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How to be a PA SNAP Advocate for Students

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL STAFF



A student may still be eligible for SNAP even if they do not meet the “student” eligibility criteria. There are many ways to qualify for SNAP. The student status determination is to help the county eligibility specialists decide which criteria to use when assessing their case.



Staff are not eligibility workers and some students/applicants’ situations can be nuanced. Only a county eligibility specialist can qualify or disqualify an applicant.



SNAP is a program that is available for anyone who is eligible. There is no cap on how many people may receive benefits. Anyone who needs and is eligible for these critical services should apply for them.

TIPS FOR ENROLLING IN SNAP

Encourage students to utilize application assistance from staff, faculty, or community partners. With frequent changes to rules and regulations, it is helpful to have an advocate help students navigate the process.

Resources to provide to students include:

- Food pantries in your area: <https://shfbv.org/find-a-food-pantry/> or <https://www.lvfp.org/food-access/>
- The SNAP flyer for assistance in applying for benefits (your hard copy or online [here](#))
- Call 2-1-1: this is a helpline to assist with social services and benefits
- Students can complete an application on their own at: <http://www.compass.state.pa.us>

TIPS FOR SNAP INTERVIEW

- **The county may call from a blocked or unknown number.** After an application is submitted, encourage students to answer calls from unknown or blocked numbers so they can complete their interview to receive SNAP.
- **If a student missed their phone interview,** have the student call back as soon as possible to reschedule.
- **If an interview is not completed within 30 days,** the student will need to reapply to SNAP.
- **Upload all required verification documents** prior to interview.

TIPS FOR APPEALING A SNAP DENIAL

An appeal can be **submitted through the county DHS office** if the county has denied a SNAP application, discontinued a case or reduced benefits and the participant disagrees with the decision.

- Before filing an appeal, it is strongly encouraged to contact your county and see if the issue can be resolved. This is usually more efficient and easier than submitting a formal appeal. You may contact the assistance officer or your Second Harvest SNAP advocate for assistance in determining next steps.
- An advocacy groups that can help provide legal advice for SNAP appeals is North Penn Legal Services.

TIPS FOR EXPEDITED SNAP SERVICES

- **If a student is unhoused,** they *may* be eligible for expedited services within five days of submitting a SNAP application. Students do not need to have an address to receive SNAP. A homeless individual who lives temporarily with others for 90 days or less may be a separate household if the homeless individual buys and makes meals separately and is not a mandatory household member.
- **SNAP benefits could be available within 5 days for the following:**
 - The household has less than \$150.00 in monthly gross income and does not have assets (resources) over \$100.00; or
 - The household's total monthly income and resources are less than the monthly rent or mortgage, and utilities; or
 - The applicant is a migrant or seasonal farm worker who has stopped receiving income from work and does not have assets (resources) over \$100.00

TIPS FOR USING SNAP

Participants can use benefits to purchase food (including refrigerated prepared food) or seeds to grow food.

Participants cannot use benefits to purchase:

- Any non-food items, including pet food, soaps, paper products, household supplies, grooming items, and cosmetics
- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco products
- Energy drinks, vitamins, and medicines
- Any food that will be eaten in the store*
- Any food marketed to be heated in the store*

Participants can buy food at:

- Grocery stores: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator
- Farmers markets: www.buyfreshbuylocalglv.org
- Online grocery shopping at select retailers such as Amazon, and participating locations of Aldi, Fresh Grocer, Giant, Shop-Rite, and Walmart.
 - Delivery fees cannot be paid for with SNAP benefits

TIPS FOR SNAP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Currently, through December 2021, all households are receiving extra benefits called emergency allotments
- College students with \$0 EFC or who are eligible for work study are temporarily exempt from student restrictions.



We shape the landscape for regional food access, policy, and collaboration.