

FACT SHEET

Food Assistance Benefits

The Food Assistance Program – formerly called food stamps and known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – helps eligible low-income Ohioans stretch their food budgets and buy healthy food. Food assistance benefits are distributed electronically through the Ohio Direction Card, which is similar to a debit card.

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. These guidelines change yearly; you can find the current figures at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.cfm>. Some households may qualify if they have incomes over the limit if someone in the household is elderly or disabled.

What can I buy with food assistance benefits?

You can use your benefits to buy most food products. Prohibited items include alcoholic beverages; tobacco; vitamins and/or medicines; hot food products that are made to be eaten immediately (including prepared food from grocery stores and restaurants); and 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 with your benefits, or use your benefits to buy food for someone who is not a member of your household.

How can I apply for food assistance?

You may apply for food assistance online at 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 it at your county agency or at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp>. You can find the address and phone number of your county agency at http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf or by calling 1-866-635-3748. (Follow the phone prompts for food assistance.) You also may file the application through your local Ohio Benefit Bank site. The Ohio Benefit Bank helps low- and moderate-income Ohioans apply for work supports such as tax credits and public benefits. You can find the site nearest you and get more information at www.ohiobenefits.org.

You will need proof of the following:

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

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

Be sure to get the "Your Rights" (JFS 8000) and "Program Enrollment and Benefit Information" (JFS 07501) brochures from your county agency or online at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp> for more information.