Removes temporary exemptions for people experiencing homelessness, people under 24 who aged out of foster care, and veterans.
- ❑ DHS plans to apply for another waiver but does not expect it to be approved.



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What does this mean for residents?

- ❑ Residents who have not previously been subject to work requirements may be required to start to work, enroll in a SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program, or volunteer 20 hours per week
- ❑ Additional documentation to submit to DHS
- ❑ D.C. Hunger Solutions will release additional information, fliers, and a screening tool in the near future



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What does this mean RIGHT NOW?

- ❑ USDA recently issued two memos stating:
 - Termination dates for current ABAWD waivers
 - States must begin to screen new and recertifying SNAP applicants under ABAWD criteria beginning Nov. 1, 2025
- ❑ Until we have additional guidance, residents should continue to follow existing guidance and continue to apply for/recertify for/receive SNAP benefits.



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Data Protections

- ❑ The [USDA has requested](#) that states share information about people “who have received, are currently receiving, or have applied to receive SNAP benefits from Jan. 1, 2020, through present date”
- ❑ D.C. received this request but has not shared any client data.
- ❑ D.C.’s Attorney General has joined a [lawsuit](#) with other states suing USDA for violation of privacy laws



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Frequently Asked Questions

General SNAP FAQs



☐ How do I get a new EBT card if mine is lost or stolen?

☐ To report a lost or stolen card and/or to request a new card, you can visit an EBT Card Distribution Center or call (888) 304-9167.

☐ Do SNAP benefits expire?

☐ Generally, most SNAP benefits expire after nine months of not using your EBT card. Your monthly benefits will transfer over to the next month if you do not use them all.

SNAP FAQs - Older Adults (60+) and People with Disabilities

☐ Can someone else represent me for my SNAP case?

☐ Yes, you can designate an authorized representative to conduct interviews, make changes, and use your card to buy groceries for your household.

☐ Can I receive benefits if I lived in an assisted living facility?

☐ Typically, no. However, if you are a resident of a federally-subsidized unit for older adults or if you are a person with a disability living in certain nonprofit group living arrangements, you may be eligible.



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SNAP FAQs - College and Trade School Students

- ❑ Can I receive benefits if I live with a roommate?
 - ❑ If you regularly buy and prepare food with roommates, you should apply together. Otherwise, you can and should apply separately.
- ❑ What if I am enrolled in school less than half-time?
 - ❑ If you attend an accredited college or university less than half-time, you are not considered a student according to SNAP guidelines and you only need to qualify under regular program rules.
- ❑ Are my student loans counted as income?
 - ❑ Educational loans funded through the Department of Education and some parts of other student grants, loans, scholarships, and fellowships are not counted as income for the purposes for determining SNAP eligibility. Private loans and scholarships may be counted as income.

SNAP FAQs - Immigrants

- ❑ Will applying for or receiving SNAP benefits affect my immigration status?
 - ❑ **NO!** Currently, applying for and receiving SNAP benefits for yourself or a member of your household **will not** result in any “public charge” or affect your ability to remain in the United States, obtain or keep LPR status, or become a U.S. citizen.
- ❑ Can I apply for an eligible family member even if I am not eligible based on my immigration status?
 - ❑ Yes, you can obtain benefits on behalf of a qualifying household member (for example, a child who is a U.S. citizen. DHS cannot ask for any information about your immigration status if you are not applying for yourself.

SNAP FAQs – Returning Citizens and People Experiencing Homelessness

- ❑ Can I receive SNAP benefits if I have a criminal record?
 - ❑ You may be eligible for SNAP even if you have a criminal record. The only relevant criminal history for SNAP in the District is if you are out of compliance with the terms of your parole or probation, or if you have been convicted of selling SNAP benefits.
 - ❑ While not a criminal offense, if you have been charged with an Intentional Program Violation (IPV), this will affect your ability to receive benefits. The penalties associated with IPV varies depending on the number and type of IPV.
 - ❑ You cannot apply for SNAP benefits before being released from a correctional institution. You must wait until the day you are released.

SNAP FAQs – People Experiencing Homelessness

- ❑ Do I need a permanent home address to receive benefits?
 - ❑ No, you do not necessarily need a permanent address. If you are living in a shelter, you can have your information and EBT card sent to the shelter, and you can provide a letter from a shelter employee stating you are living in a shelter when you apply.
- ❑ What if I do not have all of the verification documents I need?
 - ❑ You can seek assistance from a government agency like the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or another organization that serves people experiencing homelessness. They may be able to help you locate or obtain documents, verify your identity and residence, and offer mailing services.

SNAP FAQs – Returning Citizens and People Experiencing Homelessness

- ❑ Can I receive SNAP if I am living and receiving meals at a homeless shelter?
 - ❑ Yes, residents of homeless shelters are typically eligible for SNAP. This is also the case for residents of rehabilitation or treatment centers for drug and alcohol use and shelters for domestic violence survivors.
 - ❑ However, "if a customer lives in a facility that provides more than 50 percent of three meals daily as a part of the facility's normal services, ESA considers them to be living in an institution. In general, people living in an institution cannot receive SNAP benefits" (ESA SNAP Policy Manual (2025).

Questions?

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References

- USDA Economic Recovery Service Report: "*Household food security in the United States in 2023*" <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?pubid=109895&v=3660.1>
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- 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](#)

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- 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>
- SunBucks - [| sunbucks](#)
- DC Youth Meals Program - [DC Youth Meals Program | osse](#)



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Contact Information

Maggie Snow

msnow@dchunger.org

(202) 640-1088 ext. 3042