

Understanding Changes to SNAP

Kinship families facing food insecurity may have questions about changes to SNAP benefits and requirements under HR-1, the comprehensive budget bill passed in 2025.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Although people often refer to this assistance as food stamps, benefits are now loaded onto an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, usually near the beginning of the month.

SNAP can be used to purchase most food items at authorized stores or retailers, such as grocery stores, superstores, convenience stores, certain online retailers, and many farmers markets. SNAP may not be used for non-food items, like vitamins, laundry detergent, or paper towels, nor can it be used for hot, ready-to-eat foods, like pizza or rotisserie chicken. To learn more, see [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) for Kinship/Grandfamilies](#).

Not sure if your local store accepts SNAP? Look for the SNAP EBT sign or sticker near the entrance or ask store associates if they accept EBT.

Who is eligible for benefits?

SNAP eligibility is based on income, resources, and household size. US citizens and certain legal permanent residents (green card holders) are eligible to apply for SNAP. Immigrants without legal status have always been ineligible for SNAP. HR-1 further restricts benefits to [certain categories of legal immigrants](#). Child support and caregiver income are included in family income. (For about 20 years, Minnesota has been the only state offering child-only SNAP that does not include the caregiver's income when determining eligibility.)

[Benefit amounts](#) are based on household income, size, and certain expenses, such as housing and energy costs. Kin/grandfamily caregivers do not need to be related to or have legal custody or guardianship of the child(ren) they are raising to include them in their SNAP application. There are special rules for households that include an older adult, a disabled person, and/or a child who is in the foster care system.

Some states have an application process that combines SNAP and other benefits. To apply for benefits or get information about SNAP, families may contact their [local SNAP office](#).

For more information, [find a guide to SNAP in your state](#)

What do service providers and families need to know about new SNAP restrictions?

Below, we provide information and links on changes to the SNAP work requirement and other important updates to SNAP.

Employment

Applicants are given a three-month grace period, then required to work at least 20 hours a week (80 hours a month) to receive benefits for their family. HR-1 changes the work requirement, also known as the community engagement requirement, as follows:

- ▶ Applicants over age 64 are exempt from the work requirement. (Previously, those over age 54 were exempt.)
- ▶ Relative caretakers (caregivers) of children age 13 or under are exempt from the work requirement. (Previously, caretakers with minor children in the household were exempt.)
- ▶ Former foster youth, all veterans, and people experiencing homelessness are no longer exempt from the work requirement.
- ▶ People living in places with low numbers of available jobs (such as rural areas) are no longer exempt from the work requirement unless the unemployment rate in their area rises above 10% and their state applies for a waiver. [Alaska and Hawaii](#) can request waivers for the work requirement from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for areas with unemployment rates that are at least 150% above the national rate AND/OR for individuals who demonstrate a good faith effort to comply with the work requirement (referred to as good faith exemptions) on a case-by-case basis.

Members of federally recognized Indian Tribes *remain exempt* from the work requirement. Pregnant women and people certified as physically or mentally unfit for work *remain exempt*.

This [article](#) contains more information about the SNAP work requirement.

Other SNAP Changes in HR-1

- ▶ The SNAP education program was eliminated.
- ▶ Beginning in October 2026, states will have to pay 75% of SNAP administrative costs, an increase from 50%.
- ▶ Beginning in October 2027, many states will have to pay a share of SNAP benefits. Until this change, the federal government has always paid for all SNAP benefits.
- ▶ New rules will make it more difficult for the USDA to increase SNAP benefit amounts based on changes to the cost of food.
- ▶ To account for the costs of heating, electricity, and other utilities, SNAP permits households to deduct a standard utility allowance (SUA) from their household income.
 - HR-1 reverses the USDA rule that allowed internet expenses to count toward the household SUA, reducing families' SNAP benefit amounts.

- Households receiving LIHEAP energy assistance no longer automatically qualify for the SUA in SNAP, unless they include an older adult or a person with a disability.

For more information on the changes to SNAP, see the [Budget Reconciliation Impacts Fact Sheet](#) released by the Food Research & Action Center.

Will families that are currently receiving benefits continue to do so?

Yes! As always, each state must recertify families every six months. At that time, adults must provide documentation that they are working or exempt from the work requirement. Families currently receiving benefits need not recertify until their state SNAP agency requests that they recertify.

If families feel like they've been unfairly denied benefits, what can they do?

Families who feel they've been unfairly denied benefits can request an appeal, and a local [Legal Aid](#) provider may be able to help them do so.

SOURCES

- ▶ Chelsi Rhoades and Jaia Lent, Generations United
- ▶ [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: A Quick Guide to SNAP Eligibility and Benefits](#)
- ▶ Food Research & Action Center: The Far-Reaching and Harmful Impacts of the Reconciliation Bill—on Families, Older Adults, Immigrants, and State Budgets, [fact sheet](#) and [blog](#).
- ▶ [Share Our Strength: Summary of Changes to SNAP in Reconciliation \(H.R.1\)](#)

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, Tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit www.GKSNetwork.org.

The Network is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,950,000 with 95 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$523,684 and 5 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

The Network is a project of Generations United.

generations
united[®]
Because we're stronger together[®]