

West Virginia 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 WV DoHS at dhhr.wv.gov or 1-800-642-8589.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

West Virginia uses 200% FPL through BBCE with no asset test and has a modified drug felony ban. A purchase restriction on soda — including diet and zero-calorie varieties — became effective January 1, 2026. West Virginia has the highest drug overdose death rate of any state in the nation, creating a significant intersection between SNAP eligibility and substance use treatment programs. West Virginia has historically maintained statewide ABAWD waivers based on high unemployment — verify current status. WV PATH is the state's online benefits portal.

West Virginia SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 200% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households
- ACTIVE January 1, 2026: All soda (including diet and zero-calorie) restricted; energy drinks, sports drinks NOT restricted

- Modified drug felony ban: eligible if complying with sentence terms
- Highest drug overdose death rate in the nation — SNAP + treatment program intersection is significant
- Historically statewide ABAWD waivers due to high unemployment — verify current status
- WV PATH (dhr.wv.gov) for online applications and case management

ACTIVE PURCHASE RESTRICTION — Effective January 1, 2026

Soda (all types): Regular, diet, and zero-calorie sodas are restricted — the restriction explicitly includes diet and zero-calorie varieties. The restriction is limited to carbonated soda beverages only.

NOT restricted: Energy drinks, sports drinks (Gatorade, Powerade), flavored sparkling water, 100% juices, coffee, tea, and all other non-soda beverages remain fully eligible.

Compared to other states: West Virginia's restriction is narrower than Florida (which also bans energy drinks, candy, and prepared desserts) but notable for explicitly including diet sodas.

Your benefit amount does NOT change. This is a 2-year USDA demonstration pilot through December 31, 2027. For details: bfa.wv.gov/bfa-programs/snap

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in West Virginia. 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 WV DoHS 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

West Virginia uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. WV Works (West Virginia's TANF program) recipients are categorically eligible.

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

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

HHSize	Gross Limit	Elderly/DisabledGross Limit	Net Limit(100% FPL)	Max MonthlyBenefit
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. West Virginia 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: \$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

West Virginia Deduction Note

West Virginia's coal and manufacturing economy creates significant income volatility. Workers in extractive industries should report income drops promptly — a decrease can immediately increase benefit amounts. High home heating costs in the mountainous regions of eastern and southern West Virginia make the Standard Utility Allowance especially significant. Out-of-pocket costs for substance use treatment — for households with an elderly or disabled member — may qualify for the medical expense deduction if they exceed \$35/month.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most West Virginia 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

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 WorkForce WV Career Centers
- 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. West Virginia has historically maintained statewide ABAWD waivers based on high unemployment rates.

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.

West Virginia ABAWD Note

West Virginia has historically been one of the states most likely to obtain and maintain statewide ABAWD waivers due to persistently high unemployment — particularly in coal-dependent southern counties. Contact WV DoHS at 1-800-642-8589 or visit dhr.wv.gov to confirm the current status of any ABAWD waiver. If no statewide waiver is in effect, WorkForce WV Career Centers offer approved employment and training activities. If you are in recovery from substance use, participation in a licensed treatment program is an ABAWD exemption — document it in writing with your treatment provider.

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 WV PATH (dhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/fca/WVPATH), by phone, or in person at your WV DoHS 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 West Virginia 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 — or claim the Standard Utility Allowance if higher)
- 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 1-800-642-8589, or visit your local WV DoHS office.

Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
WV PATH Online	dhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/fca/WVPATH — apply online, upload documents, manage benefits. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-800-642-8589 or your local DHHR county office.
In Person	Visit your local DHHR county office. Find locations at dhr.wv.gov/office-locator .
By Mail	Download application from dhr.wv.gov ; mail to your local county office.

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, WV DoHS 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

WV DoHS 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. WV DoHS 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

West Virginia has a modified drug felony ban. Individuals with drug felony convictions may receive SNAP if they are in compliance with the terms of their sentence, including any required substance abuse treatment and supervision conditions. Given West Virginia's high rates of substance use disorder, this is a particularly important and common situation. Bring documentation of treatment program participation or probation/parole compliance when applying. West Virginia's SNAP Employment & Training program can coordinate with substance use treatment providers.

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 Substance Use, Recovery, and SNAP Eligibility

West Virginia has the highest drug overdose death rate of any state in the United States, driven by the opioid crisis. Many West Virginians in recovery — or actively struggling with substance use disorder — interact with the SNAP system. Key points: Participation in a licensed drug or alcohol treatment program is an ABAWD exemption — document it in writing with your treatment provider. If you have a drug felony conviction, SNAP eligibility requires compliance with sentence terms including any required treatment — bring documentation. Out-of-pocket treatment costs for eligible household members (60+ or disabled) may qualify for the medical expense deduction. The Prevention Resource Center (preventionresource.com) and DHHR's Office of Drug Control Policy (dhhr.wv.gov/office-of-drug-control-policy) can connect individuals in recovery with both treatment resources and benefits navigation support.

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 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 WV DoHS 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 Mountain State Justice (msjlaw.org, 304-344-3905) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
WV DoHS SNAP Line	1-800-642-8589 dhhr.wv.gov
WV PATH Portal	dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/fca/WVPATH — apply, manage benefits, upload documents
DHHR County Office Locator	dhhr.wv.gov/office-locator
Purchase Restriction Info	bfa.wv.gov/bfa-programs/snap — details on soda restriction and eligible items
WorkForce WV Career Centers (E&T)	workforcewv.org — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Facing Hunger Food Bank	facinghunger.org 304-523-6029 — Huntington area and southern WV
Mountaineer Food Hub	mountaineerfoodhub.org — central WV food access
West Virginia 211	Dial 211 — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation
Mountain State Justice	msjlaw.org 304-344-3905 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

A Note on Navigating West Virginia's System

West Virginia's 200% BBCE and no asset test make it accessible, but the soda restriction (including diet sodas — narrower but more inclusive of diet varieties than most states) and the substance use context are the most operationally significant features for advocates to understand. The opioid and substance use crisis intersects directly with SNAP eligibility — treatment program participation is an ABAWD exemption, and drug felony compliance requirements are frequently relevant. Verify ABAWD statewide waiver status at every recertification. For recovery-focused organizations: understanding how treatment program participation protects SNAP eligibility is essential advocacy knowledge.

This guide was compiled using information from the West Virginia Department of Human Services (DoHS), Bureau for Family Assistance (BFA), 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 dhr.wv.gov or dhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/fca/WVPATH or by contacting your local office.