

Getting food help: SNAP, WIC and food pantries

Easy · 30 min to apply; up to 30 days for SNAP · Free

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your ZIP code to find a pantry
- ☐ Your state's SNAP website or local office
- ☐ For SNAP: proof of income, rent and utility costs, and ID

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 Find a pantry for this week.** Feeding America's finder takes your ZIP code and lists the nearest food bank; contact them for local pantries and hours. Anyone who needs extra help affording food can visit a pantry or meal program, though some have rules like living in a certain area.
- 2 Know what a first visit is like.** Volunteers may ask a few questions or have you fill out a form about your household's needs.
- 3 Apply for SNAP in your state.** Each state has its own form; you can apply at your local SNAP office, on your state's website or through its SNAP hotline.
- 4 Check the income line.** For October 1, 2026, through September 2027, USDA's table lists gross monthly income limits of \$1,729 for one person and \$2,345 for two, and resources of \$3,000 for most households. The rules are changing under a 2025 law, so let your state decide; don't rule yourself out.
- 5 Get through the 30 days.** Your state usually decides within 30 days, after an interview and proof of what you reported. If you're approved, benefits go back to the day you applied. With very little money, you may get benefits within 7 days.
- 6 Students: check the exceptions.** More-than-half-time college students generally need an exemption, like working 20 hours a week, having work-study, or caring for a young child. Less than half-time? The student rules don't apply.
- 7 Check WIC if you have a baby or young kids.** WIC serves people who are pregnant, up to 6 months after a pregnancy ends, or breastfeeding up to the baby's first birthday, plus infants and children up to age 5. It provides healthy foods, nutrition advice, breastfeeding support and referrals. If you get Medicaid, SNAP or TANF, you may already meet WIC's income rule.

Watch out Can't get to the office or online? Someone else can apply and do the interview for you as an authorized representative.

DAD NOTE Using a food pantry or SNAP when money's tight isn't failing. It's what those programs are for, and it keeps a rough month from becoming a crisis.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/cooking-on-a-budget/getting-food-help-snap-wic-and-food-pantries/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Feeding America.