



## COVID-19 Federal Resource Guideline Series: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

### *What needed activities and services does SNAP provide or pay for?*

SNAP benefits can be used to purchase a limited variety of food items, and cannot be used to purchase medicine, vitamins, alcoholic beverages, pet food, or non-food household goods. SNAP can be used to purchase food from shelters who provide the option. SNAP benefits can subsidize food costs for shelters which feed guests by allowing shelter guests access to other food options.

### *Who is eligible for SNAP benefits?*

SNAP is intended to help feed individuals and families with low or no income. Eligibility is limited to U.S. citizens and certain non-citizens who meet specific requirements. People who live outside or in shelters or other non-permanent settings are eligible for SNAP, including youth who live separately from parents. People with newly-decreased or halted income due to the pandemic may be able to access SNAP.

### *What funds are available?*

The CARES Act contains [\\$15 billion](#) for SNAP. [Several states](#) have received USDA waivers allowing for emergency supplemental benefits for households which already receive SNAP benefits. A [40% increase](#) in SNAP benefits, or an extra \$2 billion per month nationwide, is now available in addition to the \$4.5 billion in benefits already provided to households nationwide. This change means that a household's SNAP benefits may increase from an average of about \$300 a month to \$420 a month, or from \$130 a month to nearly \$200 per month for an individual. Existing recipients may see even further increases in their benefits if they were not already receiving the maximum benefit they are eligible for. Additional funding in recent stimulus bills is being used to make sure that states can distribute the maximum amount of money every family is eligible to receive.

The recently-passed [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) grants states temporary flexibility in administering SNAP, making it easier for users to access benefits. Most notably, states can now increase benefits to meet immediate rising need, waive certain application requirements so that more people can become eligible, and begin online purchasing programs. Recipients who live in food deserts or for whom traveling to a grocery is unsafe due to COVID-19 can now purchase food online with SNAP benefits.

The new Act [also](#) temporarily suspends SNAP's three-month time limit for childless adults under 50, suspends SNAP's work requirement, and allows [school meal replacement benefits](#)

through the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program. These changes mean that now, childless adults can use SNAP benefits to purchase food through at least the duration of pandemic; adults cannot have their benefits revoked for being out of work; and families with children can cover the cost of meals for children who, if not for the pandemic, would be receiving free or reduced-cost meals at school.

*How can you find more information?*

System providers can start by reaching out to their [local SNAP office](#). In your state, SNAP decisions may be made one of a number of [state agencies](#). Representatives of these agencies should be able to explain decisions and updates, or initiate a review process. You may also seek to educate your local and state [legislators](#) about the needs of your community.