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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 incomes 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 low-income people buy the 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 conditions and 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 detailed information about SNAP eligibility requirements, you should also 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

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are applying for or already getting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, **any Social Security office will 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. To find your local SNAP office or to apply online (in some states), visit ***www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory***. You can also call the SNAP information line toll-free 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 also are set up to improve the health and eating habits of children, and people age 60 or older with low income. Two examples are 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 to

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low income pregnant, breastfeeding, or non-breastfeeding postpartum women. These services also benefit infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk. 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. 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. In addition to the benefits and services provided through WIC, the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program provides eligible WIC participants with coupons to purchase food. This includes nutritious, unprepared, locally grown 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/women-infants-and-children-wic\*\*](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic).

## Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP works to improve the health of low-income elderly persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA foods. CSFP is administered at the federal level by FNS, an agency of the USDA. Through

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CSFP, USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and Indian Tribal Organizations. State agencies provide USDA foods to public and nonprofit private local agencies. Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and offer nutrition education. For more information about this program, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program-csfp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program-csfp).

## Senior Nutrition Program by the Administration for Community Living (ACL)

The Senior Nutrition Program provides nutritious meals to adults age 60 and older. These services include healthy meals served in group settings, such as senior centers and faith-based locations or home delivered. In addition, the programs provide a range of services including nutrition screening, assessment, education, and counseling. Nutrition services also provide an important link to other supportive in-home and community-based supports such as transportation and home-health aide services. The ACL is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about this program visit <https://acl.gov/programs/health-wellness/nutrition-services>.

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## Other nutrition programs available

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 who are enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs and children residing in emergency shelters. Adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities may also be eligible.

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

NSLP and SBP reimburse participating public and nonprofit private schools for offering nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children each school day. Households may apply for children to receive school meals free or at a reduced price.

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- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP provides free meals and snacks to low-income children ages 18 and under when school is not in session.

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

SFMNP awards grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors aged 60 years and older with coupons that can be exchanged for food. This includes fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

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

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people, by providing emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. Through TEFAP, USDA purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to state distributing agencies. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens, food pantries, and community action agencies.

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For more information about these nutrition programs administered by USDA, contact your local social services, health or agriculture department, state aging office, Indian tribal organization offices, school, or visit [www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map](http://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map).

## 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, request a replacement Medicare card, and get a replacement SSA-1099/1042S. Access to your personal *my* Social Security account may be limited for users outside the United States.

If you don't have access to the internet, we offer many automated services by telephone, 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, 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 must either fill out the application and submit it to the SNAP office or go to the SNAP office to apply.*

### ***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 get or apply 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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