



The food stamp program helps low-income people buy food. Although it is a federal government program, it is run by state or local agencies.

Who can get food stamps?

To get food stamps, you and the other people in your household must meet certain conditions.

Everyone in your household must have or apply for a Social Security number and be in one of the following categories:

- Citizens of the United States;
- Noncitizens who are lawfully admitted for permanent residence and have a total of 40 qualifying work credits;
- Some noncitizens who are active duty members or honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. armed forces, their spouses and unmarried dependent children; or
- Some American Indians who are born outside the U.S. or who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Other noncitizens may be able to get food stamps, but only for seven years. The seven-year period begins on:

- The date of their admission as refugees under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);
- The date they were granted asylum under section 208 of the INA;
- The date their deportation was withheld under section 243(h) of the INA, as in effect before April 1, 1997, or the date their removal was withheld under section 241(b)(3) of the INA;
- The date they were admitted as Amerasian immigrants under section 584 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1988; or

- The date they were granted status as Cuban or Haitian entrants as defined in section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980.

Work

Most able-bodied people between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for work to qualify for food stamps. Many people may be required to participate in an employment or training program. Some college students also may be eligible.

Resources (things you own)

Generally, your household cannot have more than \$2,000 in resources. But, if your household includes a person age 60 or older, the limit is \$3,000. The resources of a person who is getting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are not counted for food stamp purposes. Resources include cash, bank accounts and other property.

Not all the things you own count. For example, your home and the land it is on do not count for food stamp eligibility. A car or truck counts differently, depending on how it is used.

Most households also must meet an income limit. Certain things do not count as income and can be subtracted from your income. Your household may qualify for other income exclusions if it includes a person age 60 or older or disabled. The income limits vary by household size and may change each year.

How to apply for food stamps?

Food stamp applications are available at any Social Security office. If you and everyone in your household are applying for or already getting SSI payments, any Social Security office will help you fill out the food stamp application and send it to the food stamp office for you.

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All others must take or send their food stamp applications to the local food stamp office or to any Social Security office where a food stamp representative works.

When you apply, you also should have:

- Identification that shows your name and address;
- Proof of earnings or other income, such as Social Security, SSI payments or a pension for each member of your household;
- Proof of how much you spend for child care;
- Rent receipts or proof of your mortgage payments;
- Records of your utility costs; and
- Medical bills for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who receive Social Security or SSI payments because they are disabled.

Food stamps

Getting or applying only for Social Security?

You can get a food stamp application and information at any Social Security office.

We cannot process your food stamp applications if you are getting or applying only for Social Security.

Getting or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

You can apply for food stamps at any Social Security office if you and everyone in your household get or apply for SSI.

We will help you fill out the food stamp application. You do not have to go to the food stamp office to apply.

Contacting Social Security

Contact your Social Security representative or your local food stamp office for more information about the food stamp program and the eligibility rules. Remember, Social Security does not decide if you are eligible for food stamps.

For general information, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.