



What is SNAP?

- SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) is a program that helps low-income households purchase adequate, nutritious food.
- SNAP benefits can only be spent at authorized retailers, and some farmers markets, on foods that recipients prepare and eat at home.
- Benefits are distributed monthly on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards or, in Illinois, “Link.”
- SNAP is an entitlement program: any household eligible for benefits will receive the full amount of benefits for which it qualifies. One household receiving benefits will not affect another household’s access to benefits.
- SNAP reduces poverty and supports the economy. Every \$1.00 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity.



Why help consumers apply for SNAP benefits?

Average monthly benefit in Illinois:

\$132.42

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service (2015)

- Most low-income families struggle with food insecurity and hunger, which lead to poor health outcomes and increased health care costs. SNAP reduces food insecurity—participants receiving SNAP benefits spend more money on food than they would if they did not participate in the program.
- Low-income households that access both health and nutrition supports to meet their household’s needs experience greater stability and more success at work and school.

Who is eligible for SNAP?

To receive SNAP benefits, a person has to:

1. be a U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant AND
2. meet income limits.

Updates can be found here: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=33412>

Number of People in Your Household	Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Maximum Gross Monthly Income (Age 60 and Over or Disabled)	Maximum Monthly Benefits
1	\$1,276	\$1,962	\$194
2	\$1,726	\$2,655	\$357
3	\$2,177	\$3,348	\$511
4	\$2,628	\$4,042	\$649
5	\$3,078	\$4,735	\$771

Completing a joint application for SNAP and Medicaid through ABE:

- A single application for both programs can be submitted at one time through ABE, and the majority of the information needed for a SNAP application is also necessary for a Medicaid application.
- Verification for information unique to the SNAP application is minimal: applicants will need to provide proof of identity, Illinois residence and income, but rent and utility costs can be verified by a personal statement from the applicant. Verification of child support payments are only required if court ordered and verification of medical expenses are only required from qualified member households.
- A household includes anyone who buys and prepares food together plus any spouse or child (under 22) of the applicant living at the same residence.
- Finally, SNAP applicants must participate in an interview (in-person or by phone) but a delay of this interview will not affect the timeliness of a decision on eligibility for health benefits.

Tip: It's possible for two SNAP households to be living at the same residence. In these cases, it is advantageous for the households to apply for SNAP benefits separately.

More detail here: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=13558>

Tip: SNAP uses net monthly income, not MAGI, to determine benefits; a family could qualify for one program and not the other despite their similar income limits. Use the SNAP eligibility calculator if you're unsure of a client's eligibility.

<http://fscalc.dhs.illinois.gov/FSCalc/>

Tip: If a client wishes to apply for SNAP but does not have the necessary documentation on hand, you can submit the application without it and advise the client to bring all required verification to the interview.

Resources:

- The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) administers the SNAP program. Additional information is available on their website: **<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30357>**
- The Illinois Hunger Coalition operates a Hunger Hotline, which can connect households to benefits and to neighborhood pantries: **<http://www.ilhunger.org/resources.aspx>**
- Many area food banks also offer SNAP application and redetermination assistance. Find a local food bank here: **<http://www.feedingillinois.org/>**
- The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights has more information on how immigration statuses impacts households: **<http://icirr.org/content/snap-eligibility>**
- Additional resources and application assistance available through HelpHub: **<http://helphub.povertylaw.org>**

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