

# Washington SNAP BENEFITS

*Called "Basic Food" in Washington*  
**A Plain-Language Navigation Guide**

For Individuals, Families, and Nonprofits Serving Vulnerable Populations | Updated May 2026

## What This Guide Covers

Eligibility rules • Income limits • Required documents • Step-by-step application • Work requirements • Why people lose benefits • Key contacts

### **Federal Changes in Effect (2025–2026)**

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed July 4, 2025, expanded ABAWD work requirements (now ages 18–64), narrowed non-citizen eligibility, and made other national changes to SNAP. This guide reflects rules as of May 2026. Always verify current rules with DSHS at [dshs.wa.gov](https://dshs.wa.gov) or [washingtonconnection.org](https://washingtonconnection.org).

## Section 1: What Is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Washington it is called "Basic Food" and is administered by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Benefits are issued monthly through a Washington State EBT Card accepted at authorized grocery stores, farmers markets, and major online retailers including Amazon and Walmart.

Washington uses 200% FPL through BBCE with no asset test and has fully lifted the drug felony ban. SNAP is called Basic Food in Washington and is administered through DSHS Community Services Offices statewide. Washington Connection is the state's online portal. Fresh Bucks matches SNAP EBT spending on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets — up to \$40 per visit, one of the highest matching caps in the nation. BFET (Basic Food Employment and Training) is one of the most comprehensive state SNAP E&T programs in the country. DSHS offers interpreter services in over 20 languages — important for Washington's large immigrant and refugee populations.

### ✓ **Washington SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance**

- SNAP called 'Basic Food' in Washington; 200% FPL through BBCE — no asset test
- Full drug felony ban lift — no conditions or requirements
- Fresh Bucks: SNAP matched on fresh produce at participating farmers markets, up to \$40/visit (highest cap in the nation)
- BFET (Basic Food Employment and Training): one of the nation's most comprehensive SNAP E&T programs
- DSHS interpreter services in 20+ languages — critical for WA's large immigrant and refugee communities
- ABAWD waivers have narrowed post-OBBBA — verify current county waiver status with DSHS

## Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

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### 2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Washington. There is no minimum residency period. You do not need a permanent address — a shelter address, transitional housing, or a signed statement from a non-relative can satisfy this requirement.

### 2.2 Citizenship and Immigration Status

The following individuals are generally eligible:

- U.S. citizens (born or naturalized)
- Lawful Permanent Residents (Green Card holders) who have held status for at least 5 years
- Certain refugees, asylees, and Special Immigrant Visa holders

### ⚠ **2025 Change: Non-Citizen Eligibility Narrowed**

The OBBBA (July 4, 2025) removed SNAP eligibility for humanitarian parolees, most asylum seekers pending a decision, and several other previously eligible categories. U.S.-born children in mixed-status households may still qualify. Contact your local DSHS office or legal aid if your immigration status is unclear.

### 2.3 Household Composition

Your SNAP household includes everyone who lives together and regularly purchases and prepares food together. Members who buy and prepare food separately may form their own household unit.

## 2.4 Income Limits

Washington uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. Washington is among the most accessible SNAP states in the Pacific Northwest.

Exception: Households where all members are age 60+ or have a documented disability have NO gross income limit — only the net income test applies.

### Washington SNAP Income Limits and Maximum Benefits (FY 2026, Oct. 1, 2025 – Sept. 30, 2026)

HH Size	Gross Limit	Elderly/Disabled Gross Limit	Net Limit (100% FPL)	Max Monthly Benefit
1	\$2,510	No limit*	\$1,255	\$292
2	\$3,398	No limit*	\$1,699	\$536
3	\$4,287	No limit*	\$2,144	\$766
4	\$5,178	No limit*	\$2,589	\$994
5	\$6,067	No limit*	\$3,034	\$1,155
6	\$6,956	No limit*	\$3,478	\$1,386
7	\$7,845	No limit*	\$3,923	\$1,532
8+	+\$889/person	No limit*	+\$445/person	+\$177/person

\* Elderly/disabled households have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. Washington uses BBCE at 200% FPL. Limits update each October 1.

### How Net Income Is Calculated

Net income = gross income minus approved deductions. Standard deductions include:

- 20% earned income deduction — automatically applied to all wages and self-employment income
- Standard deduction: varies by household size (approximately \$204–\$291 for most households)
- Excess shelter deduction: rent/mortgage plus utilities exceeding 50% of net income after other deductions
- Dependent care deduction: childcare or adult care costs paid while working, searching, or in training
- Medical expense deduction: out-of-pocket costs over \$35/month for members 60+ or with a disability
- Child support deduction: legally obligated child support paid to someone outside the household

### **Washington Deduction Note**

Washington's housing costs — particularly in the Seattle-Bellevue metro, Tacoma, Spokane, and the Eastside — have risen sharply. For households near the 200% FPL ceiling, the excess shelter deduction is frequently decisive. Western Washington's maritime climate drives heating and cooling costs; always claim the Standard Utility Allowance. Agricultural workers in eastern Washington's farming communities should document all farm expenses for self-employment income calculation.

## **2.5 Asset Limits**

For most Washington BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 200% FPL face a \$4,500 asset limit. Primary home and one vehicle are always exempt.

## **Section 3: Work Requirements**

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Work requirements are the most common reason people lose SNAP benefits.

### **3.1 Standard Work Requirements (All Adults 16–59)**

All able-bodied adults between ages 16 and 59 must meet at least one of the following:

- Be employed (any number of hours)
- Be registered for work with WorkSource Centers / Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET)
- Participate in an approved employment or training program
- Not have voluntarily quit a job without good cause or reduced hours below 30/week

### **3.2 ABAWD Rules**

ABAWDs are adults ages 18–64 without dependents who are not disabled and not otherwise exempt. Washington has historically maintained ABAWD waivers in many counties, but post-OBBBA many of those waivers are no longer available.

ABAWDs must complete at least 80 hours per month (20 hours/week): employment, job training, volunteering, or participation in an approved work program.

Without meeting this requirement, ABAWDs can only receive SNAP for 3 months in any 36-month period.

### **Washington ABAWD Note**

Washington's ABAWD waiver coverage has significantly changed under the OBBBA. Many waivers that previously covered Washington counties are no longer available under the 2026 federal framework. Contact DSHS at 1-877-501-2233 or visit [dshs.wa.gov](https://dshs.wa.gov) to verify current ABAWD waiver status in your specific county. BFET (Basic Food Employment and Training) is Washington's state-administered E&T program — one of the most comprehensive in the nation, offering job training, education assistance, childcare support, and transportation reimbursement. Enrolling in BFET satisfies the 80-hour/month ABAWD requirement.

## **3.3 Exemptions from ABAWD Requirements**

The following individuals are exempt from ABAWD time limits:

- Physically or mentally unfit for employment (documented by a physician or licensed clinical social worker)
- Pregnant
- Responsible for a dependent child under age 14 living in the same household
- Enrolled at least half-time in a recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education
- Participating in a drug or alcohol treatment or rehabilitation program
- Age 15 or younger, or 65 or older
- Recently released from an institution (incarceration or psychiatric facility)
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Experiencing homelessness (may qualify under 'unfit for employment' — ask your caseworker)

## **3.4 How to Document Work or an Exemption**

Report work activity or exemption status through Washington Connection ([washingtonconnection.org](https://washingtonconnection.org)), by phone, or in person at your DSHS office. Submit documentation before your benefit period runs out.

# **Section 4: Required Documents**

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Gather these before applying. Missing documents are the most common cause of delays.

## **4.1 Always Required**

- Proof of Identity: Driver's license, state-issued ID, passport, or birth certificate
- Social Security Number (SSN): For each household member applying

- Proof of Washington Residency: Utility bill, lease agreement, official mail, or a signed statement from a non-relative

## 4.2 Income Verification

- Pay stubs from the last 30 days (for employed applicants)
- Most recent W-2, 1099, or tax return (for self-employment income)
- Award letter or benefit statement for Social Security, SSI, unemployment, or other unearned income
- Documentation of child support received or paid

## 4.3 Deduction Documentation (Strongly Recommended)

- Rent or mortgage statement
- Utility bills (or claim the Standard Utility Allowance — ask your caseworker which produces a higher deduction)
- Childcare or dependent care receipts
- Medical bills for members 60+ or with disabilities

### Tip: Apply First, Gather Documents Later

Submit your application to lock in your application date — benefits are generally backdated to that date if approved. Your caseworker will specify what additional documents are needed.

# Section 5: Step-by-Step Application Process

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## Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at [snapeligibilitycalculator.com](https://snapeligibilitycalculator.com), call 1-877-501-2233, or visit your local DSHS office.

## Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
Washington Connection Online	<a href="https://washingtonconnection.org">washingtonconnection.org</a> — apply online 24/7, upload documents, track your case. Available in multiple languages. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-877-501-2233 (Mon–Fri). Interpreter services available in 20+ languages.

Method	Details
In Person	Visit your local DSHS Community Services Office. Washington has offices in every county. Find locations at <a href="https://dshs.wa.gov">dshs.wa.gov</a> .
By Mail/Fax	Download Form DSHS 14-001 from <a href="https://dshs.wa.gov">dshs.wa.gov</a> ; mail or fax to your local CSO.

### Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, DSHS will schedule a mandatory interview — typically by phone. Missing the interview is the most common reason applications are denied. Contact your office immediately to reschedule if needed.

### Step 4: Receive a Decision

DSHS must process standard applications within 30 days. If approved, you will receive an EBT card by mail. If denied, you have 90 days to appeal.

### Expedited / Emergency Processing (7-Day)

You may qualify if: gross monthly income is under \$150 AND liquid assets under \$100; OR combined monthly income and liquid assets are less than monthly rent plus utilities; OR you are a migrant/seasonal farmworker with liquid assets under \$100.

## Section 6: Special Situations

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### 6.1 Experiencing Homelessness

You do not need a permanent address to apply. DSHS accepts shelter addresses, transitional housing, or a signed statement from a non-relative. Dial 211 for local shelter and benefits navigation resources.

### 6.2 People With Disabilities or Elderly Members

Households where all members are 60+ or disabled benefit from: no gross income test (only net income limit), uncapped shelter deduction, medical expense deduction, and higher asset limits (where applicable).

### 6.3 Drug Felony Convictions

Washington has fully lifted the federal drug felony ban. Individuals with any drug-related felony conviction are fully eligible for Basic Food if they meet income and other standard requirements — no treatment programs, drug testing, or compliance conditions apply.

### 6.4 Students

Students enrolled at least half-time must meet at least one exception: work 20+ hours/week, participate in work-study, care for a dependent child under 6, receive TANF, or be enrolled in an approved training program.

### 6.5 Fresh Bucks and BFET

Washington has two standout SNAP-related programs. Fresh Bucks matches SNAP EBT spending dollar-for-dollar on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets — up to \$40 per market visit, the highest matching cap of any state produce program in the country. Find participating markets at [freshbucks.org](https://freshbucks.org). BFET (Basic Food Employment and Training) is Washington's voluntary SNAP E&T program that offers job training, career counseling, education assistance, childcare support, and transportation reimbursement to Basic Food recipients who want employment support. BFET participation satisfies ABAWD work requirements. Contact DSHS at 1-877-501-2233 or your local WorkSource Center to enroll.

## Section 7: Why People Lose Benefits — and How to Avoid It

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### Most Common Reasons SNAP Benefits Are Cut Off

#### 1. Missing the recertification (renewal) deadline

Certification periods last 6–12 months. Set a calendar reminder 60 days before your certification end date and monitor your online account regularly.

#### 2. Failing the ABAWD work requirement without claiming an exemption

ABAWDs who do not work 80 hours/month and have not claimed a valid exemption are cut off after 3 months. Verify statewide or local waiver status and document any exemption in writing at every recertification.

#### 3. Missing the interview or not responding to agency notices

Keep your phone number and mailing address current. Check your online account regularly for notices.

#### 4. Failure to report changes in income or household composition

Report changes within 10 days. Failure to report can result in overpayments and case closure.

## Your Right to Appeal

If DSHS denies or reduces your benefits, request a Fair Hearing within 90 days of the notice. If you request within 10 days of a termination notice, your benefits may continue during the review. Contact Northwest Justice Project ([nwjustice.org](http://nwjustice.org), 1-888-201-1014) for free legal assistance.

## Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
DSHS Basic Food Line	1-877-501-2233   <a href="http://dshs.wa.gov">dshs.wa.gov</a>
Washington Connection Portal	<a href="http://washingtonconnection.org">washingtonconnection.org</a> — apply, upload documents, manage Basic Food benefits
DSHS CSO Office Locator	<a href="http://dshs.wa.gov/office-locator">dshs.wa.gov/office-locator</a> — find your county Community Services Office
BFET (Employment & Training)	Contact DSHS or your local WorkSource Center — job training, education, childcare, and transportation support
WorkSource Centers	<a href="http://worksourcewa.com">worksourcewa.com</a> — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Fresh Bucks Program	<a href="http://freshbucks.org">freshbucks.org</a> — SNAP produce matching at WA farmers markets (up to \$40/visit)
Northwest Harvest	<a href="http://northwestharvest.org">northwestharvest.org</a>   206-285-4607 — statewide food bank and SNAP outreach
Washington 211	Dial 211   <a href="http://wa211.org">wa211.org</a> — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation
Northwest Justice Project	<a href="http://nwjustice.org">nwjustice.org</a>   1-888-201-1014 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

### A Note on Navigating Washington's System

Washington's 200% BBCE, no asset test, full drug felony ban lift, 20+ language support, and Fresh Bucks (nation's highest matching cap at \$40/visit) make it one of the most accessible and well-resourced SNAP states in the country. The most critical 2026 change is the narrowing of ABAWD waivers post-OBBBA — many counties that were previously waived no longer are. BFET is the most important tool for ABAWDs who need to meet work requirements. For advocates working with immigrant and refugee communities: interpreter services in 20+ languages at DSHS make Washington's system unusually accessible for non-English-speaking households.

*This guide was compiled using information from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, and publicly available state SNAP resources. It is informational only*

*and does not constitute legal advice. Rules may change — always verify at [dshs.wa.gov](https://dshs.wa.gov) or [washingtonconnection.org](https://washingtonconnection.org) or by contacting your local office.*