

# Maine SNAP BENEFITS

## A Plain-Language Navigation Guide

*Known in Maine as: Food Supplement Program*

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 Maine DHHS OFI at [maine.gov/dhhs/ofi](http://maine.gov/dhhs/ofi) or [mymaineconnection.gov](http://mymaineconnection.gov).

## Section 1: What Is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Maine it is called "Food Supplement Program" and is administered by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office for Family Independence (OFI). Benefits are issued monthly through the Maine Pine Tree Card accepted at authorized grocery stores, farmers markets, and major online retailers including Amazon and Walmart.

Maine uses 185% FPL through BBCE with no asset test and has fully lifted the drug felony ban. SNAP is called the Food Supplement Program and benefits are issued on the Pine Tree Card. Maine DHHS expanded ABAWD work requirements in September 2025 under the OBBBA, making it important for more Mainers to document work hours or exemptions. Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards programs extend SNAP purchasing power at farmers markets. The My Maine Connection portal handles applications and renewals.

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

- 185% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households
- SNAP called 'Food Supplement Program'; EBT card is the 'Pine Tree Card'
- Full drug felony ban lift — no conditions or requirements
- ABAWD rules expanded September 2025 — more Mainers now subject to work requirements
- Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards: SNAP matching programs at farmers markets statewide
- My Maine Connection ([mymaineconnection.gov](http://mymaineconnection.gov)) for online applications and case management

## Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

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### 2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Maine. 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 Maine DHHS OFI 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

Maine uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. This places Maine alongside Arizona, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont at 185% FPL — higher than the federal 130% floor but below neighboring New Hampshire (200%).

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

### Maine 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. Maine uses BBCE at 185% 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

### **Maine Deduction Note**

Maine's cold winters and heating oil dependence make the Standard Utility Allowance especially significant. Heating oil costs in rural Maine — particularly in Washington, Aroostook, Piscataquis, and Somerset counties — can be substantial. Always claim the SUA and note any LIHEAP heating assistance received, which may trigger the highest SUA tier. Rural Maine households with significant distances to grocery stores may also have travel-related deductions.

## **2.5 Asset Limits**

For most Maine 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**

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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 Maine CareerCenters / SNAP Employment & Training program
- 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. Maine expanded ABAWD work requirements in September 2025 under the OBBBA. DHHS screens all SNAP recipients for ABAWD status and exemptions before starting the 3-month clock.

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.

### **Maine ABAWD Note**

Maine DHHS is required to screen all recipients for ABAWD exemptions before starting the 3-month time limit. If any exemption applies to you (disability, pregnancy, homelessness, recent institutional release, domestic violence), report it to OFI as soon as possible — call 1-855-797-4357. Maine CareerCenters and the SNAP E&T program offer qualifying training and employment activities. Some rural Maine areas may have ABAWD waivers based on local unemployment — verify with your local DHHS office. Maine Equal Justice ([maineequaljustice.org](http://maineequaljustice.org)) has current, up-to-date ABAWD guidance for advocates.

## **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 My Maine Connection ([mymaineconnection.gov](http://mymaineconnection.gov)), by phone, or in person at your Maine DHHS OFI 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 Maine 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

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## Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at [snapeligibilitycalculator.com](https://snapeligibilitycalculator.com), call 1-855-797-4357, or visit your local Maine DHHS OFI office.

## Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
My Maine Connection Online	<a href="https://mymaineconnection.gov">mymaineconnection.gov</a> — apply, check eligibility, track status, renew benefits. Available 24/7. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-855-797-4357 (Mon–Fri) or your local DHHS district office.
In Person	Visit your local DHHS district office. Find locations at <a href="https://maine.gov/dhhs/locations">maine.gov/dhhs/locations</a> .

Method	Details
By Mail	Download application from <a href="http://maine.gov/dhhs">maine.gov/dhhs</a> ; mail to your local district office.

### Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, Maine DHHS OFI 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

Maine DHHS OFI 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. Maine DHHS OFI 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

Maine has fully lifted the federal drug felony ban. Individuals with any drug-related felony conviction are fully eligible for the Food Supplement Program 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 Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards

Maine operates two programs that extend SNAP purchasing power for fresh produce. Maine Harvest Bucks matches SNAP EBT spending on Maine-grown fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets — up to \$20 per market visit. Farm Fresh Rewards provides similar matching at participating farmstands and farm shares (CSAs). Both programs effectively double fresh produce purchasing power and are available at markets and farms statewide. Visit [getrealmaine.com](http://getrealmaine.com) or contact Maine Farmland Trust for participating location information. These programs are particularly valuable in rural counties where fresh produce can be expensive.

# 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 Maine DHHS OFI 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 Pine Tree Legal Assistance ([ptla.org](http://ptla.org), 207-774-8211) or Maine Equal Justice ([maineequaljustice.org](http://maineequaljustice.org)) for free legal assistance.

## Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Maine DHHS OFI SNAP Line	1-855-797-4357   <a href="http://maine.gov/dhhs/ofi">maine.gov/dhhs/ofi</a>
My Maine Connection Portal	<a href="http://mymaineconnection.gov">mymaineconnection.gov</a> — apply, manage benefits, upload documents
DHHS District Office Locator	<a href="http://maine.gov/dhhs/locations">maine.gov/dhhs/locations</a>
Maine CareerCenters (E&T)	<a href="http://mainecareercenter.com">mainecareercenter.com</a> — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Good Shepherd Food Bank	<a href="http://gsfb.org">gsfb.org</a>   207-782-3554 — Maine's largest hunger relief organization
Maine Equal Justice	<a href="http://maineequaljustice.org">maineequaljustice.org</a> — SNAP advocacy, ABAWD guidance, legal help
Maine Harvest Bucks	<a href="http://getrealmaine.com">getrealmaine.com</a> — farmers market SNAP matching program
Pine Tree Legal Assistance	<a href="http://ptla.org">ptla.org</a>   207-774-8211 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

### A Note on Navigating Maine's System

Maine's 185% BBCE, no asset test, and full drug felony ban lift make it accessible, and the ABAWD expansion in September 2025 is the most significant recent change. Maine Equal Justice and the DHHS ABAWD Q&A Resource (May 2026) are the best current references for work requirement guidance. Maine Harvest Bucks and Farm Fresh Rewards are underutilized tools that meaningfully extend fresh produce purchasing power. For advocates: screen every client for ABAWD exemptions immediately, help document exemptions in writing, and promote produce matching programs at farmers markets.

*This guide was compiled using information from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office for Family Independence (OFI), 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 [maine.gov/dhhs/ofi](http://maine.gov/dhhs/ofi) or [mymaineconnection.gov](http://mymaineconnection.gov) or by contacting your local office.*