

WHAT ARE FOOD STAMP BENEFITS?

The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income individuals buy nutritious food needed for good health.

Food Stamp households may have earned or unearned income or may be receiving public assistance. Many Food Stamp participants are people who have temporarily fallen on tough times.

SPENDING YOUR FOOD STAMP BENEFITS

Food Stamp benefits can only be used for purchasing food or plants and seeds to grow food for your household to eat.

Food Stamp benefits cannot be used to buy:

- any non-food item, such as pet food, soaps, paper products, etc.;
- alcoholic beverages and tobacco;
- vitamins and medicines;
- any food eaten in the store; and
- hot foods.

Benefits are not to be used to pay off existing grocery accounts or to purchase food for non-household members. Sales tax is not charged on items bought with Food Stamp benefits.

HOW CAN I APPLY?

You can pick up an application either in English or translated in Spanish, at any Family Support Division (FSD) Customer Service or Resource Center. You can request an application be mailed to you; you may download an application, or you may come to the FSD and apply in person.

You may return the application in person, by mail, or by fax to any Family Support Division (FSD) Customer Service Center or Resource Center.

If you need to, you may ask someone you trust to apply for you. That person is called your **Authorized Representative**.

Once your application has been filed you may be interviewed by phone or in person. You will hear about your eligibility for Food Stamp benefits within 30 days.

WHAT IF I HAVE NO MONEY AND CAN'T WAIT 30 DAYS?

In some emergency cases, you can get Food Stamp benefits in seven days or less. A decision about emergency benefits is made when we receive your completed application and verify your identity. A person who knows you may identify you for this purpose.

WHO IS COUNTED AS PART OF MY HOUSEHOLD?

A household is an individual or a group of people who buy, prepare, and eat food together.

CAN I HAVE INCOME AND STILL GET FOOD STAMP BENEFITS?

Yes, the amount of income you can have and still get Food Stamp benefits depends on the number of people in your household. Your gross monthly income, before deductions, must be less than the amounts listed below:

Household Size	Maximum gross monthly income**
1	\$1,276
2	\$1,726
3	\$2,177
4	\$2,628
5	\$3,078
6	\$3,529
7	\$3,980
8	\$4,430
For each additional member add \$451	

**These amounts are effective October 2015

If your gross monthly income is under the limit, an FSD team member will figure your net income (income after deductions) to determine if you are eligible for Food Stamp benefits.

Deductions include expenses such as dependent care costs, medical bills (if you are age 60 or older, or are disabled), and some shelter costs.

If you think you may be eligible, contact the Family Support Division Information Center toll free at 1-855-FSD-INFO (1-855-373-4636) or go to http://dss.mo.gov/dss_map/ for a listing of Resource Centers.

WHAT KIND OF PROPERTY CAN I OWN?

Some items that you own are counted in figuring eligibility and some are not.

Items NOT counted include:

- a home you are living in;
- personal belongings;
- cash value of life insurance policy; and
- vehicles.

Items that WILL be counted are:

- Cash on hand; and
- Savings and checking accounts.

All of your counted property is added together and the total must be less than \$2,250.

If your household has one member 60 years of age or older, or who is disabled, you can have up to \$3,250 in counted property.

INFORMATION WE WILL NEED BEFORE WE CAN COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

You do not have to have this information to make your application, but you will have to provide it before we can decide if you will receive Food Stamp benefits. We can help you obtain this information if needed.

- Proof of income for the last thirty days for those in your household that are employed.
- Proof of income such as Social Security payments, Supplemental Security Income, Child Support, Pensions, etc.

- Medical bills if you are 60 years of age or older, or if you are disabled;
- Proof of legal immigrant status for each non-citizen for whom you are applying. You do not have to tell us the immigrant status of any individual, but you will not receive Food Stamp benefits for that individual.
- Social Security Number (SSN) for each household member for whom you are applying. Or, you must agree to apply for a SSN. If you choose not to provide a SSN of an individual in your household, you will not receive Food Stamp benefits for that individual.

If additional information needed your FSD team member will discuss this with you and assist you in getting the information.

SOME THINGS YOU MAY ALSO BE ASKED TO PROVIDE:

- Bank book or current bank statement;
- Receipts for childcare or the care of other dependents who cannot care for themselves; and
- Utility bills and rent receipts.

NOTICE

If your application is denied or not acted upon with reasonable promptness, or after approval your benefits are reduced or discontinued, or you believe we have not followed the Food Stamp Law and Regulations, you may ask for a hearing. Your FSD team member can help you file an appeal.

CIVIL RIGHTS LAW

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any

program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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**MISSOURI'S
FOOD STAMP
PROGRAM**
