

Food Stamps - The Basics



What are food stamps?

Food stamps are help from the government to buy most foods in grocery stores. Food stamps are only for food. They can't buy soap or washing powder, beer, diapers or pet food.

Who can get food stamps?

U.S. citizens and some legal immigrants can get food stamps. You can be working or not working. You can have children or not. Your income and savings must be below a certain amount. To find out if you can get food stamps, you can apply.

How much food stamps can I get?

It depends on:

- how many people are in the household
- how much income there is and
- what household expenses you have.

Where can I apply for food stamps?

Call, write or go to the Food Stamp office in the county you live in. Need the phone number? Call the **Family Assistance Help Line at 1-888-863-6178**. It's a free call. They can give you the phone number of the nearest Food Stamp office. You can also call the **Food Stamp Hotline at 1-800-342-1784**. It's a free call.

Fill out the application. Get it to the Food Stamp office right away. They will set a time to talk with you at the office or by phone.

What will they ask me?

You must give these things to the case worker:

- The names and ages of all household members
- Pay stubs for everyone for the last 8 weeks
- Proof of other money you and others in your household get (Social Security, VA, unemployment, child support and the like)
- Proof of all savings and checking accounts



- Proof of where you live. What if you are homeless? You can still apply.
- Proof of rent or house payment
- Proof of who you are
- Proof of how many people live with you
- Social Security numbers for everyone who will get Food Stamps. **Important:** Family members who do **not** want Food Stamps do not have to give a Social Security number.
- Proof of recent utility bills (gas, lights, coal, wood, water, phone)
- Proof of child care costs you pay
- Are you 60 or over or disabled? It will help if you give them your medical and drug bills. If you are disabled, give them proof.

At the time they set to talk with you, give them these papers. What if you can't find all of it? Talk to them anyway at the set time. **Do not skip it.** Do you need to change the time? Call the Food Stamp office. What if you don't know all the facts they want? The case worker can contact someone who knows you. You must give the case worker the person's name.

Most of the time, it takes 30 days to get food stamps after you apply. Some very poor families can get food stamps within 7 days after they apply.

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Legal Aid Society

Of Middle Tennessee And The Cumberlands

1-800-238-1443

It's a free call.