



## SNAP Benefits

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SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, helps Minnesotans with low incomes get the food they need for nutritious and well-balanced meals. The program provides support to help stretch your household food budget. It is not intended to meet all of your household's food needs, it is a supplement. Many AmeriCorps members utilize the SNAP benefit during their term of service. The earlier you apply the bigger impact SNAP can make on your service year.

Here's what you need to know before applying:

### Eligibility

SNAP eligibility depends on a household's income. SNAP defines a household as all individuals that live together in one residence and purchase or prepare meals together. Depending on if you are serving as a Promise Fellow or a VISTA and when you apply for SNAP determines if the living stipend will count as income. While both Promise Fellow and VISTA are AmeriCorps programs, they are different branches of AmeriCorps and were authorized and are governed by different legislation which provides for different treatment of benefits. [Learn more here.](#)

**Promise Fellows:** The Promise Fellow living stipend does **not** count as income when applying for SNAP benefits. The Alliance provides a service verification letter to Promise Fellows that explicitly states this. Be sure to include this letter when applying for SNAP.

**VISTA Members:** Depending on when a VISTA applies for SNAP benefits determines if their living stipend counts as income or not. For members who apply for SNAP and are receiving the benefit before service begins, the living stipend will not be considered income. If a VISTA applies for SNAP after service begins, the living stipend **is** considered income. Apply **before** VISTA service begins to maximize the amount of benefit received.

### How SNAP Works

The amount of benefits you get is based on your income, expenses and the number of people in your household. If approved for the program, you will get an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. It is like a debit card. Each month, your benefits will be credited to your EBT account.

You use your card to purchase food at stores that display a poster or sign that reads: "We Accept EBT." Grocery stores and convenience stores must sell a variety of foods to be approved to accept EBT. Cub Foods, Target, Aldi, Trader Joes, Co-Ops, and most corner markets accept EBT cards. Many farmers markets also accept EBT.

Benefits cannot be used to buy non-food items, such as paper products, household and personal hygiene supplies, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, vitamins, medication, pet foods, food eaten in the store or hot ready-to-eat "deli" food.

[How to use your EBT card FAQ](#)

## Application Process

[Apply for SNAP benefits](#) online or in person at your local county office. The application for Minnesota is available in English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Russian, and Vietnamese. Once an application is submitted you will be contacted for a phone interview with an assigned case worker in which you will confirm or clarify information submitted in your application. After completing the interview, you will be notified of qualification within 30 days.

## What Documentation is Needed?

Before you apply online or head to your county office, make sure you have the documentation you need:

- Identification (driver's license, state ID, passport, etc.)
- Social Security number
- Proof of Residency in Minnesota (state ID, lease agreement, etc.)
- Proof of all income from past 30 days (paystubs, pension, etc.) or any other money coming into your household (unemployment, sponsor income, etc.)
  - Promise Fellows: The Alliance provides Fellows with a Service Verification Letter stating their service term and living allowance amounts. Additionally, members may access their paystubs through their PayEntry account. Note that members do not have access to Payentry until after their first month of service. Contact the Alliance if you need help accessing this documentation.
  - VISTAs: VISTAs may access their Service Verification Letter and paystubs through their MyAmericops Account. If applying for SNAP before the service term begins, contact the Alliance to receive a Service Verification Letter.
- Housing costs (rent/house payment receipt, mortgage, lease, etc.)

Not sure you'll qualify? Check out [Bridge to Benefits](#), a tool created by Children's Defense Fund. Answer a few simple questions and you will be able to see if you or someone else may be eligible for public work support programs, such as SNAP!

## I'm Receiving Benefits, What's Next?

Beyond money to use to purchase food at grocery stores, those who are receiving SNAP benefits can also:

- Buy food at farmers markets. Market Bucks will match purchases dollar to dollar, up to \$10 per day. [Read here](#) for a more complete breakdown. [Click here](#) for a map of all the markets in Minnesota accepting EBT.
- Visit any of the 26 historical sites managed by the Minnesota Historical Society for \$4. [Learn more.](#)
- Discounts at Children's Museums. [Learn more.](#)
- Receive a [scholarship](#) with the YMCA.
- Pay \$1 fares with Metro Transit. [Details here.](#)
- Receive a free government cell phone or pay less for a network plan. [More info here.](#) If you already have cellphone, check with your provider to see if they offer discounts for those with limited incomes.
- Visit the MN Zoo for free. [Details here.](#)
- Pay \$3 for the Minnesota Science Museum. [Learn more.](#)
- Watch Guthrie Theater productions for as little as \$2. [Learn how.](#)
- Get \$5 admission and discounted theater classes at the Children's Theater Company. [Details here.](#)
- Check out [Good And Cheap](#) – a recipe book developed for those on a budget, particularly those using SNAP benefits.