

# ALABAMA SNAP BENEFITS

## 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 & exemptions • Why people lose benefits • Key contacts


### Important: Federal Rule Changes in Effect (2025–2026)

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed July 4, 2025, made significant changes to SNAP nationally. Key changes include expanded ABAWD work requirements (now extending to age 64 under federal rules), loss of eligibility for many non-citizens, and stricter documentation requirements. Alabama has not yet fully implemented all OBBBA provisions. This guide reflects rules as of May 2026 — verify current rules at [dhr.alabama.gov](http://dhr.alabama.gov) or call your county DHR office.

## Section 1: What Is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Alabama it is administered by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and is sometimes called the Food Assistance Program (FAP). Benefits are loaded monthly onto an Alabama EBT card, which works like a debit card at authorized grocery stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, and select online retailers including Amazon and Walmart.

Approximately 761,000 Alabama residents — roughly 1 in 7 people statewide — receive SNAP benefits. The program is open to working families, seniors, people with disabilities, students meeting specific criteria, and unemployed individuals. An estimated 30% of eligible Alabamians never apply despite qualifying, often because they assume they won't meet income limits. Alabama's income thresholds are more generous than most people expect.

 **Alabama-Specific Advantage: No Drug Felony Ban**

Alabama has fully opted out of the federal ban on SNAP benefits for people with drug felony convictions. Individuals with any drug-related felony conviction are fully eligible for SNAP if they meet income and other standard requirements — no additional conditions apply.

## Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

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To qualify for SNAP in Alabama, a household must meet the following requirements.

### 2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Alabama. You do not need a permanent address. Shelter addresses, transitional housing, or a signed third-party statement from a non-relative confirming your location can satisfy this requirement. Your application is routed to the DHR office in the county where you currently live.

### 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 (SIVs)

 **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 immigration categories that previously qualified. U.S.-born children in mixed-status households may still qualify even if their parents do not. Contact your county DHR office or a legal aid organization if your immigration status is unclear.

### 2.3 Household Composition

Your SNAP household includes everyone who lives with you and regularly shares meals together. Spouses, children, and other family members who pool grocery purchases are counted together. Each household applies as a unit, and income is counted for all members combined.

## 2.4 Income Limits — Alabama’s BBCE Advantage

Alabama uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), which sets the gross income limit at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level — significantly higher than the federal standard of 130% FPL. This makes Alabama one of the more accessible states for SNAP eligibility.

Most households must also pass a net income test at 100% FPL. Net income is calculated after approved deductions are subtracted from gross income.

Exception: Households where all members are age 60+ or have a disability skip the gross income test entirely and are only subject to the net income limit.

Household Size	Gross Limit (200% FPL BBCE)	Gross Limit (130% FPL Standard)	Net Limit (100% FPL)	Max Monthly Benefit
1	\$2,510	\$1,255	\$1,255	\$292
2	\$3,398	\$1,699	\$1,699	\$536
3	\$4,287	\$2,144	\$2,144	\$768
4	\$5,178	\$2,589	\$2,589	\$994
5	\$6,067	\$3,034	\$3,034	\$1,155
6	\$6,956	\$3,478	\$3,478	\$1,386
7	\$7,845	\$3,923	\$3,923	\$1,532
8+	+\$889/person	+\$445/person	+\$445/person	+\$177/person

Note: The table above shows both the BBCE 200% FPL gross limit (which applies to most households) and the standard 130% FPL federal limit for reference. Most Alabama applicants qualify under the 200% FPL BBCE threshold. Income limits are updated each October 1.

### How Net Income Is Calculated

Net income = gross income minus approved deductions. Alabama SNAP allows the following deductions:

- 20% earned income deduction — automatically applied to all wages and self-employment income
- Standard deduction: \$204/month for households of 1–3; higher for larger households
- Excess shelter deduction: rent/mortgage plus utilities exceeding 50% of net income after other deductions (capped at \$712/month for most households; no cap for elderly/disabled)
- Dependent care deduction: childcare or adult care costs paid while working, job searching, or in training
- Medical expense deduction: out-of-pocket costs over \$35/month for members 60+ or with a qualifying disability

- Child support deduction: legally obligated child support paid to someone outside the household


 **Tip: Deductions Can Make a Major Difference**

People often assume they don't qualify because their gross income looks too high. After applying the 20% earned income deduction, the standard deduction, and shelter costs, many households qualify who initially seem over the limit. Always apply and let DHR calculate your net income — do not self-screen out based on gross income alone.

## 2.5 Asset Limits

For most Alabama households, there is no asset limit. Under BBCE, savings, vehicles, and other assets are not counted or tested.

Exception: Households where all members are elderly or disabled AND whose income exceeds the federal poverty level face a \$4,500 asset limit on countable assets (cash, bank accounts, stocks). Primary homes and one vehicle are always exempt.

 **Alabama Advantage: No Asset Test for Most Households**

Unlike states that did not adopt BBCE, Alabama does not count bank savings, vehicles, or other assets against most applicants. Having a car or modest savings does not disqualify you.

## Section 3: Work Requirements

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Work requirements are the most common reason people lose SNAP benefits. Understanding these rules — and what exemptions apply — is critical.

### 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 DHR / Alabama Career Center
- 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 (Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents)

ABAWDs face a stricter, separate time-limited requirement. Under Alabama's current rules (as of May 2026), ABAWDs are adults ages 18–49 without dependents.

### Who Is an ABAWD in Alabama?

1. Between ages 18 and 49 (Alabama's current enforcement range as of May 2026)
2. Not disabled (as documented)
3. Not the parent or caregiver of a dependent child living in the same household
4. Not otherwise exempt from general work requirements

ABAWDs must complete at least 80 hours per month of qualifying activity:

- Employment (paid work)
- Job training or an approved vocational program
- Volunteering or community service
- Participation in a SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) program through DHR

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

### Federal Rule Change Coming: Age Expansion Under OBBBA

The OBBBA (July 4, 2025) expands the ABAWD age range nationally from 18–54 to 18–64. Alabama's current enforcement as of May 2026 still uses an 18–49 range, but full implementation of federal OBBBA ABAWD rules is expected to expand this. Monitor updates from DHR or check [dhr.alabama.gov](http://dhr.alabama.gov). If you are between 50 and 64 and currently exempt from ABAWD rules, verify your status directly with your county DHR office.

## 3.3 County-Level Waivers

Some Alabama counties may have ABAWD waivers in effect due to high local unemployment rates, which would suspend the 3-month time limit for residents in those counties. Your county DHR office can tell you whether a waiver is currently active in your area.

## 3.4 Exemptions from ABAWD Requirements

The following groups are exempt from ABAWD time limits:

- Physically or mentally unfit for employment (documented by a physician, licensed clinical social worker, or similar professional)
- Pregnant
- Caring for a dependent child 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 50 or older (under current Alabama rules; verify if OBBBA has changed this in your county)
- Recently released from an institution (incarceration, psychiatric facility)
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Experiencing homelessness (may qualify under “unfit for employment” — ask your caseworker to document this)

### 3.5 How to Document Work or an Exemption

You must report work activity or exemption status to DHR. This can be done:

- Online through your MyDHR account at [mydhr.alabama.gov](http://mydhr.alabama.gov)
- In person at your county DHR office
- By fax or mail with the appropriate DHR form

#### **Tip: Claim Exemptions Proactively and in Writing**

If you believe you qualify for any exemption, submit documentation before your benefit period runs out. DHR cannot retroactively restore months lost due to non-compliance. A letter from a treating physician, psychiatrist, licensed social worker, domestic violence advocate, shelter staff, or treatment provider describing your situation can serve as supporting documentation. Verbal claims alone are generally not sufficient.

## Section 4: Required Documents

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Gather these before you apply. Missing documents are the most common cause of processing delays. DHR requires verified documentation — self-reported statements alone are generally not sufficient.

### 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. Members without an SSN may still allow other eligible household members to apply
- Proof of Alabama Residency: Utility bill, lease or rental agreement, official mail with your name and current address, or a signed third-party statement from a non-relative confirming your location (must include their address and phone number)

## 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, TANF, or tribal assistance
- Documentation of child support received or paid
- Documentation of any other income source (pension, workers' compensation, gifts, loans)

## 4.3 Deduction Documentation (Optional But Highly Recommended)

These documents are not required to apply, but submitting them can significantly increase your monthly benefit:

- Rent or mortgage statement
- Utility bills (electric, gas, water, phone)
- Childcare or dependent care receipts and provider information
- Medical bills or statements for members 60+ or with disabilities (for the medical deduction)
- Documentation of court-ordered child support you pay to someone outside the household

## 4.4 Situation-Specific Documents

- Non-citizens: Immigration documents (Green Card, visa, refugee resettlement paperwork)
- Students: Class schedule or enrollment verification from your institution
- Disabled individuals: Physician's letter, SSI award letter, or other medical documentation
- Work exemption claims: Letter from a doctor, social worker, DV advocate, shelter, or treatment provider
- Recently incarcerated: Release paperwork from the facility

### **Tip: Apply First, Gather Documents Second**

Submit your application as soon as possible to establish your application date. Benefits are generally backdated to that date if approved — not to the date you finished submitting documents. DHR will send you a notice specifying what additional verification is needed. Do not wait until every document is in hand.

## Section 5: Step-by-Step Application Process

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### Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Before applying, get a rough estimate. You can:

- Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at [snapbenefitscalculator.com/alabama](https://snapbenefitscalculator.com/alabama)
- Call your county DHR office directly (find it at [dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact](https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact))
- Contact Alabama 211 (dial 211) to connect with a local benefits navigator or nonprofit

### Step 2: Choose Your Application Method

Method	How / Contact / Notes
Online (Recommended)	<a href="https://mydhr.alabama.gov">mydhr.alabama.gov</a> — create a free account, complete the application, and upload documents. Application is automatically routed to your county DHR office. Available 24/7.
In Person	Visit your county DHR office. Find your office at <a href="https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact">dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact</a> . Bring all documents. Best for complex situations or same-day expedited screening.
By Mail or Fax	Download the application at <a href="https://mydhr.alabama.gov">mydhr.alabama.gov</a> (English and Spanish available). Mail or fax to your county DHR office. Slower than online; confirm receipt.
Through a Designated Representative	If you cannot apply yourself, you may authorize someone outside your household who knows your situation to apply and be interviewed on your behalf. This is documented on the application form.

### Step 3: Complete the Application

The application will ask for:

- Names, dates of birth, and Social Security Numbers for all household members
- Current address and residency information
- Income sources for all household members (employed and self-employed)
- Monthly expenses — rent, utilities, childcare, medical costs
- Citizenship and immigration status
- Work history and current employment status
- Any existing program participation (TANF, Medicaid, SSI, unemployment)
- Household members who live with you but are not part of your SNAP household (e.g., they buy and prepare food separately)

## Step 4: Attend Your Interview

After submitting your application, DHR will send you a notice with an interview appointment. The interview is mandatory and is typically conducted by phone, though in-person interviews may be scheduled for some cases.

### **Tip: Do Not Miss Your Interview**

Missing the scheduled interview is one of the most common reasons applications are denied. If you cannot make the scheduled time, contact your county DHR office immediately to reschedule. Missing the appointment without rescheduling typically results in denial and requires a new application, resetting your application date.

## Step 5: Provide Requested Verification

After the interview, DHR may request additional documents. You will receive a written notice specifying exactly what is needed and the deadline. Submit documents through your MyDHR online account, in person, by fax, or by mail to your county DHR office.

### **Tip: Monitor Your MyDHR Account Regularly**

DHR sends notices, requests, and interview schedules through your MyDHR online account and by mail. Check both regularly. A missed notice in either place means a missed deadline — which means denial. Keep your mailing address and phone number updated in the system.

## Step 6: Receive a Decision

DHR must process standard applications within 30 days of receipt. If approved, you will receive a notification and an Alabama EBT card by mail. Benefits are loaded monthly to that card. Your EBT card works at authorized retailers nationwide, not just in Alabama.

If denied, you have the right to appeal within 90 days. See Section 7.

## Emergency / Expedited Processing (7-Day)

You may qualify for expedited processing — EBT card issued within 7 days — if your household meets any of these criteria:

- Gross monthly income is less than \$150 AND liquid assets (cash, checking/savings) are less than \$100
- Combined monthly income and liquid assets are less than your monthly rent or mortgage plus utilities
- A migrant or seasonal farmworker with liquid assets under \$100

Ask specifically about expedited processing when you apply, especially if applying in person. If you are in crisis, visit your county DHR office and request expedited processing directly.

## Section 6: Special Situations and Common Barriers

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### 6.1 Experiencing Homelessness

You do not need a permanent address to apply for SNAP in Alabama. DHR accepts:

- A shelter address (with staff confirmation)
- A transitional or temporary housing address
- A signed statement from a non-relative (a case manager, outreach worker, church staff, or neighbor) confirming your location, with their address and phone number

If you cannot receive mail, ask a shelter, nonprofit, or trusted community contact if they can receive DHR correspondence on your behalf. Alabama 211 (dial 211) can connect you with local organizations that specialize in helping people experiencing homelessness navigate benefits.



#### **For Nonprofits: Address Documentation for Unhoused Clients**

Organizations can help clients establish a valid address by providing a signed letter on organizational letterhead confirming: the individual is known to the organization, the approximate area where they are staying, and contact information for the organization. This satisfies the address verification requirement in most DHR cases.

### 6.2 SSI Recipients — Simplified Application

SSI recipients have a streamlined path to SNAP in Alabama. SSI recipients can apply for SNAP at their local Social Security office — a separate visit to DHR is not required. This is a significant convenience for elderly and disabled applicants who may have mobility limitations.

### 6.3 People With Disabilities or Elderly Household Members

Households where all members are 60+ or have disabilities qualify under more favorable rules:

- No gross income test applies — only the net income limit at 100% FPL
- Additional medical expense deduction for out-of-pocket costs over \$35/month
- No cap on the shelter deduction (unlike other households)
- Simplified recertification procedures may be available

Disability does not need to be formally adjudicated by Social Security. A letter from a treating physician or licensed clinical social worker documenting a condition that limits employment is generally sufficient to claim a work exemption.

## 6.4 Students

Students enrolled at least half-time in higher education face additional eligibility requirements. You must meet at least one of these exceptions:

- Work 20 or more hours per week (average of 80 hours/month)
- Participate in a federal or state work-study program
- Care for a dependent child under age 6
- Care for a dependent child ages 6–11 when adequate childcare is unavailable
- Receive TANF benefits
- Enrolled in school as part of a SNAP employment and training program

Part-time students (fewer than half the normal full-time credit load) are generally not subject to the student restrictions.

## 6.5 Mixed-Status Households

If some household members are U.S. citizens or qualified non-citizens and others are not eligible, the eligible members can still receive SNAP. DHR will calculate benefits based only on the eligible members. Do not assume ineligibility for the whole household without applying.

## 6.6 Drug Felony Convictions

As noted in Section 1, Alabama has fully opted out of the federal drug felony ban. Anyone with a drug felony conviction who otherwise meets income and eligibility requirements can receive SNAP with no additional conditions attached.

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

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Most people who lose SNAP in Alabama do not lose it because their income changed. They lose it because of a procedural failure. Here are the most common causes:

### **The Most Common Reasons SNAP Benefits Are Cut Off in Alabama**

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

SNAP is not permanent. Certification periods last 6–12 months for most households (longer for some elderly/disabled households). DHR sends a notice before your period ends, but many people miss it. Prevention: Set a personal calendar reminder 60 days before your certification end date. Check your MyDHR account monthly.

#### **2. Failing to meet work requirements or document an exemption**

ABAWDs who do not work 80 hours/month and do not claim a valid exemption are cut off after 3 months. Prevention: If you believe you qualify for any exemption (disability, pregnancy,

caretaker status, student status, homelessness, recent release from an institution), claim it in writing with supporting documentation at application and at every renewal.

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

DHR sends notices by mail and through your MyDHR online account. Not responding leads to denial or case closure. Prevention: Keep your mailing address and phone number current in the DHR system. If you move, update your address immediately. Check MyDHR online regularly even if you think everything is fine.

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

You are generally required to report certain changes (a new job, someone moving in or out, income increases above a threshold) within 10 days. Failure to report can result in overpayments, which DHR will attempt to recoup, and may lead to case closure or disqualification.

### 5. Changes in immigration or citizenship status

The OBBBA removed eligibility for many non-citizen categories effective July 4, 2025. Individuals in affected categories had their benefits terminated. If you are a non-citizen and recently lost benefits, contact Legal Services Alabama or another legal aid organization to verify whether your category was affected and whether any appeal rights apply.

## Your Right to Appeal

If DHR denies your application, reduces your benefits, or closes your case, you have the right to request a Fair Hearing (appeal). Key points:

- You must request the hearing within 90 days of the date on your notice
- If you request a hearing within 10 days of a notice reducing or terminating benefits, your current benefits may continue while the appeal is pending (called “continued benefits”)
- Hearings are typically conducted by phone
- You may represent yourself or have an advocate, legal aid attorney, or trusted person assist you

To request a hearing, contact your county DHR office in writing or by phone, or submit a written request to: Alabama DHR, 50 N. Ripley St., Montgomery, AL 36130. Note your case number and the date of the decision you are appealing.

## Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Alabama DHR (State Office)	334-242-1310   <a href="http://dhr.alabama.gov">dhr.alabama.gov</a> General SNAP information, policy questions, escalation of county-level issues
MyDHR Online Portal	<a href="http://mydhr.alabama.gov">mydhr.alabama.gov</a>

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
	Apply online, upload documents, track your case, renew benefits
County DHR Offices (Apply In Person)	<a href="http://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact">dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact</a> Find your local office by county. Apply, submit documents, request expedited processing
Alabama 211	Dial 211   <a href="http://211connectsalabama.org">211connectsalabama.org</a> Connect with local food banks, benefits navigators, housing, and emergency services
Alabama Career Center (ABAWD Work Program)	<a href="http://alabamaworks.com">alabamaworks.com</a> Employment and training programs to meet ABAWD work requirements
Legal Services Alabama	<a href="http://legalservicesalabama.org">legalservicesalabama.org</a>   1-866-456-4995 Free legal help with SNAP denials, reductions, overpayments, and fair hearings
Alabama Appleseed Center	<a href="http://alabamaappleseed.org">alabamaappleseed.org</a> Advocacy and legal support on benefits issues, particularly for low-income individuals
SNAP E&T Program (via DHR)	Contact your county DHR office Employment and training to help SNAP recipients meet work requirements and advance careers
Social Security Administration (SSI-SNAP)	<a href="http://ssa.gov">ssa.gov</a>   1-800-772-1213 SSI recipients can apply for SNAP at their SSA office without a separate DHR visit

### **A Final Note: The System Is Navigable With the Right Information**

Alabama’s SNAP program has genuine strengths — a 200% FPL income threshold, no asset test for most households, no drug felony ban, and no asset limits — that make it more accessible than many applicants realize. The barriers that trip people up are almost always procedural: missed interviews, undocumented exemptions, missed renewals, and unreported changes. The most effective strategy is to apply early, document everything, report deductions proactively, monitor your DHR account consistently, and treat every notice from DHR as time-sensitive. For advocates and nonprofit staff, the highest-value support you can provide is deadline tracking, exemption documentation, and helping clients understand that a denial is not always final.

*This guide was compiled using information from the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), 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 current rules at [dhr.alabama.gov](http://dhr.alabama.gov) or by contacting your county DHR office.*