

## Food and Nutrition Assistance in Massachusetts

This guide is an introduction to services that offers general guidance. **We encourage you to read the additional references provided and to discuss your unique situation in more detail with your social worker or other advocate.**

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### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) provides funds monthly on an EBT card (like a pre-loaded debit card) that you can use to buy food.

#### SNAP Eligibility:

- Eligibility depends on your family size, income and certain expenses. Mass Legal Services provides an online SNAP calculator to help you learn if you may be eligible and offer an estimate of likely benefits. See [masslegalservices.org/content/online-snap-calculator](https://masslegalservices.org/content/online-snap-calculator) or call the FoodSource Hotline: 1-800-645-8333.
- If **everyone** in your household receives TAFDC or EAEDC you are automatically eligible for SNAP and should not need to apply.
- **Learn more about:**
  - **Financial eligibility:** [masslegalhelp.org/income-benefits/food-stamps/advocacy-guide/part3/q68-income-tests](https://masslegalhelp.org/income-benefits/food-stamps/advocacy-guide/part3/q68-income-tests).
  - **Non-citizen eligibility:** you must be U.S. citizens or certain eligible noncitizens-see [fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-policy-non-citizen-eligibility](https://fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-policy-non-citizen-eligibility). Receiving SNAP will NOT make you a “public charge.”

#### Expedited (Emergency) SNAP Benefits:

Expedited SNAP benefits are not extra benefits - they are a *faster way* to get your first month of SNAP benefits. If you are eligible for Expedited SNAP benefits, DTA must give you these benefits no later than seven days after they receive your application. These benefits are given for one month only. To continue to receive benefits, you must submit all of your proofs to complete the application.

- **Expedited SNAP Eligibility:**
  - your income is less than \$150 a month and you do not have more than \$100 in savings; **or**
  - your rent or mortgage plus utilities is higher than your monthly income and savings; **or**
  - you are a migrant worker

## SNAP Benefits:

- **EBT Cards-** if approved, you'll get an electronic account and a debit card called the an **Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card**. Monthly benefits are deposited into your account and then you can use the EBT card at participating grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, and co-ops.
- **You can** buy any food except alcohol, pet food, or heated foods. You can also buy seeds and plants to grow food, as long as you are buying them from a store that accepts SNAP (like a grocery store).
- **You cannot** use your EBT card to buy soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, diapers, feminine hygiene products, tobacco, or anything else that is not food.
- **Online purchases-** since the pandemic, SNAP has added more participating providers which can accept online purchases (curbside pick-up and delivery). Current participating providers: Aldi, Amazon, Walmart, Price Chopper, Stop & Shop. **SNAP benefits cannot be used for service or delivery fees.** You may need an additional source of payment (credit or debit card) to pay for any fees or non-covered items.

**SNAP Work requirements are resuming. They were waived during the COVID public health emergency that ended in May 2023.** Able-bodied adults, up to age 50, without dependents, are required to work or participate in approved activities to maintain benefits for more than 3 months in a 3 year period. Certain groups are exempt from these requirements: those under age 18, people age 50 or older, pregnant people, people who have dependents under age 18 or who care for people with disabilities, and people who have been exempted for physical or mental health reasons.

## To Apply for SNAP:

- **By phone:** call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333 to start an application over the phone, or ask to have an application sent to you by mail.
- **By mail or fax:** fill-able PDF: [mass.gov/doc/english-snap-benefits-application-snapa-1/download](https://mass.gov/doc/english-snap-benefits-application-snapa-1/download) . Your completed applications can be mailed to: DTA, PO Box 4406, Taunton, MA, 02780-9975 or faxed to 617-887-8765.
- **Online:** [dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/](https://dtaconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/) -online app available in in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Vietnamese.
- **In person:** Currently DTA offices are closed except for **staffed lobby kiosks** to assist those without access to computers. To find your local office, see: [mass.gov/orgs/department-of-transitional-assistance/locations](https://mass.gov/orgs/department-of-transitional-assistance/locations).
- **Over 65 and applying for MassHealth?** The **MassHealth** paper application has a check-box you can check to share your information with DTA and automatically apply for SNAP.
- **Receiving or applying for SSI? If you and everyone in your household are applying for or already receive SSI payments,** Social Security will:
  - Help you complete the SNAP application by phone. Call 800-772-1213 (TTY: 800-325-0778).
  - Help you complete the application in person if you have a scheduled appointment.

## Sources and For More Information:

- 2022 Food Stamp/ SNAP Advocacy Guide: [masslegalservices.org/content/2022-snap-advocacy-guide](https://masslegalservices.org/content/2022-snap-advocacy-guide)
  - USDA Nutrition Assistance Program website: [fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap](https://fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap)
  - Mass.gov website: [mass.gov/snap-benefits-food-stamps](https://mass.gov/snap-benefits-food-stamps)
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## The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

### WIC Eligibility:

You or your child must be:

- Pregnant (through pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends)
- Breastfeeding (up to infant's 1st birthday)
- Non-breastfeeding postpartum (up to 6 months after the birth of an infant or after pregnancy ends)
- Under age 5

You must also meet income guidelines, live in Massachusetts, and be at nutritional risk as determined by a health professional. **There are NO immigration status requirements and receiving WIC will NOT make you a “public charge.”**

See [mass.gov/service-details/check-eligibility-for-wic](https://mass.gov/service-details/check-eligibility-for-wic) for more information.

### WIC Benefits:

WIC participants receive WIC cards to purchase certain healthy foods each month to supplement their diets.

### To Apply for WIC:

- **Online:** [mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online](https://mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online) Your information will be shared with your local WIC agency, who may then use this information to screen your WIC eligibility. **At this writing, in person applications are not being accepted.**

### Can I get both WIC AND SNAP?

Yes! If you qualify for both programs you can receive assistance from SNAP and WIC at the same time.

### Sources and For More Information:

- Mass.gov website: [mass.gov/women-infants-children-wic-nutrition-program](https://mass.gov/women-infants-children-wic-nutrition-program) USDA Food and Nutrition Service website: [fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic](https://fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic)
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## National School Lunch Program

The FY2024 budget included a provision making free school lunch permanent in the Commonwealth's K-12 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. **Families no longer need to apply** for the **National School Lunch Program** to receive free school meals. However, **completing an application may help** the state draw federal funding, and schools may use the data to help qualify students for other subsidies or programs and help the school apply for grants and other funding. During summer vacation, the **Summer Food Service Program** provides free meals and snacks for children and teens at many Massachusetts parks, schools, housing developments, community centers, and other approved locations where summer programs for children take place.

**There are NO immigration status requirements; receiving school meals will NOT make you a "public charge".**

**If you are eligible there may be benefits to you and the school if you apply:**

- Students living in households receiving up to 185% of FPL
- **Students who are homeless or if ANYONE in the household is on TAFDC or SNAP.** These families should be Directly Certified, should automatically qualify.
- **Children in foster care** are categorically eligible for free meals. These families should be Directly Certified, should automatically qualify.

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## Home Delivered Meals - Meals on Wheels and Community Servings

- **Meals on Wheels (MOWs)** delivers prepared meals to homebound seniors, aged 60 or older who are unable to shop or cook for themselves. Apply through your local Aging Services Access Point (ASAP). Find your local ASAP: [mass.gov/location-details/aging-services-access-points-asaps-in-massachusetts](https://mass.gov/location-details/aging-services-access-points-asaps-in-massachusetts)
- **Community Servings-** provides home delivered meals to individuals and families struggling with **any type of acute life-threatening illness**, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and lupus. In addition to their regular meals, they provide special diets to meet diverse dietary needs.
  - **Community Servings serves the following Massachusetts cities:** Boston, Braintree, Brockton, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Medford, Quincy, Randolph, Revere, Somerville, Weymouth, or Winthrop.
  - **Eligibility** is based on the client's mobility-level and severity of illness. There is no income limit. Your medical provider must complete a form, to document that you have an acute life-threatening illness and to explain the need. You must also submit signed paperwork including income verification.
  - **To apply-** ask your medical provider and see [servings.org/meal-delivery/application-process/](https://servings.org/meal-delivery/application-process/)

## **Food Pantries**

Food pantries are independent community organizations, often run by churches, that provide food staples to individuals and families in need.

### **Food Pantry Eligibility:**

Individual food pantry programs set their own eligibility rules, but food pantries should not ask you to present photo IDs or Social Security cards to access food assistance.

### **Food Pantry Benefits:**

Usually food pantries provide two to four days' worth of food. Some limit the number of times one can receive food to once or twice a month.

### **To Apply for Food Pantry assistance:**

Generally, food pantries within the city of Boston have scheduled days for food pick-up and may require a referral. Generally, outside of Boston, families or individuals can self-refer and make an appointment to pick up food.

- **Call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333** to find local food pantries (see [projectbread.org/get-help/foodsource-hotline.html](http://projectbread.org/get-help/foodsource-hotline.html) for more information). Or search by zip code on The Greater Boston Food Bank website to find your local food pantry, including the days and hours they are open: [gbfb.org/need-food/](http://gbfb.org/need-food/).
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## **Fair Foods Inc. Two Dollars a Bag**

The Two Dollars a Bag program provides large bags of mixed fresh produce for a suggested donation of two dollars.

### **Eligibility:**

There are no income or immigration limitations to participate in Two Dollars a Bag.

### **Benefits:**

Each bag offers about twelve pounds of mixed fresh produce.

### **To Apply:**

There is no application process to participate in Two Dollars a Bag. Participants should bring their own bags as well as money. To find your local site: [fairfoods.org/dollarbag.html](http://fairfoods.org/dollarbag.html).

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## **Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: 1-800-645-8333**

**Need more information or help? Call the FoodSource Hotline!** Available state-wide and in 180 languages, FoodSource Hotline counselors can refer you to food resources in your community as well as provide information about school meals, summer meal sites for kids, elder meals programs, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).