

Assisting SNAP Households: Helpers vs. Authorized Representatives

What are the ways a third party can help a SNAP household?

A third party - such as a community organization, friend, neighbor, family member - can help someone applying for or getting SNAP. There are two distinct buckets of “assisting” persons or organizations: a helping person or organization, or an Authorized Representative.

Helping Person or Organization

- Those helping a SNAP household get information from DTA or helping fix a DTA case.
- May be a social service agency, food pantry, legal services, or a trusted family member or friend.
- Different from appointing an "authorized representative."
- Permission lasts for one year from date on the note.

Form: Any signed and dated note giving permission to the person or organization assisting the client. For example, a handwritten note, a standard release for your organization, or DTA's VARI-OI.

Authorized Representative

- Someone a client chooses to act on their behalf and manage their benefits (similar to a "representative payee" for SSI or Social Security benefits).
- The Authorized Representative does not need to have legal guardianship or any court appointment. Clients can choose a family member, friend or other trusted third party to become the Authorized Representative.
- This person can:
 - Sign an application/form, report changes, and talk to DTA on behalf of the client, and/or
 - Get a second EBT card to shop with the client's benefits

Form: The Request to Choose Someone to be My Authorized Representative (Image-10), Authorized Representative portion of the Senior SNAP application, or other document capturing the information required by the Image-10.

Remember: If you are a helping agency and contact DTA to discuss a case, tell the case manager the date you submitted a release form. The case manager should list you as a helping agency in BEACON (DTA's eligibility computer system). They should not confuse you with an Authorized Representative and should not require the VARI-OI or the Image-10 if adequate permission is in the case record. For further information regarding assisting persons refer to DTA's Online Guide Transmittal 2017-103.