

During the coronavirus pandemic, the federal nutrition programs can be a vital source of support for you and your family. This fact sheet covers the federal nutrition program options that are available during COVID-19, and includes information on program benefits, special access options, and how to get connected to, such as enrolling to receive, these valuable program benefits.

PROGRAMS

- SNAP Benefits for Individuals and Families
- Meals Available for Children 18 and Under Due to School Closures
- Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT)
- Meals for Preschool Children and Children in Homeless Shelters
- Food for Women, Infants, and Children
- Meals and Food for Older Adults

SNAP Benefits for Individuals and Families

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously named the Food Stamp Program, is the first line of defense against hunger. Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), SNAP provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income people to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other regular commercial food outlets. If you are applying for SNAP benefits, you must meet income eligibility guidelines. Those who are eligible will receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) debit card to make food purchases.

Due to COVID-19, some changes have been made to streamline the process of applying for and participating in SNAP. SNAP applications often can be submitted online or over the phone so that there's no need to visit your local social services office in person. Find out what resources are available and how to apply for SNAP in your state:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>.

Meals Available for School-Aged Children

Even if your child's school is planning to use a virtual or hybrid model, schools can offer breakfast and lunch through the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program. Families are able to pick up the meals to take home, and, at most schools, children do not need to be present for parents or caregivers to pick up the meals. Many schools are providing multiple days' worth of meals. If your school is not offering free meals to all students, complete a free and reduced-price school meals application to see if your child qualifies for free school meals. For more information, contact your child's school.

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT)

P-EBT gives families with school children an EBT card to purchase food. If your child received free or reduced-price school meals in the spring of the 2019–2020 school year, then you are eligible to receive P-EBT benefits for the days that school was closed due to the pandemic during that time. This includes any child who attended a school that offered free school meals to all students.

P-EBT provides about \$5.70 per child for each day that school was closed due to the pandemic in the 2019–2020 school year. This adds up to \$114 per child for four weeks.

Families who participate in SNAP will have the benefits added to their SNAP EBT card. Families who do not participate in SNAP may automatically receive a P-EBT card in the mail, or may have to fill out a short application. This will depend on how your state has decided to operate the P-EBT program.

For additional information about your state's P-EBT program, visit FRAC's [P-EBT Map](#).

Meals for Preschool Children and Children in Homeless Shelters

Children in child care and homeless shelters can receive nutritious meals and snacks paid for by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Children of essential workers continue to be in child care as their parents work to provide health care, stock grocery store shelves, produce food, and engage in a myriad of other important jobs. Not only is CACFP an important support for providing healthy meals to those children still in child care, the program is also critical for providing meals to children enrolled but unable to attend.

Special rules have been implemented during COVID-19 that allow CACFP child care providers to offer take-out or delivered meals for children enrolled but currently unable to attend care due to social distancing requirements. Parents or guardians can pick up non-congregate meals for their children. Homeless shelters can serve meals and snacks through CACFP. To learn more, contact your child care provider, State CACFP point-of-contact, or refer to your state agency website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>.

Food for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides low-income nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to five years old with nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health care. If your income has changed recently, you may now qualify for WIC. You are income-eligible if your family income is at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line or you participate in SNAP or Medicaid. WIC participants receive a WIC EBT card (a few states provide paper WIC food vouchers instead) to shop for WIC foods at authorized grocery stores.

During COVID-19, WIC is enrolling new participants and providing benefits to existing participants remotely. To accommodate the need for social distancing, WIC services are now available over the phone or online. In most states, WIC can download benefits onto a WIC EBT card remotely. Most local WIC clinics have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To apply for WIC or find out more information,

- call your WIC State toll-free WIC hotline: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/toll-free-numbers-wic-state-agencies>;
- visit your WIC State agency websites: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>; or
- call your nearest WIC local agency (use this locator): <https://www.signupwic.com/>.

Meals and Food for Older Adults

Home-Delivered Meals (also called Meals on Wheels) —

This program is typically for older adults who are homebound and cannot cook or prepare meals. Depending on where a person lives, they may be able to get meals delivered to their home. The meals might be hot, frozen, or shelf-stable. Because of the coronavirus, organizations are working to serve additional people, such as those who are under quarantine. Organizations are also working to deliver the meals without contact between the delivery person and older adult to protect everyone's health. Who can get meals and how and when the meals are delivered varies by area. The Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov or call 1-800-677-1116) and Meals on Wheels (www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals) have information on what areas have home-delivered meals programs.

Congregate meals (also called meals with friends or community dining) —

Many meal sites have temporarily closed to protect the public's health during the coronavirus pandemic. Organizations are working to deliver meals to older adults who usually eat lunch at community dining sites, like senior centers, but can no longer do so because of coronavirus closures. The Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov or call 1-800-677-1116) and Meals on Wheels (www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals) have information on whether meals are available in your area.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program — Some states have programs that provide older adults with a box or bag of staple foods (e.g., canned fruits and vegetables, cheese, shelf-stable milk, cereals, potatoes, grains, peanut butter, and dried beans) each month through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. Participants must be low-income and 60 years of age or older.

Older adults should check to see if the program is offered in their area and if the program can accept new participants. Current participants may want to check if there are changes to how and when the food box is being handed out during the coronavirus pandemic. USDA has information on participating states and contact information: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts>.

Resources: FRAC COVID-19 website

See FRAC's COVID-19 webpage with the most current updates on the federal nutrition programs during the pandemic: <https://frac.org/covid-19-updates>.