

Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin DHS at dhs.wi.gov or access.wisconsin.gov.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

Wisconsin's SNAP program is called FoodShare and uses 200% FPL through BBCE with no asset test. Wisconsin has a modified drug felony ban with possible drug testing requirements. FoodShare is one of Wisconsin's most-used public assistance programs, serving over 800,000 residents per month. ACCESS Wisconsin handles online applications. Wisconsin's SNAP Employment & Training (FSET) program is mandatory for ABAWDs and offers job training, resume help, and job search support. Wisconsin winters drive significant heating costs that make utility deductions valuable.

Wisconsin SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- SNAP called 'FoodShare' in Wisconsin; benefits on the Wisconsin Quest Card
- 200% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households

- Modified drug felony ban: eligible with treatment and compliance — drug testing may be required
- FSET (FoodShare Employment & Training): mandatory E&T for ABAWDs; voluntary for others
- County and tribal ABAWD waivers may apply in some areas — verify with local DHS office
- ACCESS Wisconsin (access.wisconsin.gov) for online applications and case management

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Wisconsin. 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 Wisconsin 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

Wisconsin uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. FoodShare is administered through county and tribal agencies across all 72 counties.

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

Wisconsin 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. Wisconsin 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

Wisconsin Deduction Note

Wisconsin's cold winters make the Standard Utility Allowance especially valuable for reducing net income. If you pay any heating or cooling bill separately from rent, always claim the SUA rather than actual bills if the SUA produces a larger deduction. Wisconsin's dairy and

agricultural communities should also note that farm equipment and machinery used for business purposes are not counted as assets under BBCE.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most Wisconsin BBCE-eligible FoodShare households, there is NO asset test. Farm equipment and agricultural assets used for business are not counted. 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 Wisconsin Job Center network
- 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. Wisconsin enforces ABAWD rules in areas without active waivers.

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.



Wisconsin ABAWD Note

Some Wisconsin counties and tribal agencies may have ABAWD waivers based on local unemployment conditions — contact your local DHS office or tribal agency to verify current waiver status. Wisconsin's FSET (FoodShare Employment & Training) program is MANDATORY for ABAWDs and offers job training, resume help, and job search support. If you

are subject to ABAWD rules, you will be automatically referred to FSET. Enroll promptly — participation in FSET satisfies the ABAWD work requirement and maintains your eligibility.

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 ACCESS Wisconsin (access.wisconsin.gov), by phone, or in person at your Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 as soon as possible to lock in your application date — benefits are generally backdated to that date if approved. Your caseworker will notify you of any additional documents needed.

Section 5: Step-by-Step Application Process

Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at snapeligibilitycalculator.com, call 1-800-362-3002, or visit your local Wisconsin DHS office.

Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
ACCESS Wisconsin Online	access.wisconsin.gov — apply for FoodShare, Medicaid, and other benefits in one application. Available 24/7. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-800-362-3002 or your local county DHS office.
In Person	Visit your local county or tribal DHS office. Find locations at dhs.wi.gov/office-locator .
By Mail	Download application from dhs.wi.gov ; mail to your local county DHS office.

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, Wisconsin 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

Wisconsin 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. Wisconsin 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

Wisconsin has a modified drug felony ban. Individuals with drug felony convictions may receive FoodShare benefits if they are in compliance with the terms of their sentence and any required substance abuse treatment. Wisconsin is one of a small number of states that uses drug testing as part of its modified drug felony ban — you may be required to submit to drug testing and produce negative results to maintain eligibility. Contact your local DHS office or Wisconsin DHS at 1-800-362-3002 for specific guidance on your conviction history and what compliance documentation is required.

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 FSET — FoodShare Employment & Training

Wisconsin's FSET (FoodShare Employment & Training) program is mandatory for ABAWDs and a valuable voluntary resource for other FoodShare recipients who want employment assistance. FSET offers job search assistance, resume writing, skills training, and work experience programs. Participation in FSET counts toward the ABAWD 80-hour monthly requirement. For non-ABAWDs, participation is voluntary but can help advance employment goals. Contact your county DHS office or call 1-800-362-3002 to connect with FSET services in your area.

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. Check county/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 Wisconsin 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 Legal Action of Wisconsin (legalaction.org, 414-278-7722) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Wisconsin DHS FoodShare Line	1-800-362-3002 dhs.wi.gov
ACCESS Wisconsin Portal	access.wisconsin.gov — apply, upload documents, manage benefits
County/Tribal DHS Office Locator	dhs.wi.gov/office-locator
Wisconsin Job Centers (E&T)	jobcenterofwisconsin.com — employment training resources
Hunger Task Force (Milwaukee)	hungertaskforce.org 414-777-0483 — Milwaukee area food resources
Second Harvest Foodbank (Madison)	secondharvestmadison.org 608-223-9121 — south-central Wisconsin
Wisconsin 211	Dial 211 211wisconsin.org — food banks, emergency resources
Legal Action of Wisconsin	legalaction.org 1-414-278-7722 — free legal help with FoodShare appeals

A Note on Navigating Wisconsin's System

Wisconsin's FoodShare program (SNAP) with 200% BBCE and no asset test is very accessible. The modified drug felony ban with drug testing is the most significant restriction — advocates working with justice-involved populations should understand that compliance and drug testing are both required, not just one or the other. FSET is Wisconsin's most important ABAWD resource — enrollment is mandatory for ABAWDs and should be initiated as early as possible. Wisconsin's county and tribal ABAWD waivers are worth verifying, particularly in rural northern Wisconsin and tribal areas.

This guide was compiled using information from the Wisconsin Department of Health 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.wi.gov or access.wisconsin.gov or by contacting your local office.