

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## SNAP Food Assistance For College Students



The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “SNAP” (formerly called Food Stamps) helps eligible low-income households buy food. Many low income college students qualify.

### Can I get SNAP if I am in college?

There are special rules about SNAP for low-income college students. You may qualify if you are a student between ages 18 and 49 enrolled half-time or more in a post-secondary program and meet any of the following:

- Get federal Work Study, and you work or expect to work during the semester
- Receive financial aid from the state MASSGrant program
- Attend a community college and your course of study or certificate program will increase your employability
- Work (for pay) an average of 20 hours or more per week
- Care for a child under the age of 12, or you get TAFDC as a parent with children
- Are in school through a state-approved education or training program
- Have a temporary or permanent disability that makes it hard to work 20 hours/week
- Are experiencing chronic homelessness
- Receive services through MassAbility

### How do I apply for SNAP benefits?

You can file an application for SNAP through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA):

- Online: [DTAConnect.com](https://DTAConnect.com)
- By phone: 877-382-2363, press 7
- In person at a local DTA Office
- Fax or mail: Get a paper application at [Mass.gov/SNAP](https://Mass.gov/SNAP)

If you live with other people who get SNAP, they may need to contact DTA to add you. See below.

After you apply, call the DTA Assistance Line for an interview at 1-877-382-2363. Then send DTA the proofs they ask for. DTA has 30 days to approve or deny your application, unless you qualify for emergency SNAP within 7 days. 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. Visit [Mass.gov/SNAP](https://Mass.gov/SNAP) to see maximum benefit amounts.

### What income does DTA count?

- Earned income from a job or self-employment,
- Unearned income such as Social Security, child support or unemployment insurance.

Work Study and other educational aid, loans, or grants **do not count** as income.

## What proofs do I need to give DTA?

DTA will send you a list of proofs they need (such as proof of income or Massachusetts residency). DTA should accept a self-declaration (over the phone or written) of your college enrollment and which of the special rules you meet, listed above. Contact [info@masslegalservices.org](mailto:info@masslegalservices.org) if DTA asks you for proof of financial aid or where you are enrolled in school.

## What if I live with other people?

<b>Roommates</b>	If you buy and prepare more than half of your food separately from your roommates, you can apply for SNAP for <i>just yourself</i> . If you buy and prepare most of your food together (you share the food you all purchased together), you must apply for SNAP with your roommates—and they must report their income and meet other rules.
<b>Parents</b>	<p><i>If you are age 22 or older and live with your parents— but you buy and prepare more than half your food separate from your parents – you can apply for SNAP for just yourself to buy your own food.</i></p> <p><i>If you are under age 22, you cannot get SNAP separately from your parents if you live with them. This is true even if you don't share food. If your parents currently get SNAP, they should ask DTA to add you. If your family is low income and does not get SNAP, your parents can apply for SNAP as a household.</i></p>
<b>On-Campus</b>	If you live on-campus and get 2/3 or 3/3 meals a day or 14+ meals a week from a school meal plan, you don't qualify for SNAP benefits. If you have a limited meal plan – for example, 1 meal a day – then you may be SNAP eligible. Even if you are on a meal plan that makes you ineligible for SNAP during the school year, you may become SNAP eligible if your meal plan ends for summer break.

## What are my rights if I am denied SNAP?

- Use the DTA Connect mobile app to send proofs, look at case information, and see notices.
- Call the DTA Assistance Line at 1-877-382-2363 to talk with a SNAP worker and about why you were denied. If you disagree with what the SNAP worker says, you can also ask to speak to a Supervisor or the Office Director.
- Call the DTA Ombudsman's office at 617-348-5354 and ask them to review the case.
- Request a hearing if you disagree with DTA's decision. There is an appeal form on the back of the DTA denial notice. Fill this out and fax or mail it back to DTA. Or, call (617) 348-5321 to request a hearing by phone. The hearing will be by phone unless you ask for a Zoom or in-person hearing.
- Contact your local Legal Services office for help: [MassLRF.org](http://MassLRF.org).
- For more information visit [Masslegalservices.org/food4students](http://Masslegalservices.org/food4students)