



## Immigrant Eligibility for SNAP (Food Stamps)

### What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also called Food Assistance or Food Stamps, helps people pay for food. You get a card that works like a debit card from a bank. You can use the card to buy food at grocery stores.

Maine DHHS uses your household size, income, certain expenses, and immigration status to decide if you're eligible for SNAP and the amount of monthly benefits you get.

### Which non-citizens can get SNAP (food stamps)?

Many non-citizens who have low income are able to get SNAP, but there are different federal and state rules, depending on your immigration status.

#### A. These groups are eligible for *federal* SNAP:

- Naturalized U.S. Citizens, including U.S. citizens in mixed-status households
- Lawful permanent residents or green-card holders (not subject to the five-year bar or who have had their green card for more than five years)
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- People living in the U.S. under the Compact of Free Association ("COFA migrants")

#### B. These groups must **ALSO** have a hardship\* in order to get *state* SNAP

- Lawful permanent residents or green-card holders without a prior humanitarian status (subject to five-year bar and have had their green card less than five years)
- Refugees
- Asylees
- Asylum seekers with a pending application for asylum
- Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants (SIVs) holders
- Certain Afghan and Ukrainian parolees
- Parolees granted more than a year of parole
- Survivors of domestic violence who are self-petitioners under VAWA
- Certain survivors of human trafficking
- Conditional Entrants
- Hmong and Highland Laotian tribal members
- North American indigenous people born in Canada

- Individuals who were eligible for Federal SNAP prior to July 4, 2025
- Individuals with Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Individuals with Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) status\* (beginning in July 2026)

People who are undocumented or who do not have permission to remain in the U.S. are not eligible for SNAP. However, if you have children born in the United States, they may qualify for assistance even if you are not eligible based on your immigration status.

### **\*What is considered a “hardship” for state SNAP?**

If you have an immigration status listed in part B above, you have to meet all SNAP program requirements **and** have a hardship in order to qualify for state SNAP.

A hardship is defined in state law as *at least one* of the following:

- Elderly (age 65+)
- Disabled (Social Security definition)
- Experiencing domestic violence (or the direct impacts of domestic violence)
- Waiting for work authorization
- Have work authorization but are unemployed or lost a job

As soon as you no longer meet one of these definitions, you have to report the change to DHHS and your benefits will end.

### **What is the difference between federal SNAP and state SNAP?**

In Maine, we have a state-funded SNAP program to support some immigrants who don't qualify for federal support but meet all the other program requirements. State SNAP benefits work just like federal benefits and can be used anywhere SNAP is accepted. You apply the exact same way, and Maine's DHHS decides which benefit you're eligible for.

*Remember: to qualify for state SNAP you also need to meet a “hardship exception” (see above) and once you begin working, you will lose your state-funded benefits, even if your income is still low enough to otherwise qualify.*

### **What about mixed-status families?**

In households where people have different immigration statuses, some people may qualify for SNAP and others may not. Only those who will receive SNAP benefits need to share their immigration status, but all members of the household must be included on the application so DHHS can determine the household size and benefit level.

For example: If a family of four has one parent with a pending application for asylum, one parent who is undocumented, and two U.S. citizen children, the children may be eligible for Federal SNAP, the parent seeking asylum may be eligible for State SNAP, and the parent who is undocumented isn't eligible for either program but would still be listed on the application. Only the parent seeking asylum and their U.S.-born children need to verify their immigration status with DHHS.

### **How do I apply for SNAP?**

- You can apply **online** at [MyMaineConnection.gov](https://www.maineconnection.gov).
- You can **download** an application and submit it by:
  - **Mail:** Office for Family Independence  
114 Corn Shop Lane, Farmington, ME 04938
  - **Email:** [Farmington.DHHS@Maine.gov](mailto:Farmington.DHHS@Maine.gov), or
  - **Fax:** (207) 778-8429
- You can **apply over the phone at 1-855-797-4357**. Interpretation is available.
- You can **apply in person** at a [regional DHHS Office](#). Interpretation is available.

### **Where can I find more information about SNAP and other food assistance?**

SNAP basics: You can learn more about SNAP benefits and other resources on our [Food Assistance page](#).

SNAP benefit estimator: You can check if you're eligible for SNAP and estimate your monthly benefit with [Pine Tree Legal Assistance's estimator](#).