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# Nutrition Assistance Programs

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Federal, state, and local governments provide many programs designed to help meet the nutritional needs of people with low income and their families.

Although Social Security does not manage any of the nutrition assistance programs discussed in this publication, we provide general information and refer you to the agencies that do.

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, helps people with low income buy food needed for good health. SNAP benefits are provided on an electronic card, which operates like a debit card, to buy food at most grocery stores.

To get SNAP benefits, your household must meet certain requirements. Your household includes everyone who lives with you and who buys and prepares food together. You can still get SNAP even if you do not have a permanent address or place to stay. For more details about SNAP eligibility requirements, read *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Facts* (Publication No. 05-10101).

## How to apply for SNAP

Applications for SNAP benefits are available at any Social Security office. If you and everyone in your household are applying for or already getting

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Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, **a representative at any Social Security office can help you fill out the application and send it to the local SNAP office for you.** All other applicants, including those applying for or getting only Social Security benefits, must take or send their SNAP application to the local SNAP office or apply online (in some states). To find your local SNAP office, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory). You can also call the SNAP Toll-free Information Number at **1-800-221-5689**.

SNAP is just one of many nutrition programs available. The federal government and many state and local government agencies sponsor numerous programs that provide people with information about, and access to, a more nutritious diet. Many of these programs are set up to improve the health and eating habits of children and people age 60 or older with low income. These programs include the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

## Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

The WIC program provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education

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to eligible women and children. WIC is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5, who meet certain requirements are eligible for WIC. These requirements include income eligibility and state residency. In addition, the applicant must be determined to be at “nutrition risk” by a health professional or a trained health official. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides eligible WIC participants with a seasonal benefit to buy fruits, vegetables, and herbs at farmers markets and roadside stands. For more information, contact your state or local health department or visit [\*\*www.fns.usda.gov/wic\*\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic).

## Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP works to improve the health of adults 60 and older who have low income by supplementing their diets with nutritious food. CSFP is administered at the federal level by FNS, an agency of the USDA. Through CSFP, USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and Tribal Organizations. State agencies provide USDA foods to local public and nonprofit agencies. Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute food,

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and offer nutrition education. For more information, visit [\*\*www.fns.usda.gov/csfp\*\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp).

## Nutrition services supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL)

Senior nutrition programs provide nutritious meals to adults age 60 and older. Services include healthy home-delivered meals and meals served in group settings, such as senior centers and faith-based locations. In addition, programs provide nutrition screening, assessment, counseling, and education. Nutrition services are an important link to other in-home and community-based supports, such as transportation and home health services. The ACL is administered at the federal level by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). For more information, visit [\*\*acl.gov/programs/health-wellness/nutrition-services\*\*](http://acl.gov/programs/health-wellness/nutrition-services).

## Other nutrition programs

The USDA administers other food programs:

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

CACFP provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children and adults enrolled at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day

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care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in after-school care programs and children living in emergency shelters. For more information, visit [\*www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp).

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

NSLP and SBP reimburse participating public and nonprofit private schools that offer nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free meals to eligible children each school day. For more information, visit [\*www.fns.usda.gov/nslp\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp) and [\*www.fns.usda.gov/sbp\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp).

- **SUN Programs**

USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids offer convenient, flexible options to help children get nutritious food in the summer when school meals aren't available. For more information, visit [\*www.fns.usda.gov/summer\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer).

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- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**

SFMNP awards grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Tribal governments to provide adults age 60 and older who have low income with a seasonal benefit to buy produce. This includes fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs at farmers markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs. For more information, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp).

- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of Americans with low income, including older adults, by providing free emergency food and nutrition assistance. The USDA buys a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA foods and makes them available to state agencies. States provide the food to local agencies, typically food banks, to distribute to soup kitchens, food pantries, community action agencies, and other local organizations. For more information, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/tefap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap).

To learn more about USDA nutrition programs, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map](http://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map) or contact your local social services, health or agriculture department, state aging office, Tribal government office, or school.

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## Contacting Us

The most convenient way to do business with us is to visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) to get information and use our online services. There are several things you can do online: apply for benefits; start or complete your request for an original or replacement Social Security card; get useful information; find publications; and get answers to frequently asked questions.

When you open a personal *my* Social Security account, you have more capabilities. You can review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, and get estimates of future benefits. You can also print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information (Social Security beneficiaries only), and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S. If you live outside the United States, visit [www.ssa.gov/foreign](http://www.ssa.gov/foreign) to access our online services.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by phone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so you may not need to speak with a representative.

If you need to speak with someone or if you need to make an appointment to come into an office, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you're deaf or hard of hearing. A member of our staff can answer your call from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We provide free interpreter services upon request. For



quicker access to a representative, try calling early in the day (between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. local time) or later in the day. **We are less busy later in the week (Wednesday to Friday) and later in the month.**

## SNAP

### ***Getting or applying only for Social Security?***

You can get a SNAP application and information about SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs at any Social Security office.

*You can fill out the application and submit it to a SNAP office or apply at a SNAP office in person, online, or over the phone.*

### ***Getting or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?***

You can apply for SNAP benefits at any Social Security office if you and everyone in your household gets or applies for SSI.

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

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