

COLLEGE STUDENT SNAP ELIGIBILITY

This screening tool is intended to assist in determining if a college student is eligible for SNAP while enrolled in an Institution of Higher Education (IHE). This tool does not take the place of the SNAP application or full screening by the Department of Social Health and Services. If you are a student age 50+ or under 18 years *or* a student attending class **less** than half time do **not** need to meet any additional criteria *besides* the standard [SNAP eligibility requirements](#). If none of these apply to you, please move down the list of questions to help determine if you may be SNAP eligible.

1. Do you make at or below this income?

To qualify for SNAP benefits, your household's gross income must be at or below the income guidelines. (200% of federal poverty level, as updated 4/1/2025)

Persons in Family	Monthly
1	\$2,608
2	\$3,525
3	\$4,442
4	\$5,358

Add \$916/month for each additional person in the household.

2. Are you considered a student enrolled in higher education?

- ☐ Are you between the ages of 18-49?
- ☐ Do you attend a higher education institution at least half-time?

If you checked **both** of these boxes, **you will need to meet one of the additional student criteria listed under #3 below to be SNAP eligible.**

3. If you said yes to **BOTH** questions in #2, do you meet **ONE** of these exemption criteria?

- ☐ Have you been awarded or anticipating receiving work study through your college?
- ☐ Are you working an average of 20 hours per week?
- ☐ Are you unable to work due to physical or mental limitations?
- ☐ Are you participating in an approved education and training program?
- ☐ Do you have a child under 6, or are you a single parent with a dependent household member under the age of 12?

Note: If you do not meet at least one of the criteria above, you will likely not be exempt from the general work requirements for SNAP eligibility. However, if you are a student at a community or technical college, you may qualify in other ways. Please contact your [Benefits Navigator](#) at your campus for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions about SNAP from Students:

How do I know if I will be considered a student of higher education when I apply?

- ❖ An individual's eligibility for SNAP is based on enrollment in Institution of Higher Education (IHE) and defined by three criteria: enrollment status, the type of school, and the type of curriculum.
 - An individual is considered enrolled in an IHE if they are enrolled in a regular curriculum at a college or university that offers degrees regardless of whether a high school diploma is required. Individuals enrolled at least half-time in a regular curriculum at a college must meet a student exemption to be eligible for SNAP.
 - Individuals enrolled at least half-time at a college, but in a program outside of the regular curriculum, are not considered enrolled in an IHE and, therefore, do not need to meet a student exemption. This means if they meet all other eligibility criteria, they are eligible for SNAP.
 - Programs outside of regular curriculum: These can include remedial education, continuing or community education, professional development, English for speakers of other languages, and workforce development/training programs.

Does my SNAP status change during school breaks? Do I need to report being on a school break to DSHS (Department of Social Health Services)?

- ❖ Student enrollment status continues through school breaks (including Winter, Spring, and Summer breaks) as long as the student intends to return to school for the next term. You **DO NOT** need to report that you're on a school break to DSHS, but you do need to continue to meet the student eligibility criteria.

Who do I need to include on my SNAP application?

- ❖ You should report everyone in the house that buys, prepares and eats the majority of their food with you. This applies to a significant other, family member, or friend who is living in the house. If you are living with roommates and they do not buy, prepare or eat the majority of their food with you then do not list them in your SNAP application.

How do I know who I have to apply with to receive SNAP benefits?

- ❖ All individuals in the household who buy, prepare and eat food with you.
- ❖ If you are 21 or younger **and** living at home with your parent(s) or guardian(s) then you must include their income and information on your application **even if you do not buy, eat, and prepare food with them.**

- ❖ If you are 21 or younger and **do not** live at home with your parent(s) or guardian(s) then you do not need to include their income or information on your application.
- ❖ If you are 22 or older and living at home with your parent(s) or guardian(s) then you only need to include their income and information on your application only **if you buy, eat, and prepare food with them.**

Could I be eligible for SNAP and own a car or a house?

- ❖ Yes! Contrary to common misconceptions you can still be eligible for SNAP and own a car and a house.

Could I be eligible for SNAP as an Immigrant or Refugee in WA State?

- ❖ In WA State, you may be eligible for services through the [Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance \(ORIA\) programs](#).
- ❖ The general eligibility rule for non-U.S. citizens requires legal residents to have lived in the U.S. for at least five years. However, there are many exceptions for certain populations such as refugees, victims of trafficking, and asylum recipients.

- ❖ Here is a table that helps break down SNAP eligibility for non-U.S. citizens.

Immigrant Status	SNAP	Medicaid	TANF	SSI
LPR* (18 and over)	Eligible (after 5-year bar or qualifying work history)	Eligible (after 5-year bar)	Eligible (after 5-year bar)	Eligible (after 5-year bar and qualifying work history)
LPR (under 18)	Eligible	State option	Eligible (after 5-year bar)	Eligible (after 5-year bar and qualifying work history)
LPR (Pregnant Women)	Eligible (after 5-year bar or qualifying work history)	State option	Eligible (after 5-year bar)	Eligible (after 5-year bar and qualifying work history)
Refugees, asylees, victims of trafficking, certain others	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible (after 5-year bar)	Only eligible during the first 7 years after status is granted
Lawfully present individuals	Not Eligible	State option	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Undocumented, and DACA recipients (including children and pregnant women)	Not Eligible	Emergency Medicaid only	Not Eligible	Not Eligible

*LPR stands for “Legal Permanent Resident,” colloquially referred to as a green card. The table above is edited and simplified version of one published by the National Immigration Law Center, which can be found at: https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/table_ovrw_fedprogs/.

Does applying for and/or receiving SNAP affect my ability to become a U.S. citizen?

- ❖ No. If you receive Basic Food, you will not be considered for public charge. You can find out more here: <https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-processes-and-procedures/public-charge>

How do I submit verification documents to DSHS once my application has been submitted?

To submit documents, you may:

- Bring documents to the local community services office during normal business hours.
- Mail to DSHS PO Box 11699, Tacoma WA 98411-6696.
- Fax to 1-888-338-7410
- Use the drop box located at most local Community Services Offices.
- Email using the 'MyDocs' portal. (The department can help you set up secure access to this portal, please call 877-501-2233 and request the email invitation).

Do not mail or drop off original documents: They cannot be returned.

Be sure your Client ID (Client Identification) Number is written on each of the documents you submit.

What if I'm an out-of-state or non-resident student?

- ❖ If you are a student in Washington but a resident in another state, you will have to apply for SNAP in the state you are a resident. If you commute to school in Washington from another state where you are a resident, you will need to apply for benefits in that state.
- ❖ SNAP Benefits in Washington State
 - In Washington state (WA), SNAP is referred to as "Basic Food"
 - Here is the link to the application for benefits in WA:
<https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/>
 - If you have questions about SNAP in WA, call 1-877-501-2233.
 - Find a CSO near you at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/office-locations>

What do I do if I have been denied SNAP benefits, but I believe I am eligible?

- ❖ There can be many reasons why a denial for benefits was issued. If you believe your denial was incorrect you can appeal the decision. You can appeal the decision and request a hearing within 90 days of your denial notice. A hearing can be requested in person, by phone, or in writing using [Request for Hearing \(DSHS Form 05-013\)](#). If you need to cancel your Administrative Hearing you may use [Fair Hearing Withdrawal \(DSHS Form 02-528\)](#).

Resources

- ❖ **WA Connections:** online applications for public benefits such as SNAP, TANF, childcare and medical. <https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/>
- ❖ **Hopelink:** a food market program that operates in Bellevue, Redmond, Shoreline, Kirkland, and Carnation: <https://www.hopelink.org/programs/food-program/>
- ❖ **Washington 211:** connects callers to critical community resources statewide. <https://wa211.org/>
- ❖ **2nd Harvest:** connects individuals East of the Cascades to food resources. <https://foodfinder.2-harvest.org/>