
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Overview

Summary

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) is a federally administered program that supplements the food budget of families by providing them with benefits to purchase healthy and nutritious food. The SNAP is available to low-paid working families, including individuals and households with low incomes, low-income older adults (60 years and older), and people with disabilities. The SNAP is federally administered by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#), and administered in Iowa by the [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#).

Background

The SNAP was authorized by the federal [Food Stamp Act of 1964](#), and is administered federally through [7 U.S.C. §2011 - 2036d](#) and [7 C.F.R. §271 - 285](#). Federal income thresholds for the SNAP are specified at 130.0% of the federal poverty limit (FPL), with states able to exceed the floor. The HHS has previously [administered](#) the Program at 160.0% of the FPL, while 2023 Iowa Acts, [Senate File 494](#) (Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Eligibility Verification Act), codified the FPL threshold for the SNAP eligibility at 160.0%. **Figure 1** shows the FPL thresholds by family size for 2023.

Figure 1 — 2023 Federal Poverty Level Thresholds

Family Size	100.0%	130.0%	160.0%
1	\$ 14,580	\$ 18,954	\$ 23,328
2	19,720	25,636	31,552
3	24,860	32,318	39,776
4	30,000	39,000	48,000
5	35,140	45,682	56,224
6	40,280	52,364	64,448
7	45,420	59,046	72,672
8	50,560	65,728	80,896

In FY 2023, allowable federal asset limits are \$2,750 (including bank accounts), or \$4,250 if at least one member of the household is age 60 or older or disabled. In 2023, SF 494 defined “asset test” to include the value of all assets of all members of a SNAP applicant’s household up to \$15,000 for eligible Iowans. Asset tests for receipt of SNAP benefits include members of the applicant’s household. Per federal guidelines, certain resources, such as homes, are not counted when determining eligibility. Allowable assets for review by State agencies include boats, vacation homes, savings accounts, and the value of vehicles used for household transportation purposes. Federal regulations provide a State option to

More Information

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services SNAP: hhs.iowa.gov/food-assistance/SNAP
LSA Staff Contact: Eric Richardson (515.281.6767) eric.richardson@legis.iowa.gov

disqualify custodial parents from participation in the SNAP unless the individual cooperates with a State agency.

Most unemployed nondisabled adults aged 18 to 49, who are not living with minor children, are limited to three months of SNAP benefits, unless they are working at least 20 hours per week or participating in a qualifying workfare or job training program. States may seek temporary waivers from this time limit for areas with high unemployment where qualifying jobs are scarce. States also have separate authority to impose work requirements on many adults in SNAP households; however, Iowa has not imposed work requirements through the statute for the Program.

The SNAP benefits must be utilized by eligible recipients, per federal [guidelines](#), on a specific set of foods, including fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products, breads and cereals, snack foods, and seeds and plants. The HHS provides [eligible](#) SNAP enrollees Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards that can be used to buy groceries at supermarkets, grocery stores, and some [farmers markets](#). The average number of Iowa households and individuals receiving SNAP benefits, average benefit per household, and average amount of monthly benefits issued from FY 2019 to FY 2022 is shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 — Iowa SNAP Benefits (FY 2019 – FY 2022)

Fiscal Year	Average Number of Households	Average Monthly Household Benefits	Average Number of Recipients	Average Monthly Benefits Issued
2019	160,000	\$ 227	332,000	\$ 36,213,000
2020	152,000	260	313,000	39,600,000
2021	147,000	398	299,000	58,737,000
2022	141,000	428	287,000	60,404,000

Funding

The SNAP funding for benefits is received from the federal government; however, 50.0% of administrative costs are paid by the State, with the other 50.0% paid by the USDA. According to the USDA, in FY 2020, the State [paid](#) \$22.4 million for SNAP administrative expenses to match federal funding. Most of the State funding for SNAP administrative expenses was paid through the General Fund appropriation to the HHS for Field Operations.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [239](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [441 IAC 47.1](#), Iowa Administrative Code [441 IAC 65](#)