



Members Brief

An informational brief prepared by the LSC staff for members and staff of the Ohio General Assembly

Author: Emma Carroll, Research Analyst
Reviewer: Erika Kramer, Attorney
Laurel Mannion, Division Chief, Health and Human Services

Volume 135
February 7, 2024

Food Assistance

Food assistance helps meet the nutritional needs of low-income people. Ohioans have access to several food assistance programs, which are administered by the state and largely funded by the federal government. Food assistance programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), school meal programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, in addition to local food banks.

Contents

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.....	2
Eligibility	2
Work requirements	3
Able-bodied adults without dependents	3
Approved retailers and use of benefits.....	3
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	4
Federal law	4
State administration.....	4
School meal programs	4
Federal law	4
State administration; recent legislation.....	5
Child and Adult Care Food Program	6
Emergency Food Assistance Program.....	6
Federal law	6
State administration.....	6
Commodity Supplemental Food Program	7
Federal law	7
State administration.....	7
Food banks.....	7
Food assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic.....	7

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a federal program administered by the states to provide low-income people with benefits to pay for food at approved retailers. The federal government fully funds program benefits and generally pays for half of the program's administrative expenses.¹ The director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) administers SNAP in Ohio.²

Eligibility

Federal regulations establish general eligibility standards for SNAP that states must follow. Eligibility is determined based on household income and resources. A household's gross income must be at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines, established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to receive SNAP.³ This means that a family of four would need a gross monthly income under \$3,250 to qualify for SNAP.⁴ Additionally, a household's assets may not exceed \$2,750, or \$4,250 if the household has an elderly or disabled member, excluding the value of a home, certain vehicles, retirement plans, and other specified resources. These numbers represent 2023-2024 limits and are adjusted for inflation annually.⁵

SNAP Income Eligibility Limits – October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024		
Household size	Gross monthly income (130% of poverty)	Net monthly income (100% of poverty)
1	\$1,580	\$1,215
2	\$2,137	\$1,644
3	\$2,694	\$2,072
4	\$3,250	\$2,500
5	\$3,807	\$2,929
6	\$4,364	\$3,357
7	\$4,921	\$3,785
8	\$5,478	\$4,214
Each additional member	+\$557	+\$429

¹ 7 United States Code (U.S.C.) 2013.

² R.C. 5101.54(A).

³ 7 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 273.9(a)(1).

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS), [SNAP Eligibility](#), which is available by searching "SNAP eligibility" on the USDA FNS website: fns.usda.gov.

⁵ 7 C.F.R. 273.8; USDA FNS, [SNAP Eligibility](#).

Work requirements

In general, SNAP recipients must meet work-related eligibility requirements to remain eligible for the program. The requirements apply to individuals between the ages of 16 and 59 who are not disabled, and include:

- Accepting a job offer;
- Registering for work;
- Not voluntarily quitting a job or reducing employment hours; and
- Participating in a state-offered SNAP employment and training program, if required.⁶

Able-bodied adults without dependents

Additional requirements apply to able-bodied adults without dependents: individuals between ages 18 and 49 who have no dependents and are not disabled. These adults can only receive SNAP benefits for up to three months every three years unless they either:

- Work at least 20 hours per week;
- Participate in qualifying education and training activities at least 20 hours per week, including a state-offered SNAP employment and training program; or
- Comply with a state-approved workfare program.

The time limit does not apply to individuals who (1) are unable to work due to physical or mental health reasons, (2) care for a child or incapacitated family member, or (3) are otherwise exempt from the general work-related requirements.⁷

Approved retailers and use of benefits

Since 2009, all SNAP benefits are issued on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, which may be used only to purchase food from approved retail stores.⁸ States may require photos on EBT cards, but must have procedures to ensure that other household members who are not pictured can still use the card.⁹

States may disqualify SNAP recipients and retailers from participating in SNAP for violating the terms of the program and may also impose a fine or imprisonment under certain circumstances.¹⁰

⁶ 7 C.F.R. 273.7; Ohio Administrative Code (O.A.C.) 5101:4-3-11 and 5101:4-3-11.1; USDA FNS, [SNAP Work Requirements](#), which is available by searching “SNAP work requirements” on the USDA FNS website: fns.usda.gov.

⁷ 7 U.S.C. 2015(o); USDA FNS, [SNAP Work Requirements](#).

⁸ 7 U.S.C. 2016(b) and (f)(3)(B); O.A.C. 5101:4-1-04(A) and (D).

⁹ 7 U.S.C. 2016(h)(9).

¹⁰ 7 U.S.C. 2024.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Federal law

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for providing food assistance, breastfeeding support and education, and nutrition education to eligible individuals. Benefits are distributed through local agencies that provide health services, often referred to as WIC clinics.¹¹ To qualify:¹²

1. The individual must be a pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding woman, an infant from birth to 12 months of age, or a child from one to five years of age.
2. The individual must be at medical or nutritional risk as determined by health professionals at a WIC clinic.
3. The individual's gross family income must not exceed 185% of the federal poverty guidelines.

The WIC program provides vouchers for specific food items such as infant formula, juice, cereal, bread, peanut butter, cheese, milk, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. The type and amount of food is determined based on the age of the individual receiving assistance.¹³

State administration

The Department of Health administers the WIC program in Ohio.¹⁴ All WIC vendors must be authorized as retailers under the SNAP program and may provide only authorized foods in exchange for benefits issued on a WIC nutrition card. The Director of Health is responsible for sanctioning vendors that abuse the WIC program.¹⁵ States also must sanction adult participants, or the parents or caregivers of child participants, who violate the terms of the program.¹⁶

School meal programs

Federal law

The federal government provides funding to states for school breakfast and lunch programs.¹⁷

¹¹ 42 U.S.C. 1786.

¹² 7 C.F.R. 246.7(c); USDA FNS, [Am I Eligible for WIC?](#), which is available by selecting "WIC" under the "Programs" heading on the USDA FNS website: [fns.usda.gov](https://www.fns.usda.gov).

¹³ 7 C.F.R. 246.10.

¹⁴ R.C. 3701.132.

¹⁵ O.A.C. 3701-42-06 and 3701-42-08.

¹⁶ 7 C.F.R. 246.2 and 246.7(h)(2).

¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. 1751 and 1773. The federal government also provides funding for the Special Milk, After School Care Snack, and USDA Foods Programs, among others; see Ohio Department of Education and

- Students are eligible to receive free food from school breakfast and lunch programs if their family income is below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Reduced-price food is available to students with family incomes below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Schools where at least 80% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches may request additional financial assistance.¹⁸

All meals served by schools participating in the school lunch program must meet nutritional requirements established by the Secretary of Agriculture.¹⁹ The standards for lunch are based on grade level and specify the minimum amount of fruits, vegetables, legumes, starches, grains, meats/meat alternatives, and milk that must be served each week. Breakfasts are only required to include fruit, grains, and milk. The federal government also provides funding to assist schools and other public institutions, camps, and nonprofit organizations that administer summer food service programs in areas with poor economic conditions.²⁰

State administration; recent legislation

The Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) administers school breakfast and lunch programs in Ohio and establishes standards for them. The board of education of each school district must maintain a breakfast and lunch program serving eligible students in each district school where (1) at least one-fifth of the students are eligible for free meals or (2) the parents of at least half of the students have requested one. Additionally, DEW must establish a breakfast program for all students in schools where at least half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.²¹

The operating budget for FYs 2024 and 2025 established a new, permanent requirement that school breakfasts and lunches be provided free to all students who qualify for a reduced-price lunch. DEW must reimburse schools and other facilities that provide these meals. Schools and facilities that must provide the free meals are:

1. Public schools, including community schools, STEM schools, and buildings operated by educational service centers;
2. Chartered nonpublic schools;
3. Special education programs operated by county boards of developmental disabilities; and
4. Facilities offering juvenile day treatment services.²²

Workforce (DEW), [National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#), which is available by searching “National School Lunch Program” on DEW’s website: education.ohio.gov.

¹⁸ 42 U.S.C. 1758(b), 1759(a)(1)(B), and 1773(e)(1)(A).

¹⁹ 42 U.S.C. 1758(a) and 1773(e)(1)(A).

²⁰ 7 C.F.R. 210.10(c), 220.8(c), and 225.16(d).

²¹ R.C. 3313.813(C) and 3313.818; DEW, [National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#).

²² R.C. 3301.91, 3313.819, 3314.03, and 3326.11.

Finally, DEW must prepare an annual report detailing the type of breakfast model used and the breakfast and lunch program participation in each school.²³

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federally funded program that provides food assistance to child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes. In Ohio, it is administered by DEW.²⁴ Certain organizations providing either child care or adult day care for adults with disabilities or over 60 in a group setting may participate.²⁵

To qualify for benefits, an institution must serve people who meet the income requirements for school lunches and generally are under age 12, have disabilities, or are older adults. Providers are given donated foods or are reimbursed through the program at a rate determined by provider type and the portion of enrollees who meet the income eligibility requirements.²⁶

Emergency Food Assistance Program

Federal law

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing emergency food assistance at no cost. The USDA purchases food and makes it available to state agencies for distribution.²⁷ Food is distributed to eligible individuals for at-home consumption or through meals that are prepared and served at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, or other partner agencies. Federal regulations permit each state to establish its own program eligibility standards. A local agency providing prepared meals and not distributing commodities to households must ensure that it is serving predominantly needy persons.²⁸

State administration

ODJFS administers TEFAP and has divided Ohio into eight regions for the program. A foodbank in each region is designated as the regional agent responsible for administering TEFAP

²³ R.C. 3313.818; DEW, [Ohio School Breakfast Program: Implementation and Effectiveness 2022-2023 School Year \(PDF\)](#), December 2022, which is available by searching “school breakfast program report” on DEW’s website: education.ohio.gov.

²⁴ DEW, [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#), which is available by searching “CACFP” on DEW’s website: education.ohio.gov.

²⁵ 42 U.S.C. 1766(a).

²⁶ 42 U.S.C. 1766.

²⁷ USDA FNS, [What is the Emergency Food Assistance Program?](#), TEFAP Fact Sheet, which is available by searching “TEFAP” on the USDA FNS website: fns.usda.gov.

²⁸ 7 C.F.R. 251.5(a)(2) and (b).

in that region and partners with member agencies to distribute commodities to eligible participants.²⁹

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Federal law

The federally funded Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides food to state and local agencies to meet the nutritional needs of low-income adults age 60 or older by providing a monthly box of food. Federal regulations require that income eligibility be set at or below 130% of federal poverty guidelines. States may require that an individual be at nutritional risk or reside within the service area of the local agency.³⁰

State administration

Ohio sets the income limit at 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. Applicants self-declare income for CSFP, and proof of income may neither be requested nor required by the state. ODJFS administers CSFP and has divided Ohio into 13 regions for the program. A food bank within each region administers the program within the region and may work with local pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and similar nonprofit organizations to distribute CSFP commodities.³¹

Food banks

The Ohio Food Program makes nutritious, shelf-stable foods available to Ohio's food banks through funding appropriated by the General Assembly. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is a collaboration among 12 Ohio food banks that consolidate purchasing. These food banks work with over 3,600 hunger relief organizations to distribute food in all 88 counties.³² The main operating budget for FYs 2024 and 2025 appropriated \$32.1 million, with most of that coming from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant funds, in each year to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. It also provides assistance to other specified food banks. The money is used to purchase and distribute food products, support Innovative Summer Meals programs for children, provide SNAP outreach and free tax filing services, and provide capacity building equipment for food pantries and soup kitchens.³³

Food assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the federal government made additional food assistance available. The Farmers to Families Food Box Program and the Emergency Meals

²⁹ ODJFS, [What is TEFAP](#), which is available by searching “what is TEFAP” on ODJFS’s website: jfs.ohio.gov; ODJFS, *Food Programs Manual for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program*, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, April 2019

³⁰ 7 C.F.R. 247.1, 247.2, and 247.9.

³¹ ODJFS, *Food Programs Manual for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program*, April 2019; ODJFS, [Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP\)](#), which is available by searching “CSFP” on ODJFS’s website: jfs.ohio.gov.

³² [Ohio Association of Foodbanks](#), which is available at ohiofoodbanks.org.

³³Section 307.40, 307.41, 307.45, H.B. 33, 135th General Assembly.

to You program provided food to individuals, families, and school-age children on a temporary basis. SNAP, food assistance to supplement meals typically received in school or child care, WIC, TEFAP, and CSFP were also temporarily expanded.³⁴ Pandemic-related food benefits are no longer in effect.

³⁴ “Families First Coronavirus Response Act,” Public Law 116-127, 116th Congress, March 18, 2020; “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021,” Public Law 116-260, 116th Congress, December 27, 2020; Congressional Research Service (CRS), [USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic \(PDF\)](#), January 24, 2023, which is available by searching “pandemic nutrition assistance” on the CRS website: crsreports.congress.gov.