
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Summary

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) is a federally administered program that supplements the food budget of families by providing benefits to purchase healthy and nutritious food. SNAP is available to low-income working families, individuals and households, older adults (60 years and older), and people with disabilities. The Program is administered by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) as part of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) through [7 U.S.C. §2011 – 2036d](#) and [7 C.F.R. §271 – 285](#). In the State of Iowa, SNAP is administered by the Iowa [Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#).

Background

The first Food Stamp Program (FSP) in the United States began in 1939 and was brought under federal control and regulation with the passage of the [Food Stamp Act of 1964](#). In 2008, the name of the FSP was changed to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to prevent existing stigmas around food stamps from impacting the effectiveness of the welfare program. Additionally, references to the Food Stamp Act were replaced with references to the [Food and Nutrition Act of 2008](#). Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards are the primary method for distributing SNAP benefits to recipients. By 2004, all U.S. states were using EBT cards to deliver benefits. EBT is also used in many states to deliver certain Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits to recipients.

As part of the U.S. government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020](#). This granted the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to approve state agencies' plans to administer further EBT benefits in response to the pandemic. Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits allowed eligible children to receive temporary emergency nutrition benefits loaded onto EBT cards. After the public health emergency ended in May 2023, children under the age of six in households receiving SNAP benefits were no longer eligible for P-EBT benefits. However, school-age children who attended a school participating in the National School Lunch Program at the end of the 2022-23 school year were still eligible for summer 2023 P-EBT benefits in participating states.

The 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 EBT cards that can be used to buy groceries at supermarkets, grocery stores, and some farmers markets.

Requirements for Receiving Benefits

An Employment and Training Program (E&T) was added to SNAP in 1985, which required states to provide a form of job search assistance, job search training, work experience, workfare, or other relevant services to SNAP recipients. There are two different sets of work requirements that may apply to a person receiving SNAP benefits: general work requirements and the Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements. General work requirements apply to most persons age 16

More Information

Iowa HHS SNAP: hhs.iowa.gov/programs/food-assistance/snap
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through 59 who can work, meaning that persons need to meet the general work requirements to receive SNAP benefits. General work requirements include registering to work, participating in SNAP E&T or workfare programs, taking a suitable job if one is offered, and not voluntarily quitting or reducing hours at a job without good reason. The ABAWD work requirements apply to persons who are age 18 through 52, can work, and have no dependents. Qualifying persons need to meet both general work requirements and an additional ABAWD work requirement to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in each three-year time period. A person can meet ABAWD requirements by working, participating in a work program, or a combination of the two for at least 80 hours each month. It is also possible to meet ABAWD requirements by participating in workfare.

If every member of a household receives Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) or Family Investment Program (FIP) benefits, then certain eligibility factors for SNAP are automatically met and verified for that household. This is known as categorical eligibility SNAP and is funded by the TANF block grant. Although the TANF block grant has specific limitations on the use of funds, categorical eligibility SNAP meets the purposes established in federal law, which allows the State to allocate some of the TANF block grant moneys toward categorical eligibility for food assistance.

With the passage of 2023 Iowa Acts, [Senate File 494](#) (Public Assistance Modernization Act), Iowa instituted new rules regarding SNAP regulations. The gross countable monthly income threshold was set at 160.0% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a given household size. The Act states that applicants must complete a computerized identity authentication and an asset test conducted by the HHS. The Act also establishes that applicants are to be provided written notice and the opportunity to explain any issues identified in the authentication and verification process. **Figure 1** shows the FPL thresholds by family size for 2024.

Figure 1 — 2024 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 |

Funding

Funding for SNAP 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 2021, the State paid \$27.0 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—47.1](#) and [441—65](#)