

Hawaii 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 Hawaii DHS at humanservices.hawaii.gov or 1-855-643-1643.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

Hawaii uses a Hawaii-adjusted 200% FPL through BBCE with no asset test and has fully lifted the drug felony ban. Hawaii is one of only two U.S. jurisdictions (along with Alaska) where SNAP income limits and benefit amounts are set separately from the 48 contiguous states, adjusted upward for Hawaii's significantly higher cost of living. A single person in Hawaii can receive up to \$517/month in SNAP benefits — compared to \$292 in the continental U.S. Hawaii has historically maintained statewide ABAWD waivers. The Hi'ipuka program matches SNAP spending on fresh local produce at participating markets.

Hawaii SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 200% Hawaii-adjusted FPL income limit — higher than mainland states, no asset test

- HIGHEST SNAP BENEFITS IN THE NATION: single person up to \$517/month (vs. \$292 mainland)
- Full drug felony ban lift — no conditions or requirements
- Historically statewide ABAWD waiver — verify current status
- Hi'ipuka program: SNAP spending matched on fresh local produce at participating markets
- Island-specific food access: online SNAP grocery ordering (Amazon) is especially important for neighbor island households

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Hawaii. 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 Hawaii 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

Hawaii uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of Hawaii's adjusted Federal Poverty Level — which is significantly higher than the mainland FPL to account for Hawaii's cost

of living. There is no asset test for most households. Hawaii's adjusted income limits and benefit amounts are set separately from the 48 contiguous states.

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

Hawaii 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	\$3,312	No limit*	\$1,655	\$517
2	\$4,481	No limit*	\$2,241	\$953
3	\$5,650	No limit*	\$2,827	\$1,366
4	\$6,820	No limit*	\$3,410	\$1,689
5	\$7,989	No limit*	\$3,994	\$1,915
6	\$9,158	No limit*	\$4,579	\$2,298
7	\$10,328	No limit*	\$5,164	\$2,540
8+	+\$1,169/person	No limit*	+\$585/person	+\$297/person

* Elderly/disabled households have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. Hawaii uses BBCE at 200% of Hawaii's adjusted FPL — higher than mainland 200% FPL figures. Benefits are also significantly higher than mainland amounts to reflect Hawaii's cost of living. 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: varies by household size (approximately \$204–\$291 for most 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



Hawaii Deduction Note

Hawaii's cost of living — particularly for housing, utilities, and food — is among the highest in the nation. High rents in Honolulu, Maui, and even rural Oahu make the excess shelter deduction especially significant. Households on the neighbor islands (Maui, Kauai, Hawaii Island, Molokai, Lanai) face additional food access challenges due to limited grocery stores and higher food shipping costs. Online SNAP grocery ordering (Amazon) is particularly valuable for neighbor island households.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most Hawaii BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds Hawaii's 200% FPL limit 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 Hawaii Workforce Development (labor.hawaii.gov)
- 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. Hawaii has historically maintained statewide ABAWD waivers due to economic conditions — verify current status with DHS.

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.

Hawaii ABAWD Note

Hawaii has historically maintained statewide ABAWD waivers, meaning work requirements have generally not been enforced statewide. The OBBBA's expanded work requirements may affect future waiver coverage. Contact Hawaii DHS at 1-855-643-1643 or visit humanservices.hawaii.gov to confirm the current waiver status. If work requirements are enforced in your area, Hawaii Workforce Development (labor.hawaii.gov) offers approved employment and training activities.

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 Hawaii PAIS (humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap), by phone, or in person at your Hawaii 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 Hawaii 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 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 1-855-643-1643, or visit your local Hawaii DHS office.

Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
Hawaii PAIS Online	humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap — apply online, upload documents, track your case.
Phone	Call 1-855-643-1643 (Mon–Fri) or your island's DHS office.
In Person	Oahu: DHS offices in Honolulu. Neighbor islands: contact your island DHS office. Find locations at humanservices.hawaii.gov .
By Mail	Download application from humanservices.hawaii.gov ; mail to your island DHS office.

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, Hawaii 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

Hawaii 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. Hawaii 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

Hawaii 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 treatment programs, drug testing, or compliance conditions 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 Neighbor Island Food Access and Hi'ipuka Program

Hawaii's neighbor islands — Maui, Kauai, Hawaii Island (the Big Island), Molokai, and Lanai — face unique food access challenges. Fewer authorized SNAP retailers, higher food prices due to shipping costs, and limited transportation options mean that online SNAP grocery ordering (Amazon with free delivery on orders over \$35 for EBT cardholders) is especially valuable for neighbor island households. Hi'ipuka is Hawaii's farmers market EBT matching program, providing bonus dollars for fresh locally grown produce at participating markets. The program helps SNAP recipients access nutritious local food while supporting Hawaii's farmers. Contact the Hawaii Farmers Union United or your local farmers market for participating locations.

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 Hawaii 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 Aid Society of Hawaii (legallaidhawaii.org, 808-536-4302) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Hawaii DHS SNAP Line	1-855-643-1643 humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap
PAIS Online Portal	humanservices.hawaii.gov — apply, upload documents, manage benefits
DHS Office Locator	humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/contact — find your island's DHS office
Hawaii Workforce Development (E&T)	labor.hawaii.gov — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Hawaii Foodbank	hawaiifoodbank.org 808-836-3600 — Oahu food resources
Maui Food Bank	mauifoodbank.org 808-243-9500 — Maui County food resources
Hawaii Island United Way	unitedwayhawaii.org 808-536-1951 — Big Island resources
Hawaii 211	Dial 211 211hawaii.org — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation
Legal Aid Society of Hawaii	legalaidthawaii.org 808-536-4302 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

A Note on Navigating Hawaii's System

Hawaii's SNAP program is the highest-benefit program in the nation due to cost-of-living adjustments — a single person can receive up to \$517/month compared to \$292 on the mainland. The historically statewide ABAWD waiver is the most critical item to verify at every recertification. For neighbor island advocates: online SNAP grocery ordering and Hi'ipuka farmers market matching are the most important food access tools for households far from large grocery stores.

This guide was compiled using information from the Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS), Benefits, Employment, Support Services Division (BESSD), 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 humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap or by contacting your local office.