

Who Can Get Food Stamp Benefits?

If the people in your household unit are:

- low income
- U.S. citizens, or legal noncitizens, and
- without a lot of assets,

You may be able to get food stamp benefits.

Who is Counted As Part of My Household?

In most cases, a household includes all people who buy, prepare and eat meals together.

What If I Have No Money At All?

In an emergency, some people can get food stamp benefits *within seven days* of applying. If you have less than \$150.00 income in one month and less than \$100.00 in assets, or if your combined income and assets are less than your combined monthly rent or mortgage and utility expenses, go to your Transitional Assistance Office (TAO) and ask for Expedited Service.

Can I Have Income And Still Get Food Stamp Benefits?

Yes, you may have income and get food stamp benefits. Eligibility for food stamp benefits while collecting or earning money depends on the number of people in your household and how much income you have. To get food stamp benefits, your gross household monthly income (all the income before deductions) must be less than the amounts listed in the following table (these amounts for **October 2004 through September 2005**):

Income Standard for Households with Children Under 19 and a Pregnant Woman Living Alone	
If your household size is:	Maximum gross monthly income is:
1 person	\$1,595
2	2,139
3	2,682
4	3,225
5	3,769
6	4,312
7	4,855
8	5,399
for each extra person	+ 544

For example, a household of 9 would have to have a monthly gross income of not more than \$5,943 to qualify for food stamp benefits: \$5,399 (the amount for 8 people) + \$544 each extra person.

Income Standard for Households Without Children Under 19, or Without Elderly or Disabled Household Members	
If your household size is:	Maximum gross monthly income is:
1 person	\$1,009
2	1,354
3	1,698
4	2,043
5	2,387
6	2,732
7	3,076
8	3,421
for each extra person	+ 345

For example, a household of 9 would have to have a monthly gross income of not more than \$3,695 to qualify for food stamp benefits: \$3,354 (the amount for 8 people) + \$345 each extra person.

Note: These income limits do not apply to households with elderly and disabled members.

If your gross income is under the income limit, a food stamp worker will figure out if your net income makes you eligible for food stamp benefits. Net income is what remains after certain deductions are applied to your gross income, such as dependent care costs, a standard deduction, an earned income deduction, qualified child support payments and some shelter costs.

What Kind of Property Can I Own?

Some things you own are counted in figuring food stamp eligibility and some things are not:

Counted:

- Cash on hand
- Savings and checking accounts and other assets (all your counted properties added together)

Not Counted:

- Your home
- Your personal belongings
- The cash value of a life insurance policy
- The value of your car

If your household has a person who is under 19 years of age, or your household is comprised of a pregnant woman living alone, your assets **are not countable**.

If your household does not have a person under 19 years old, a pregnant woman living alone, a person age 60 or over, or a disabled person you can have **up to \$2,000** in assets.

If your household has a person age 60 or over, or a disabled person, you can have **up to \$3,000** in assets.

How Can I Apply for Food Stamp Benefits?

To get a food stamp application, call your TAO or 1-800-249-2007 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/dta or visit Project Bread's website at www.gettingfoodstamps.org.

You may mail, fax or take the completed application to the Department of Transitional Assistance Office (TAO) that serves your city or town. If you cannot get to the TAO, you may ask someone you trust to apply for you. That person is called your **Authorized Representative**.

Once you have filed your application, you will receive a decision **within 30 days**.

If you are eligible, you or your authorized representative will receive food stamp benefits through the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system. EBT will allow you to use food stamp benefits at Point-of-Sale terminals in food stores. EBT ensures that your food stamp benefits are available on time.

It is to your advantage to file a food stamp application as soon as possible. If you are eligible, you will receive food stamp benefits dating back to the day you filed the application.

What Should I Bring with Me When I Apply?

- **Identification showing your name and address:**

If you have no address, you must say where you are staying.

- **Proof of Income:**

Your last four pay stubs, copies of checks, or an official statement of the amount and frequency of payments.

- **Social Security Numbers for all Members Applying:**

If you do not have Social Security numbers for applicants, the food stamp worker will help you get them. Your food stamp application will be processed while you are waiting for your Social Security numbers.

- Bank book or current bank statements.
- Receipts for child care, or the care of other dependents who cannot care for themselves.
- Receipts for housing costs - rent or mortgage, heating and utilities.
- If you are not a citizen, bring proof of legal noncitizen status.
- Medical bills - if you are age 60 or older, or if you are disabled.

What If I Need More Information?

For more information about how you can get food stamp benefits, contact the Application Unit at **1-800-249-2007** or call your local Department of Transitional Assistance Office. You may also visit our website at www.mass.gov/dta or visit Project Bread's website at www.gettingfoodstamps.org.



Food Stamp Program
**Massachusetts Department of
Transitional Assistance**

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