



Food Stamps/SNAP: Extra Financial Help for College Students

College is stressful and expensive. Don't let food be another financial worry.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or "SNAP" (formerly called Food Stamps) helps many low income people buy food. More low income college students also qualify.

Q1: How can I be eligible if I am in college?

If you are in college more than half-time, you may qualify for SNAP if you meet any one of the conditions below:

- You receive (any amount of)federal or state work-study monies,
- You work for pay for 20 hours or more per week,
- You care for a child under the age of 12 (further rules apply) or you get TAFDC,
- You participate in a SNAP or other 'employment and training program',
- You attend a Mass. community college and are enrolled in a credit degree or certificate program that the college determines will increase your employability,
- You are age 50 or older, or you are under age 18, **OR**
- You have a temporary or permanent physical and/or mental impairment.

Q2: What proofs do I need to show if I get work study or if I attend a career-based community college program?

To prove you receive work study, give DTA a copy of your financial aid statement or any other proof of federal or state funded work study. You qualify as a work study recipient whether you attend a public or a private college.

To prove you are enrolled in a career or technical education program at a community college, DTA has a one-page form that you can bring to the college to get signed. Or you can submit a letter from the college that states you are enrolled and that your degree or certificate program will lead to employment. Bring proof of your enrollment too.

Q3: How much in SNAP benefits will I receive?

The monthly SNAP benefit amount is calculated based on your countable income and your expenses. The *maximum* for one person (living alone, very little income) is \$200/month.

Countable income includes wages from a job or direct and regular money from your parents, unemployment insurance or other source. *However, income from a federal work-study program is not counted as income. Most educational monies are not counted if from federal funds, or if used to cover educational expenses (tuition, fees, books and supplies).*

Deductible expenses include shelter, such as rent & utilities, child care expenses so you can go to school or to work, and child support you pay for a child outside the home.

Q4: Can I get SNAP if I live with roommates?

If you buy & prepare more than half of your meals separately from your roommates, *you can apply for SNAP for yourself* separate from those you share housing with.

If you buy & prepare most of you meals *together*, you must apply for SNAP with your roommates; and they must also meet the other program rules and report their income.

Q5: Can I get SNAP if I still live with my parents?

If you are 22 or older, and if you buy and prepare more than half your meals separately from your parents, you can still apply for benefits for yourself.

If you are 18-22, federal rules do not allow you to get food stamps separately from your parents, even if you barely share meals with them. If you meet one of the rules in Q1, you & your parents must apply for benefits together and report all family income.

Q6: Can I get SNAP if I live in a dorm?

If you live on-campus and get more than half your meals from a school meal plan, you don't qualify for SNAP/ food stamp benefits.

Q7: How do I apply for SNAP?

You can file an application for SNAP on-line, by mail or in-person.

- To apply online, visit the website: <http://www.mass.gov/snap> and click on the words "SNAP Application".
- To apply in person, contact your local DTA Office. To find the your office, go to <http://webapps.ehs.state.ma.us/DTAOffices/default.aspx>

NOTE: Filing an application is the first step. You will also need to send proofs to DTA of your eligibility and have an interview by phone (or, if you prefer, in person).

To get more information about SNAP in Massachusetts, visit Project Bread's website: www.gettingSNAP.org

- **If you are denied SNAP benefits because of your school status, contact Legal Services nearest you.** Go to: www.masslegalhelp.org

Examples

Example: Nina is 23 years and lives with her disabled mom. She is a full-time student at a local private college. Nina has inancial aid that includes 10 hours a week work study, and sometimes she works odd jobs off campus. She buys and prepares most of her food separately from her mom.

Nina is an eligible student because she receives work study. Because Nina is over age 22 and shares less than half her meals with her mother, she can be a separate SNAP household. To determine her benefits, Nina's earned income is countable income. Any federal financial aid she receives does not count as income. Her mother's income does not count because her mother is not part of her SNAP household. Nina's private or state-funded financial aid or loans count only if available to meet actual living expenses.

Example 2: Mark is a full-time college student in a health science degree program at a local community college, pre-nursing track. He has no work study. Mark lives off-campus with two other roommates, he buys his own groceries and cooks his own meals. At times, he cooks dinner with his roommates a few times a week, but not all the time.

Mark meets the student eligibility rules because he attends a community college and is enrolled in a career based program (health science). Since Mark buys and prepares more than half of his meals separately from his roommates, he can apply for SNAP for just himself.. Any federal financial aid Mark may receive does not count in calculating his benefits. Non-federal financial aid and loans count as income only if available to meet his living expenses.