

THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

The Food Stamp program helps many low- income households buy the food they need to stay healthy, productive members of society.

Food Stamps are simple to use when you purchase food products at your grocery store.

The Federal Government sets the rules for who qualifies for Food Stamps and determines the amount of Food Stamps that you can receive each month. The Human Services Department (HSD) will help you to determine whether or not you qualify for Food Stamps. This normally depends on how much money you earn each month, and it also depends on what you own.

BASIC FOOD STAMP RULES

- You must have proper identification
- You must be a U.S. citizen or a qualified lawful resident
- You will have to list who lives and eats with you (your household)
- You will have to provide information about how much money your household receives each month
- You will have to provide information about what your household owns (property, bank accounts)
- You will have to provide information about what your household pays for things like rent, utilities and child care.
- Work program participation is required for some Food Stamp recipients
- The house you live in does not count for Food Stamp eligibility
- There are special rules for the cars and trucks you may own

CAN I GET FOOD STAMPS RIGHT AWAY?

You may receive Food Stamps in as soon as seven days if:

- You have very little or no money
- Your shelter costs are more than the money you earn
- You are in a migrant worker household
- There are other rules for becoming eligible for Food Stamps right away

HOW DO I ASK FOR FOOD STAMPS?

You need to fill out an application. You can use this same application to ask for other kinds of assistance, such as free medical care. Fill in as much information as you can, then turn it in to your local HSD office.

Applications for assistance are at your local HSD office. These offices are listed in your telephone book under State Government, Human Services Department. You can also call this free number 1-800-432-6217.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I ASK FOR FOOD STAMPS?

You will be asked to come in for an interview with an eligibility worker in about ten days. Your assigned worker will give you a list of things you need to provide. This information will tell your worker about you and your household so he or she can determine if you qualify for Food Stamps. Bring as much of the requested information as you can to the interview. This will help us to help you faster.

If, after your interview, you need to provide more information, your worker will make a list of things you need to do. Your worker will explain the time allowed and ask you to gather the information as soon as you can. If later, you still need more time, or you can't get the information required, let your worker know as soon as possible.

WHEN WILL I KNOW IF I CAN GET FOOD STAMPS?

You will be notified by letter within 30 days as to whether or not your Food Stamp application was approved. If you do not agree with the letter, you can ask for a Fair Hearing on the decision. Remember, our job is to serve you. It is our policy to ensure that everyone who applies for and qualifies for Food Stamps receives these benefits in a timely manner and in accordance with the law.

WHAT IS THE EBT CARD?

When you are approved for Food Stamps, you will be issued an Electronic Benefits Card (EBT). Your EBT card is used like a bank debit card. Each month your Food Stamp allotment will be deposited into your EBT account. You will then use this card to purchase food items at most grocery stores.

Nutrition Education

The Nutrition Education Program can help you stretch your Food Stamp dollars. You can also learn tasty and nutritious new recipes. These free classes are taught at sites throughout New Mexico. For information about classes in your area, call toll free 1-877-993-3637.