

# **LawHelpNewMexico**

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## **Food Stamps (SNAP)**

Impact of the Federal Government Shutdown on SNAP: What you need to know!  
Cierre del Gobierno Federal Sobre los Beneficios de SNAP - Lo Que Necesita Saber

### **What is SNAP or food assistance?**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, helps low-income people purchase food.

People who are approved for SNAP benefits receive an Electronic Benefits Transaction Card (EBT), which can be used at a grocery store to purchase food. The EBT card is like a bank debit card however, you cannot use it for anything else but food. Every month, the amount of assistance you qualify for is added to the EBT card.

### **Who qualifies for SNAP?**

The people in your family who live together is considered a household. A household is composed of an individual or a group of individuals who customarily purchase and prepare meals together for home consumption. There can be more than one household living in one place. The household must meet the income guidelines made by the Income Support Division. ISD will determine the amount based on your income, your expenses, and the number of people in your family who are living together.

Food stamps can go to citizens and other people legally in the country. If a child is in the country legally and the parents are not, the child may be able to get food stamps even if others in the family cannot.

To get food stamps, you must have proof of your identity.

## **How long does it take to get SNAP?**

After you submit the Application for Assistance to an Income Support (ISD) office, the ISD has 30 days to decide if you are eligible.

Your household may be eligible for expedited food stamp benefits if the household is reporting little or no income or resources. If eligible for expedited food stamps you should receive your benefits within 7 days after the date you submitted your application.

Be sure to obtain a receipt for any documents and applications you provide. If your application is lost or misfiled, you will need the receipt to prove when you applied or when you provided the information they needed to process your benefits.

Before ISD makes a decision, it will arrange to meet with you to make sure it has all the information it needs. ISD should do this within 10 days after you apply. If it is very difficult for you to get to this meeting, you can send someone in your place or have a telephone meeting. Ask ISD right away for one of these options if you can't get to its office.

Sometimes you will need to send more information to ISD before it can make a decision. If you can't gather everything within the 30-day waiting period, ask for extra time to get all the papers ISD wants. It is preferable that you request this in writing and obtain a receipt. You can get up to three extensions of ten days each if you need them. You can also ask ISD for assistance in obtaining the information they need.

## **If we have no food, can we get assistance any faster than 30 days?**

Some people can get food stamps faster—within 7 days. To get emergency food stamps, you must either make less than \$150 per month or the cost of your monthly bills (rent or mortgage and utilities) is higher than your income.

## **How do I find out if ISD approved my application?**

ISD must send you a written notice telling you whether it approved or denied your application for food stamps.

If it denied your application, the notice must tell you why.

## **What will my food assistance amount be?**

ISD will determine the amount based on your income, your expenses, and the number of people in your family who are living together.

## **What can I do if I think ISD made a mistake denying me assistance, gave me the wrong amount of food assistance, or if I do not hear from ISD after the 30 day application period?**

- You have the right to appeal the decision. You have 90 days after the decision to appeal. To do that, you ask for a fair hearing—in writing. Be sure to get a receipt.
- You should get legal advice and, if possible, someone to represent you at the hearing. You will get a notice of the time and date for the hearing at least 10 days before the hearing date.
- If you don't hear from ISD after the 30-day application period, you should ask for a fair hearing because it may force ISD to make a decision.
- You have 90 days to request a hearing.
- You have 13 days from the date of the adverse notice to request a fair hearing and ask for continued benefits.
- However, if you receive continued benefits and if you lose at the fair hearing you may have to pay back those benefits.

## **Is there any other way to get money for food?**

You may not be able to get money for food, but there are many programs that can help with emergency food boxes.

- There are agencies/programs that provide food boxes.
- There is an interactive list online where you can find food resources in your area at <http://www.rrfb.org/get-help/find-help-in-your-area/>
- There is a statewide list of places to get food boxes and find food resources at <http://www.nmfoodbanks.org/>