

Delaware 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 DSS at dhss.delaware.gov or assist.dhss.delaware.gov.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

Delaware uses 200% FPL through BBCE with no asset test (except a slightly more generous \$5,000 cap for elderly/disabled households exceeding 200% FPL). SNAP is called the Food Supplement Program in Delaware, and benefits are issued on the Food First Card. Delaware is a small state with only three counties, meaning DSS offices and resources are relatively concentrated and accessible. The state reinstated ABAWD work requirements in July 2023 after COVID-era waivers ended.

Delaware SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 200% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households
- Elderly/disabled asset cap: \$5,000 (slightly more generous than most states' \$4,500)

- SNAP called 'Food Supplement Program'; EBT card is the 'Food First Card'
- Modified drug felony ban: eligible if complying with sentence terms
- Only 3 counties — DSS offices in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties
- Delaware ASSIST portal (assist.dhss.delaware.gov) for online applications and case management

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Delaware. 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 DSS 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

Delaware uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households.

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

Delaware 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 | \$2,510 | 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. Elderly/disabled households exceeding the 200% FPL gross limit face a \$5,000 asset cap (more generous than most states). 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

Delaware Deduction Note

Delaware's housing markets — particularly in the Wilmington metro and Sussex County's coastal and resort communities — have seen significant rent increases. For households near

the 200% FPL ceiling, the excess shelter deduction (rent and utilities over 50% of net income) can be an important tool for reducing countable income. Always report full housing costs.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most Delaware BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 200% FPL face a \$5,000 asset limit — slightly more generous than the \$4,500 cap in most other states. 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 Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Employment and Training
- 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. Delaware reinstated ABAWD work requirements in July 2023 after COVID-era waivers ended.

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.



Delaware ABAWD Note

Delaware has three DSS offices (New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties). Contact your county DSS office to verify current ABAWD waiver status. The Delaware SNAP Employment and

Training program provides job training and employment support that satisfies ABAWD requirements. If you received a notice about SNAP benefits and work requirements, call 1-866-843-7212 immediately — benefits can be protected if you document work or exemption before your cutoff date.

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 Delaware ASSIST (assist.dhss.delaware.gov), by phone, or in person at your DSS 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 Delaware 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 1-800-372-2022, or visit your local DSS office.

Step 2: Apply

| Method | Details |
|------------------------|--|
| Delaware ASSIST Online | assist.dhss.delaware.gov — apply online 24/7, upload documents, track your case. Recommended. |
| Phone | Call 1-800-372-2022 or your county DSS office. New Castle: 302-255-9500; Kent: 302-744-9380; Sussex: 302-703-7016. |
| In Person | Visit your county DSS office: New Castle (Wilmington), Kent (Dover), or Sussex (Georgetown). |
| By Mail | Download application from dhss.delaware.gov ; mail to your county DSS office. |

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, DSS 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

DSS 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

You may qualify for 7-day expedited benefits 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. DSS 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

Delaware has a modified drug felony ban. Individuals with drug felony convictions may receive SNAP benefits (Food Supplement Program) if they are complying with the terms of their sentence, including any required probation conditions and drug treatment programs. Bring documentation of your current compliance status when applying.

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 Sussex County and Seasonal Workers

Sussex County's agricultural industry employs significant numbers of seasonal and migrant farmworkers, particularly in poultry processing and produce harvesting. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers face unique SNAP eligibility situations — particularly regarding income averaging during non-work periods and expedited processing eligibility. If you are a migrant or seasonal farmworker with liquid assets under \$100, you qualify for expedited 7-day processing regardless of income. Contact the Food Bank of Delaware at (302) 292-1305 for SNAP application assistance and food resources across all three counties.

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 DSS 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 Community Legal Aid Society of Delaware (clasi.org, 302-575-0660) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

| Resource | Contact / What They Help With |
|---------------|--|
| DSS SNAP Line | 1-800-372-2022 dhss.delaware.gov/dss |

| Resource | Contact / What They Help With |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Delaware ASSIST Portal | assist.dhss.delaware.gov — apply, upload documents, manage benefits |
| New Castle County DSS | 302-255-9500 Wilmington area |
| Kent County DSS | 302-744-9380 Dover area |
| Sussex County DSS | 302-703-7016 Georgetown area |
| Food Bank of Delaware | fbd.org 302-292-1305 — SNAP outreach and food assistance statewide |
| Delaware 211 | Dial 211 — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation |
| Community Legal Aid Society DE | clasi.org 302-575-0660 — free legal help with SNAP appeals |

A Note on Navigating Delaware's System

Delaware's small size (three counties, three DSS offices) means the system is relatively concentrated and navigable. The 200% BBCE and no asset test make it accessible, and the \$5,000 elderly/disabled asset cap is slightly more generous than most states. For seasonal and migrant farmworkers in Sussex County: expedited processing eligibility is a critical tool, and the Food Bank of Delaware provides dedicated SNAP application assistance.

This guide was compiled using information from the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Social Services (DSS), 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 dhss.delaware.gov/dss or assist.dhss.delaware.gov or by contacting your local office.