



Know Your Rights



SNAP Food Assistance For College Students

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “SNAP” (formerly called Food Stamps) helps eligible low income households buy food. Many low income college students also qualify.

Can I get SNAP if I am in college?

There are special rules about SNAP for low income college students. You may qualify for SNAP if you meet any of the following:

- Get federal Work Study, and you work or expect to work during the semester,
- Receive financial aid from the state MASSGrant program (as of Sept. 2017),
- Attend a community college and your course of study or certificate program will increase your employability,
- Work (for pay) an average of 20 hours or more per week,
- Care for a child under the age of 12, or you get TAFDC as a parent with children,
- Are in school through a state-approved education or training program,
- Are in college less than half-time (for example, less than 6 credit hours)
- Are under age 18 or over age 49, **OR**
- Have a temporary or permanent disability.

How do I apply for SNAP benefits?

You can file an application for SNAP through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA):

- Apply online: Mass.gov/snap
- Fax a paper application to DTA at: 617 887 8765
- Mail a paper application to: DTA Document Processing Center, PO Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780
- Go in person to a local DTA Office
- If you live with other people who get SNAP, they may need to contact DTA to add you. See below.

After you apply, call the DTA Assistance Line for an interview at **1-877-382-2363**. Then send DTA the proofs they ask for. DTA has 30 days to approve or deny your application, unless you qualify for emergency SNAP. If you are approved, SNAP benefits are put on an EBT card (like a debit card).

How much SNAP will I get?

It depends! The monthly SNAP benefit amount is calculated based on your countable income and your expenses, such as rent or child care. The *maximum* for one person is currently \$194/month.

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What proofs do I need to give DTA?

DTA will send you a list asking for proof of your identity, address and possibly other items. DTA will also send you **forms** to get filled out by your college registrar or financial aid office:

- The [Educational Income and Expense Form](#) gives DTA information about your financial aid, including if you get work study or receive money from the MASSGrant program.
- If you are a community college student, the [Community College Verification Form](#) proves you meet the community college eligibility rules.

What income does DTA count?

- Earned income from a job or self-employment,
- Unearned income such as Social Security, child support or unemployment insurance.

Work Study and other federal educational aid does not count as income. State and private educational loans and grants also do not count unless the money is earmarked for living expenses (room and board).

What if I live with other people?

Roommates:

If you buy and prepare more than half of your food *separately from your roommates*, you can apply for SNAP for just *yourself*. If you buy and prepare most of your food *together* (you share the food purchased), you must apply for SNAP with your roommates—and they must report their income and meet other rules.

Parents:

If you are age 22 or older and live with your parents—but you buy and prepare more than half your food separate from your parents — you can apply for SNAP for just yourself to buy your own food.

If you are under age 22, you cannot get SNAP separately from your parents if you live with them. This is true even if you don't share food. If your parents currently get SNAP, they should ask DTA to add you. If your family is low income and does not get SNAP, your parents can apply for SNAP as a household.

On-campus:

If you live on-campus and get more than half your meals from a school meal plan, you don't qualify for SNAP benefits. If you have a limited meal plan - for example, 1 meal a day - then you may be SNAP eligible.

What are my rights if I am denied SNAP?

- Download the **DTA Connect** mobile app to send DTA proofs, look at your case information, and see DTA notices.
- Call the DTA Assistance Line at **1-877-382-2363** to talk with a SNAP worker and about why you were denied. If you disagree with what the SNAP worker says, you can also ask to speak to a Supervisor or the Office Director.
- Call the DTA Ombudsman's office at **617-348-5354** and ask them to review the case.
- Request a hearing if you disagree with DTA's decision. There is an appeal form on the back of the DTA denial notice. Fill this out and fax or mail it back to DTA. You can have the hearing by phone or in person.
- Contact your local Legal Services office for more information: www.masslegalhelp.org

For more information visit Masslegalservices.org/food4students