

Rhode Island 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 • 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 RI DHS at dhs.ri.gov or healthyrhode.ri.gov.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Rhode Island it is administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS). Benefits are issued monthly through a Rhode Island EBT Card accepted at authorized grocery stores, farmers markets, and major online retailers including Amazon and Walmart.

Rhode Island uses 185% FPL through BBCE with no asset test and has fully lifted the drug felony ban. Rhode Island has historically maintained a statewide ABAWD waiver — verify current status. RI DHS administers SNAP through the HealthyRhode portal. Rhode Island's Community Partner Exemption is a notable feature that allows trained community organizations to submit exemption documentation on behalf of recipients who cannot work. The SNAP Eat Well Be Well Pilot Rewards Program ends June 30, 2026.

Rhode Island SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 185% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households
- Full drug felony ban lift — no conditions or requirements
- Historically statewide ABAWD waiver — verify current status with DHS

- Community Partner Exemption: trained community organizations can file exemption forms for recipients who cannot work
- SNAP Eat Well Be Well Pilot Rewards Program ends June 30, 2026
- HealthyRhode portal (healthyrhode.ri.gov) and mobile app for applications and case management

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Rhode Island. 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 RI DHS 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

Rhode Island uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. RIW (Rhode Island Works — RI's TANF) recipients are categorically eligible. Rhode Island's 185% FPL places it alongside Arizona,

Maine, and Vermont, and slightly below neighboring Connecticut and Massachusetts (200% FPL).

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

Rhode Island 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 | \$2,413 | No limit* | \$1,255 | \$292 |
| 2 | \$3,267 | No limit* | \$1,699 | \$536 |
| 3 | \$4,121 | No limit* | \$2,144 | \$766 |
| 4 | \$4,974 | No limit* | \$2,589 | \$994 |
| 5 | \$5,828 | No limit* | \$3,034 | \$1,155 |
| 6 | \$6,682 | No limit* | \$3,478 | \$1,386 |
| 7 | \$7,536 | No limit* | \$3,923 | \$1,532 |
| 8+ | +\$854/person | No limit* | +\$445/person | +\$177/person |

* Elderly/disabled households have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. Rhode Island uses BBCE at 185% FPL — below neighboring CT and MA (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: \$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
- 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

Rhode Island Deduction Note

Rhode Island has seen significant housing cost increases in Providence, Warwick, and coastal communities. For households near the 185% FPL ceiling, the excess shelter deduction can be decisive. Rhode Island winters drive heating costs — always claim the Standard Utility Allowance. The state also operates a Restaurant Meals Program for elderly, disabled, and homeless recipients — ask your DHS caseworker if this applies to your household.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most Rhode Island BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 185% FPL face a \$4,500 asset limit. Primary home and one vehicle are always exempt.

Section 3: Work Requirements

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 RI Department of Labor and Training / SNAP E&T (managed by LISC RI)
- 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. Rhode Island has historically maintained a statewide ABAWD waiver — meaning work requirements have generally not been enforced in the state.

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.

Rhode Island ABAWD Note

Rhode Island has historically maintained a statewide ABAWD waiver. Contact DHS at 1-855-697-4347 or visit dhs.ri.gov to confirm the current waiver status. If work requirements are enforced in your area, the Community Partner Exemption is a unique Rhode Island resource — trained community organizations can submit exemption documentation on your behalf if you cannot work. Contact DHS or a local community partner for guidance on this exemption pathway.

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 HealthyRhode (healthyrhode.ri.gov), by phone, or in person at your RI DHS office. Submit documentation before your benefit period runs out.

Section 4: Required Documents

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 Rhode Island 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 — especially heating bills (given New England winters, the Standard Utility Allowance is often significant)
- 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

Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at snapeligibilitycalculator.com, call 1-855-697-4347, or visit your local RI DHS office.

Step 2: Apply

| Method | Details |
|---------------------|---|
| HealthyRhode Online | healthyrhode.ri.gov — apply for SNAP, Medicaid, and other DHS benefits. Also available as the HealthyRhode mobile app. Recommended. |
| Phone | Call 1-855-697-4347 (Mon–Fri) or your local DHS office. |
| In Person | Visit your local DHS office. Find locations at dhs.ri.gov/office-locator . |
| By Mail | Download paper application from dhs.ri.gov ; mail to your local office. |

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, RI DHS 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

RI DHS 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

6.1 Experiencing Homelessness

You do not need a permanent address to apply. RI DHS 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

Rhode Island has fully lifted the federal drug felony ban. Individuals with any drug-related felony conviction are fully eligible for SNAP if they meet income and other standard requirements — no additional conditions, treatment requirements, or drug testing 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 Community Partner Exemption — Unique to Rhode Island

Rhode Island's Community Partner Exemption allows trained and registered community organizations to submit exemption documentation to DHS on behalf of SNAP recipients who are unable to work but may struggle to navigate the exemption documentation process themselves. This is particularly valuable for recipients with mental health conditions, disabilities, or other barriers that make it difficult to gather and submit documentation independently. If you believe you qualify for an exemption but cannot easily document it, contact a local community organization — social service agencies, food pantries, healthcare providers, and advocacy organizations can be registered Community Partners. Contact RI DHS at dhs.ri.gov for a current list of registered Community Partner organizations.

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

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 RI DHS 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 Rhode Island Legal Services (rifreehelp.org, 1-800-662-5034) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

| Resource | Contact / What They Help With |
|-----------------------------|---|
| RI DHS SNAP Line | 1-855-697-4347 dhs.ri.gov |
| HealthyRhode Portal | healthyrhode.ri.gov — apply, manage benefits, upload documents |
| DHS Office Locator | dhs.ri.gov/office-locator — find your local DHS office |
| RI Community Food Bank | rifoodbank.org 401-942-6325 — statewide food resources and SNAP outreach |
| SNAP E&T (LISC RI) | Contact DHS at 1-855-697-4347 — workforce training for ABAWD compliance |
| Rhode Island 211 | Dial 211 ri211.org — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation |
| Rhode Island Legal Services | rifreehelp.org 1-800-662-5034 — free legal help with SNAP appeals |

A Note on Navigating Rhode Island's System

Rhode Island's 185% BBCE, statewide ABAWD waiver history, and Community Partner Exemption make it one of the more recipient-friendly SNAP programs in New England despite the lower 185% FPL threshold (vs. CT and MA at 200%). The Community Partner Exemption is Rhode Island's most distinctive feature — advocates should ensure their organizations are registered as Community Partners if they serve populations with work-related barriers. The Eat Well Be Well program ends June 30, 2026 — clients benefiting from it should be informed before that date.

This guide was compiled using information from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS), 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 dhs.ri.gov or healthyrhode.ri.gov or by contacting your local office.