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We provide free legal aid to people with civil legal problems in western New York.

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COVID-19 and SNAP Benefits

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What are SNAP benefits?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, is a Federal program that helps low-income working people, senior citizens, the disabled, and others feed their families. Previously known as food stamps, SNAP benefits are electronic benefits that can be used like cash to purchase food.

Am I eligible for SNAP benefits?

You may be eligible if your gross income is at or below the amounts listed in the charts linked here: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/>. You can also prescreen your eligibility for SNAP and other benefits at https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/screening/ScreeningWelcome_input.nysmybw.

How do I apply for SNAP benefits?

In many counties, you can apply for SNAP benefits online at <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov>. If you live in Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca or Wayne counties you can contact the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program Coordinators (NOEP's) at LawNY at 585-572-1714 (Livingston County), 585-325-2520 (Monroe County) or 315-781-1465 (Ontario, Seneca and Wayne counties).

You can also pick up a SNAP application at your local DSS office, print it out from this website, <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/applications/4826.pdf>, or ask that one be mailed to you. A list of local DSS office locations can be found here: <https://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/dss.asp>.

If you are experiencing a hardship or are disabled, you can also appoint someone to apply for you. To do so, you should print your representative's name, address, and phone number on the signature page (page 5) of your SNAP application or you can complete a SNAP Authorized Representative Request form, which can be found here:

<https://otda.ny.gov/programs/applications/4942.pdf>

How much could I receive in SNAP benefits each month?

View the maximum SNAP benefit allowances here: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/>

Please note that the amounts listed in the above link are maximum allowances. The amount you receive may differ from these amounts due to your income and other factors. A SNAP budget must be calculated for your household in order to determine your SNAP eligibility and benefit amount.

What happens after I apply? When will I receive benefits?

After you apply, the local DSS office has 30 days to give you a written decision explaining whether or not you are eligible for benefits. If you are eligible, you will generally receive benefits retroactive to the date you filed your application. These benefits will be provided to you on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, and should be loaded onto the card shortly after your approval for benefits.

If you are denied benefits and you disagree with that determination, you can file a request for a fair hearing and/or contact our office.

What is expedited SNAP? Who qualifies?

If your household has little or no money and needs help right away, you may qualify for expedited SNAP if you fit into one of the following categories:

1. Your household has \$100 or less in liquid resources and less than \$150 in gross monthly income. Liquid resources are money that is readily available to you, such as cash on hand, money in a checking or savings account, or lump sum payments (tax refunds, retroactive lump-sum Social Security, SSI, or Public Assistance payments.)
2. You are a migrant or seasonal farm worker without money or resources.
3. Your monthly income and liquid resources combined are less than the total of your monthly rent or mortgage and heating costs and utilities.

If your expedited SNAP application is approved, you should receive SNAP benefits within five days.

My recertification period is coming up. Do I need to recertify with DSS?

If you have an open SNAP case that was due for recertification in March, April, or May 2020, your recertification was automatically extended for three months from the original date your benefits were set to expire. If your SNAP case was due for recertification in June 2020, your recertification is now extended for six months. It is expected that additional extensions of certification periods will be forthcoming.

If your income has decreased significantly since the last time you recertified, you may want to notify DSS as you could potentially qualify for a larger SNAP benefit amount.

What is the SNAP Emergency Allotment?

Households that received SNAP in March and April 2020 but did not receive the maximum benefit amount for their household size were eligible to receive an emergency allotment that would bring the household up to the maximum possible benefit for their household size.

If you already had been receiving the maximum benefit amount for your household size, you would not be eligible to receive the SNAP emergency allotment.

What is the Pandemic EBT program?

The Pandemic EBT program (P-EBT) is a temporary assistance program for households with children affected by school closures during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The state will issue benefits only to households of children whose schools were closed for at least five consecutive days during the emergency and who would have received free or reduced price meals if not for the closures. Under this program, New York will issue P-EBT benefits to both current SNAP households and non-SNAP households. The state will calculate monthly benefits for each eligible child in the household equal to the daily reimbursement for free breakfast and lunch (\$5.70), multiplied by the average number of days school was canceled in the month.

Eligible families will receive a set amount of funds on an EBT card to purchase groceries at retailers that accept EBT Benefits. Visit fns.usda.gov/snap for more information on participating retailers and eligible food items.

Families do not need to apply to receive Pandemic-EBT. Benefits will be issued automatically on existing EBT cards for households already receiving SNAP, Public Assistance or Medicaid. New cards will be mailed to all other eligible households who currently do not have an EBT card.

Distribution will be staggered, with families receiving benefits at different times over the next several months.

I am an able bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD). Am I still subject to the work requirements for ABAWDS?

From April 2020 on through the end of month following the month in which the current public health emergency declaration is lifted, ABAWD work requirements are suspended. ABAWDs currently receiving benefits will remain on benefits and those whose benefits have been terminated should reapply for benefits and should not have to re-establish eligibility.

Can I use my SNAP benefits for online grocery purchases?

Yes, SNAP benefits may be used for online grocery purchases. Current participating retailers include Amazon, Walmart, and ShopRite. Amazon is available statewide, while Walmart and ShopRite are only available in specific zip codes. Some Walmart locations offer delivery and/or pick-up. Please be aware that SNAP does not cover the cost of delivery or service fees.

What if I have other questions about SNAP?

More information about SNAP can be found here: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/qanda.asp>. You can also always contact our office.

Last Reviewed: May 28, 2020

Printed: May 9, 2021

<http://www.lawny.org/node/390/covid-19-and-snap-benefits>

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