

Myths & Facts About Food Stamp Benefits



MYTH: Food stamps are welfare.

FACT: The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program. It helps low income people buy nutritious foods. It is not welfare.

MYTH: Only unemployed people can get food stamps.

FACT: Most people who work at low wage jobs can get food stamp benefits. Many working people use food stamp benefits to help make ends meet.

MYTH: You can't get food stamps if you are receiving unemployment benefits.

FACT: People who get unemployment may still qualify for food stamp benefits.

MYTH: If you have too many assets, you can't get food stamps.

FACT: Your household may have up to \$2000 in assets. But some assets like your home and car do not count. Getting food stamp benefits also depends on your household size, income and some expenses, like child support and housing and childcare costs. The resource limit for elderly or disabled households is \$3,000.

MYTH: You can't get food stamps if you own a car.

FACT: You can get food stamp benefits, even if you own a car. Your home and car and personal things, like clothes, jewelry, furniture, and household goods also do not count.

MYTH: You can't get food stamps if you have a savings account.

FACT: Your household may have up to \$2000 in assets. You can still get food stamp benefits even if you have small savings. If you have a retirement account, checking account, savings account, cash, certificates of deposits, stocks, and bonds, you may still be able to get food stamp benefits.

MYTH: Food stamps have to be paid back.

FACT: People who get the right amount of food stamp benefits do not have to pay them back. Make sure the information you give when you apply is correct. If you get food stamp benefits because of wrong information, then you have to pay them back.

MYTH: Food stamps are not worth applying for since you only get \$10.

FACT: The amount of food stamp benefits depends on household size, income and certain expenses. A mother with two children who works full time at \$7 per hour and pays \$350 in rent could receive \$180 in food stamps benefits per month.

MYTH: Other people will know I use food stamps.

FACT: Shopping with food stamp benefits is easier now. People who get food stamp benefits get an electronic card. You use the benefits by running the card through a machine at the grocery store. Other people will not know you use food stamp benefits.

MYTH: Food stamps are only for families.

FACT: Food stamp benefits are for anyone who applies and qualifies.

MYTH: Elderly or disabled people do not receive credit for medical and prescription drug bills.

FACT: Medical expenses that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays for them. Only the amount over \$35 can be deducted.

MYTH: Elderly or disabled people who receive food stamps will not be able to receive meals-on-wheels.

FACT: Households can receive food stamps and still get meals-on-wheels. You can use your food stamps to purchase food at the store. This means you will have extra food in addition to your meals on wheels

MYTH: You have to be a U.S. citizen to get food stamps.

FACT: Some legal immigrants can get food stamps. If you are an “eligible immigrant,” you may qualify. Ask your local food stamp office.

MYTH: If you don't have legal status, you can't get food stamps.

FACT: Undocumented people can't get food stamps. But citizens and some legal immigrants who live with them can get food stamps, including children. Children of undocumented immigrants can get food stamps if they are citizens or legal permanent residents.

MYTH: You can't apply for food stamps if you don't speak English.

FACT: Anyone can apply for food stamps. Local food stamp offices have applications in many languages. Food stamp workers can find interpreters to help you. Or a friend or family member who speaks English can apply for you.

MYTH: You can't get food stamps if you get SSI, disability-related Medicaid, or other disability or insurance benefits.

FACT: If you get food stamp benefits, you can still get other services too.

MYTH: You have to go to the food stamp office every few months to keep getting benefits.

FACT: Elderly or Disabled people can get benefits for up to two years at a time. You don't have to go back to the office unless there are specific changes to your case. You can also ask for a telephone interview. Or a friend or family member can go for you.

MYTH: You must have housing and a mailing address to get food stamps.

FACT: You can get food stamp benefits even if you live on the streets and don't have a mailing address. If you live in a shelter, bring a letter from a shelter employee that says you live there when you apply.

MYTH: People who live in shelters can't get food stamps because they already get free meals.

FACT: You can get food stamp benefits even if you live in a shelter with meals. You can't be turned down only because you live in a homeless shelter with meals.

MYTH: You need a photo ID to get food stamps.

FACT: You need proof of identity. A photo ID is one way to prove identity. You can't be turned down for food stamp benefits because you don't have photo ID. You can use another ID like a work or school badge, a health benefits card, an ID from another social service, a pay stub, a birth certificate, or a voter registration card. The food stamp worker can also check your identity by calling shelter workers or employers.

MYTH: It is difficult for homeless people to apply and there is no help available.

FACT: Food stamp offices must set up ways to serve homeless people. They can find an authorized representative or mail your benefits to the shelter where you stay. The food stamp office can't make you fill out forms every month.

MYTH: Homeless youth have to provide their parent's income when they apply for food stamps.

FACT: Homeless young people can apply for food stamp benefits on their own. Their parent's income does not count. If you live in a shelter, bring a letter from a shelter employee that says you live there when you apply.

MYTH: You can buy food only at grocery stores.

FACT: Homeless people can use food stamp benefits at other places. You can use food stamp benefits to pay for meals at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and restaurants (in some states) that are authorized to accept food stamp benefits.