

# Louisiana 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 changes to SNAP nationally. This guide reflects rules as of May 2026. Always verify current rules with DCFS at [dcfs.la.gov](https://dcfs.la.gov) or [cafe-cp.dcf.la.gov](https://cafe-cp.dcf.la.gov).

## Section 1: What Is SNAP?

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Louisiana it is administered by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Benefits are issued monthly through an EBT card accepted at authorized grocery stores, farmers markets, and major online retailers including Amazon and Walmart.

Louisiana uses a 200% FPL income threshold through BBCE and has eliminated the asset test for most households. As of February 18, 2026, Louisiana became one of the first states to implement purchase restrictions on soda, energy drinks, and candy under a USDA-approved 2-year demonstration waiver. Louisiana also has a modified drug felony ban and parish-level ABAWD waivers in many areas.

### Louisiana SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 200% FPL gross income limit — no asset test for most households (BBCE)
- ACTIVE February 18, 2026: Soda, energy drinks, and candy no longer purchasable with Louisiana EBT — 2-year pilot
- Modified drug felony ban: eligible if complying with sentence terms

- Parish-level ABAWD waivers in many areas — verify your parish status
- CAFÉ online portal ([cafe-cp.dcfcs.la.gov](http://cafe-cp.dcfcs.la.gov)) for applications and case management
- Text GETSNAP (no spaces) to 898-211 for application guidance

## Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

---

### 2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Louisiana. 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 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 DCFS 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

Louisiana uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level for most households. There is no asset test for BBCE-eligible households. Louisiana's BBCE applies to households qualifying for non-cash benefits such as TANF or state MOE-funded assistance.

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

### Louisiana 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. Limits update each October 1. Non-BBCE households (without TANF/MOE connection) face the standard 130% FPL limit.

### 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

#### Louisiana Deduction Note

Louisiana's homeless shelter deduction of \$190.30/month is available for households where all members are homeless with qualifying shelter expenses. This is higher than many states and can make a significant difference for unhoused applicants.

## 2.5 Asset Limits

For most Louisiana BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households exceeding 200% FPL face a \$4,500 asset limit. Standard households not BBCE-eligible face a \$3,000 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 Louisiana Workforce Commission ([louisianaworks.net](http://louisianaworks.net))
- 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. Louisiana enforces ABAWD rules in parishes without active waivers. Many Louisiana parishes have historically had waivers due to high unemployment.

ABAWDs must complete at least 80 hours per month (20 hours/week) of qualifying activity: 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.



#### Louisiana ABAWD Note

Louisiana's parish-level ABAWD waivers have covered many areas with high unemployment — particularly in rural parishes. Contact your parish DCFS office to confirm current waiver status. Louisiana's SET for Success workforce development program can help ABAWDs meet requirements through job training and placement 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 CAFÉ ([cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov](http://cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov)), by phone, or in person at your DCFS office. Submit documentation before your benefit period runs out — the agency cannot retroactively restore lost months.

## 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 Louisiana 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](https://snapeligibilitycalculator.com), call 1-888-524-3578, or visit your local DCFS office.

### Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
CAFÉ Online	<a href="https://cafe-cp.dcfslouisiana.gov">cafe-cp.dcfslouisiana.gov</a> — apply online, upload documents, manage benefits. Recommended.
Text	Text GETSNAP (no spaces) to 898-211 for guidance and application support.
Phone	Call 1-888-524-3578 (LAHelpU), Mon–Fri, 7:30 AM–6:00 PM CT.
In Person	Visit your parish DCFS office. Find locations at <a href="https://dcfslouisiana.gov">dcfslouisiana.gov</a> .

### Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, DCFS 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

DCFS 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. DCFS 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

Louisiana has a modified drug felony ban. Individuals with drug felony convictions may receive SNAP if they are complying with the terms of their sentence, including any required drug treatment programs or supervision conditions. Bring documentation of current compliance (letter from probation officer, treatment provider) 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 February 2026 Purchase Restriction — What Changed

Effective February 18, 2026, Louisiana EBT cards can no longer be used to purchase: soft drinks (carbonated nonalcoholic beverages with high-fructose corn syrup or artificial sweeteners), energy drinks (beverages with added stimulants like caffeine, guarana, or taurine),

and candy (sugary preparations in bars, drops, or pieces — including candy containing flour). This is a 2-year USDA demonstration pilot running through approximately January 2028. Your benefit amount does NOT change. All staple groceries remain eligible. Flavored carbonated water, milk-based drinks, beverages with at least 50% juice, protein bars, granola bars, and baking ingredients like chocolate chips are still eligible. For questions about specific products, call 888-524-3578 or visit [ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver](http://ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver).

**⚠ Louisiana: Purchase Restriction Effective February 18, 2026**

Your benefit amount does NOT change. Cannot purchase: soft drinks, energy drinks, candy (including candy with flour). CAN still purchase: fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, bread, 100% juices, flavored water, sports drinks, protein bars, granola bars, baking ingredients. For questions call 888-524-3578 or visit [ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver](http://ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver).

## 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 for most households. 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/parish 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 DCFS 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 Louisiana Civil Justice Center ([lcjc.org](http://lcjc.org), 1-504-529-1000) for free legal assistance.

## Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
LAHelpU Customer Service	1-888-524-3578   <a href="https://dcfs.la.gov">dcfs.la.gov</a> — Mon–Fri 7:30 AM–6:00 PM CT
CAFÉ Online Portal	<a href="https://cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov">cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov</a> — apply, upload documents, manage your case
DCFS Parish Office Locator	<a href="https://dcfs.la.gov/offices">dcfs.la.gov/offices</a> — find your local parish office
SET for Success (Workforce Dev.)	<a href="https://louisianaworks.net">louisianaworks.net</a> — E&T activities for ABAWD compliance
Purchase Restriction Info	<a href="https://ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver">ldh.la.gov/SNAPWaiver</a>   888-524-3578 — details on Feb. 2026 soda/candy restriction
Louisiana 211	Dial 211 — food banks, emergency food, benefits navigation
Louisiana Civil Justice Center	<a href="https://lccj.org">lccj.org</a>   1-504-529-1000 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

### A Note on Navigating Louisiana's System

Louisiana's 200% BBCE and parish-level ABAWD waivers make it relatively accessible despite the modified drug felony ban. The February 2026 purchase restriction is the most operationally significant change — clients need to know what they can and cannot buy before reaching the checkout. For advocates: verify parish ABAWD waiver status, explain the purchase restriction clearly, and remind clients that benefit amounts are unchanged.

*This guide was compiled using information from the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), 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 [dcfs.la.gov](https://dcfs.la.gov) or [cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov](https://cafe-cp.dcfsls.gov) or by contacting your local office.*