



FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

What Is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and households via a monthly benefit on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit card, which can be used at authorized retailer stores to purchase food. SNAP is the largest Federal nutrition assistance program.

Who Administers SNAP?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers SNAP at the Federal level. USDA also authorizes and monitors retailer stores that redeem SNAP benefits. States operate the Program at the local level, determining eligibility and issuing benefits to eligible households.

How Does SNAP Work?

Households apply to SNAP by completing an application and providing information about their household finances and other circumstances. A face-to-face or phone interview is also required. If determined eligible by the local office, the household is issued an EBT card with a monthly allotment of benefits for the duration of their certification period—typically 3, 6, or 12 months—after which the household must be recertified to continue receiving benefits.

Households use their card to purchase food at authorized retailers. SNAP benefits are also accepted at thousands of farmers markets nationwide. Participating households must report changes in their circumstances, including their income, on a periodic basis. Some individuals may have to meet work requirements to continue receiving benefits. SNAP recipients may also receive employment and training services to help them move to stable long-term employment.

Retailers that wish to become a SNAP-authorized store must meet minimum stocking requirements and apply for a SNAP license from the FNS. Questions can be directed to the SNAP Retailer Service Center at 1-888-823-4369.

How Can People Participate in SNAP?

Households that meet the eligibility requirements are eligible to receive benefits. This includes certain resource and income tests.

Where Can I Go To Learn More About SNAP?

For more information about SNAP, contact your SNAP State agency. You can also visit the SNAP website at: www.fns.usda.gov/snap.

Whom at FNS Can I Contact To Discuss SNAP?

Please call FNS Division of External and Governmental Affairs at 703-305-2281.

Key Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Data	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017 (estimate)
Average participation (in thousands)	47,696	46,664	45,767	44,219	42,138
Benefit cost (in millions)	\$76,066.3	\$69,998.8	\$69,645.1	\$66,539.4	\$63,709.7
Federal other costs(in millions)*	\$3,792.7	\$4,063.0	\$4,301.2	\$4,382.2	\$4,250.4
Total Federal cost (in millions)**	\$79,859.1	\$74,061.9	\$73,946.4	\$70,921.5	\$67,960.1

* Includes the Federal share of State administrative expenses, nutrition education, and employment and training programs, plus other costs.
** Total may not add exactly due to rounding.
FY = Fiscal Year