Know Your Rights
SNAP Food Assistance: 4-year College Students

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (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 guidelines:

• Receive federal Work Study, and you work or expect to work during the semester, or
• Attend a community college and your course of study or certificate program will increase your employability, or
• Work (for pay) an average of at least 20 hours per week, or
• Care for a child under the age of 12
• Are in college less than half-time (for example, less than 6 credit hours), or
• Are under age 18 or over age 49, or
• Have a medical barrier to employment, or meet other rules.

How do I apply for SNAP benefits?

You can file an application for SNAP through the Department of Human Services (DHS):

• Call the SNAP Hotline (215-430-0556)
• Apply online (www.compass.state.pa.us)
• Go in person to the County Assistance Office (CAO)

If you live with other people who get SNAP, they may need to contact DHS to add you to their account. They can call the customer service line at 215-560-7226 (Philadelphia) or 877-395-8930 (outside of Philadelphia). DHS 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 monthly benefit amount for one person is currently $194.

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What documents do I need to give to DHS?

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

- If you are a community college student, the Community College Verification Form proves you meet the community college eligibility rules.
- If you are receiving work study, you will need to submit proof of work study.

What income does DHS count?

DHS counts earned income from a job or self-employment, as well as unearned income such as Social Security, child support, or unemployment insurance. Work Study and other federal educational aid does **not** count as income.

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 you 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 of your food separately from your parents, you can apply for SNAP for just yourself to buy your own food.

If you are **under age 22 and live with your parents**, you cannot get SNAP separately from your parents. This is true even if you don’t share food. If your parents currently get SNAP, they should ask DHS 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 of your meals from a school meal plan**, you do not qualify for SNAP benefits. If you have a limited meal plan – for example, 1 meal a day – then you may be eligible for SNAP.