



*Helping Older Persons With  
Legal & Long-Term Care  
Problems*

# ***Food Stamps For The Elderly***

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## ***1. What Is The Food Stamp Program?***

The Food Stamp Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and issues a food stamp card used to purchase food. Your local County Department of Job & Family Services (CDJFS) assesses the financial eligibility of applicants and determines the dollar amount in food stamps each eligible applicant may receive.

## ***2. How Does The Food Stamp Program Define “Elderly”?***

An individual 60 years of age or older is defined as elderly. A disabled individual is someone who has been determined disabled by the Social Security Administration, Railroad Retirement or VA or a person receiving disability-based Medicaid or a disability-related assistance benefit.

## ***3. What Can I Buy With Food Stamps?***

Food stamps can only be used to purchase food or food products intended for human consumption including seeds and plants to grow food. Food stamps cannot be used to buy alcoholic beverages, tobacco, hot foods, nor hot food products prepared for immediate consumption.

## ***4. Where Can I Use Food Stamps?***

You can use the food stamp card at any store that is authorized to accept it. If you are elderly, disabled or homeless, you can use food stamps to pay for home-delivered Meals-on-Wheels and meals served at authorized senior citizen or other communal dining facilities.

## ***5. How Do I Apply?***

You must file an application with your local County Department of Job & Family Services (CDJFS). You must also be interviewed, and all relevant information verified. If you request food stamps by phone or mail, CDJFS must mail your application the same day your request is received. The application does not have to be completely filled in to begin the process. All that is needed is your printed name, address and signature on the form. It must then be submitted in person, by fax or mailed to CDJFS. The date CDJFS receives your application is your official date of application, which is the date from which you will begin receiving food stamps.

## ***6. What Information Will CDJFS Need?***

To determine the correct dollar amount of food stamps, you must submit proof of your monthly income, such as wages, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and pension benefits. You will need bank statements of checking and savings accounts and proof of your monthly bills, e.g., rent or mortgage, utilities, property taxes and medical expenses.

## ***7. What If I Cannot Get To CDJFS?***

If you are elderly or disabled, you can ask that the mandatory application interview be conducted over the phone or in your home. Be prepared to present all the needed information listed in question #6 if the interview is held at CDJFS or in your home. If the interview is conducted by phone, you will need to mail this information to CDJFS. Once eligibility is determined, CDJFS must offer assistance to elderly and disabled recipients who have difficulty traveling to obtain their food card. The CDJFS is also authorized to issue food cards by mail or assist the recipient in finding someone to act as his or her authorized representative.

## ***8. How Soon Will I Receive A Food Card?***

If you qualify, you will be certified to receive a food card no more than 30 days after the day CDJFS receives your application. You will actually receive the food card the month after certification. However, certain individuals are entitled to receive food cards within seven days of application under certain circumstances:

- (a)** gross monthly income of less than \$150 and liquid resources of \$100 or less;
- (b)** zero net monthly income and liquid resources of \$100 or less; or
- (c)** monthly rent or mortgage payments and utilities exceed the monthly gross income and liquid resources.

## ***9. What Dollar Amount Of Food Stamps Will I Receive?***

The amount of food stamps you receive depends on the size and income of your household after certain deductions. The elderly or disabled are not subject to the gross income maximum as other applicants are. If the household satisfies the maximum net income test, it is eligible for food stamps. For example, a household of one person with \$700 monthly Social Security income who pays \$350 rent, pays \$80 for heat and electric, and has \$50 in monthly medical expenses is entitled to \$120 in food stamps monthly. A household of two, with income of \$800 and expenses listed above, will receive \$200 in food stamps.

## ***10. I Live With My Daughter, What Is The Size Of My Household?***

The size of your household depends on whether you purchase and prepare food alone or with other people. If you

- (a) live alone;
- (b) live with friends or relatives, but do not purchase and prepare your food with them; or
- (c) live as a roomer in another person's house and purchase and prepare your own food,

then you have a household of one. As a household of one, only your income is considered. However, if you live with relatives or friends and purchase and prepare your food with them, your household size will equal the total number of people living and eating together. The amount of food stamps will then be determined by including the income of each person living in the household.

But an important exception is where an elderly person is unable to purchase food and prepare meals due to a disability and the income of the others in the household is less than 165% of the poverty level [\$1,281(1) & \$1,718(2)]. In this case, the elderly person is a household of one.

## ***11. How Is My Income Counted?***

Money from whatever source, earned or unearned, counts as income. This includes wages, pensions, Social Security, VA benefits and money received from child support or foster care. Your gross monthly income is then reduced by certain deductions to determine your net income.

Allowable deductions include a 20% deduction from gross earned income for those employed, to allow for work expenses and taxes; a standard income deduction of \$134; actual shelter costs that exceed 50% of net income; a deduction for medical expenses that exceed \$35 and, if you have heating and cooling expenses, a standard utility allowance of \$380. However, if a household chooses to claim actual utility expenses, it must use the standard deduction of \$29 for telephone costs.

## ***12. What Resources Are Counted For Food Stamp Eligibility?***

A household that contains a member age 60 or older is allowed \$3,000 in resources. For all other households, the resource limit is \$2,000. Resources include cash, savings and checking accounts, IRA accounts, certificates of deposit, and certain personal property that exceeds the maximum value permitted for that item. The home and surrounding property, the contents of the home and a licensed automobile worth up to \$4,650 are not counted. If the car is needed to transport a physically disabled person, it is excluded regardless of value.

## ***13. What Should I Do If I Am Denied Food Stamps Or Think The Dollar Amount Is Wrong?***

You may request a hearing by calling CDJFS within 90 days from the date the decision is mailed to you. If you are appealing a decision that reduces your food stamps, you can have your current amount of food stamps continued during your appeal by filing a request for a hearing within 15 days of the mailing of the notice. If you need legal advice, contact Pro Seniors at (513) 345-4160 or 1-800-488-6070.

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*Pro Seniors' Legal Hotline for Older Ohioans provides free legal information and advice by toll-free telephone to all residents of Ohio age 60 or older. If you have a concern that cannot be resolved over the phone, then the hotline will try to match you with an attorney who will handle your problem at a fee you can afford.*

*In southwest Ohio, Pro Seniors' staff attorneys and long-term care ombudsmen handle matters that private attorneys do not, such as nursing facility, adult care facility, home care, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, protective services, insurance and landlord/tenant problems.*

*This pamphlet provides general information and not legal advice. The law is complex and changes frequently. Before you apply this information to a particular situation, call Pro Seniors' free Legal Hotline or consult an attorney in elder law.*

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