

Nebraska 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 DHHS at dhhs.ne.gov or accessnebraska.ne.gov.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

Nebraska uses 165% FPL through BBCE — a middle tier higher than the federal 130% floor but lower than the 200% maximum used by neighboring Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. Nebraska was the first state in the nation to implement SNAP purchase restrictions (soda/energy drinks banned January 1, 2026; candy added November 1, 2026). Nebraska also has one of the harshest drug felony SNAP rules in the country — a partial lifetime ban. Nebraska's ADC (TANF) recipients are categorically eligible and bypass standard income tests.

Nebraska SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 165% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most BBCE households
- ACTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026: Soda and energy drinks no longer purchasable with Nebraska EBT

- ACTIVE NOVEMBER 1, 2026: Candy will be added to restricted list
- CRITICAL: Nebraska has a partial lifetime drug felony ban — see Section 6.3
- ADC (Nebraska's TANF) recipients are categorically eligible — bypass income and asset tests
- ACCESSNebraska (accessnebraska.ne.gov) for online applications

⚠️ Nebraska SNAP Purchase Restrictions — Active Now

Effective January 1, 2026: Soda and energy drinks can no longer be purchased with Nebraska SNAP EBT benefits. Nebraska was the FIRST state in the nation to implement this restriction.

Effective November 1, 2026: Candy will also be added to the restricted list.

Your benefit amount does NOT change. The restriction applies to purchases made at Nebraska retailers. If you use your Nebraska EBT card in another state, that state's rules apply.

Soda/energy drink definitions: carbonated non-alcoholic beverages with sweeteners; beverages with added stimulants like caffeine or guarana.

Still fully eligible: all fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy, bread, cereals, 100% juices, water, flavored water, sports drinks, protein bars, baking ingredients.

For questions: contact DHHS at 1-800-383-4278 or visit dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Healthy-Choices-Waiver.aspx

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Nebraska. 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 Nebraska DHHS 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

Nebraska uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 165% of the Federal Poverty Level — higher than the federal 130% floor but lower than the 200% maximum used in neighboring states. There is no asset test for most BBCE-eligible households. ADC (Aid to Dependent Children / Nebraska's TANF) recipients are categorically eligible.

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

Nebraska 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	\$2,248	No limit*	\$1,266	\$292
2	\$3,041	No limit*	\$1,714	\$536
3	\$3,833	No limit*	\$2,163	\$766
4	\$4,625	No limit*	\$2,611	\$994
5	\$5,335	No limit*	\$3,059	\$1,155
6	\$6,128	No limit*	\$3,508	\$1,386
7	\$6,920	No limit*	\$3,956	\$1,532
8+	+\$792/person	No limit*	+\$449/person	+\$177/person

* Elderly/disabled households have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. Nebraska uses BBCE at 165% FPL — lower than Iowa (160% actual), Kansas, and Missouri (200%). ADC recipients skip income tests entirely. 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

Nebraska Deduction Note

Nebraska's agricultural economy means many self-employed farm households need to document business expenses carefully. SNAP counts net self-employment income (gross farm receipts minus allowable farm expenses). Detailed records of seed, equipment, fuel, and other farm expenses directly reduce countable income. Nebraska winters drive significant heating costs; the Standard Utility Allowance should always be claimed.

2.5 Asset Limits

For most Nebraska BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 165% FPL face a \$4,500 asset limit. Primary home and one vehicle are always exempt. ADC recipients have no asset test.

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 Nebraska Career Development / NCWorks
- 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. Nebraska enforces ABAWD rules statewide with no blanket waiver.

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.



Nebraska ABAWD Note

Nebraska does not maintain a statewide ABAWD waiver. Work requirements apply in all 93 counties. Nebraska Career Development / NCWorks offers employment and training programs that satisfy ABAWD requirements. If you are an ABAWD unable to find 80 hours/month of qualifying work, contact DHHS at 1-800-383-4278 to discuss available E&T options in your county.

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 ACCESSNebraska (accessnebraska.ne.gov), by phone, or in person at your Nebraska DHHS 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 Nebraska 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 1-800-383-4278, or visit your local Nebraska DHHS office.

Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
ACCESSNebraska Online	accessnebraska.ne.gov — apply online 24/7, upload documents, track your case. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-800-383-4278 (Mon–Fri) or your local DHHS office.
In Person	Visit your local DHHS office. Find locations at dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/local-service.aspx .
By Mail	Download application from dhhs.ne.gov ; mail to your local office.

Step 3: Attend Your Interview

After submitting, Nebraska DHHS 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

Nebraska DHHS 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. Nebraska DHHS 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

Nebraska has a partial lifetime SNAP ban for drug felony convictions — one of the harshest in the nation. The rules are: Distribution/sales convictions: PERMANENT lifetime ban — no path to eligibility under current Nebraska law, regardless of time elapsed or rehabilitation. Possession/use convictions: 1 or 2 felonies — eligible IF enrolled in and actively participating in a licensed, accredited treatment program. 3 or more possession/use felonies — permanently ineligible. The Nebraska Legislature passed LB 319 in 2025 to reform these rules, but Governor Pillen vetoed the bill. As of May 2026, the lifetime ban for distribution convictions and the 3-strike possession rule remain in effect. For other eligible household members who live with someone affected by this ban: the other members CAN still receive SNAP benefits — the person with the disqualifying conviction is simply excluded from the household benefit calculation.

Nebraska Drug Felony Rule — Critical Details for Advocates

Distribution/sales convictions: Lifetime ban — no path to eligibility under current Nebraska law. Possession/use convictions: 1 or 2 felonies — eligible if enrolled in and participating in a licensed treatment program. 3 or more felonies — permanently ineligible under current law. The Nebraska Legislature voted to lift portions of this ban in 2025 (LB 319), but Gov. Pillen vetoed the bill. The lifetime ban for distribution convictions and the 3-strike possession rule remain in effect. Contact Nebraska Appleseed (402-438-8853) for advocacy resources or legal guidance on this issue.

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 Purchase Restriction — What You Can and Cannot Buy

Effective January 1, 2026: Soda (carbonated beverages with sweeteners) and energy drinks (beverages with added stimulants like caffeine, guarana, or taurine) cannot be purchased with Nebraska SNAP EBT. Effective November 1, 2026: Candy will be added. Your total benefit amount does not change — only what you can purchase. Restrictions apply at Nebraska retailers regardless of where you live; if you use your EBT card in another state, that state's rules apply. Still fully eligible: all fresh/frozen produce, meat, dairy, bread, cereals, 100% juice, water, sports drinks, protein bars, granola bars, and baking ingredients including chocolate chips. For questions, visit dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Healthy-Choices-Waiver.aspx or call 1-800-383-4278.

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 Nebraska DHHS 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 of Nebraska (legalaidofnebraska.org, 402-348-1069) or Nebraska Appleseed (neappleseed.org, 402-438-8853) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Nebraska DHHS SNAP Line	1-800-383-4278 dhhs.ne.gov
ACCESSNebraska Portal	accessnebraska.ne.gov — apply, manage benefits, upload documents
DHHS Office Locator	dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/local-service.aspx
Purchase Restriction Info	dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Healthy-Choices-Waiver.aspx
Food Bank for the Heartland	foodbankheartland.org 402-331-1213 — food resources across Nebraska
Nebraska Appleseed	neappleseed.org 402-438-8853 — SNAP advocacy, drug felony ban reform, free legal help
Nebraska 211	Dial 211 ne211.org — food banks, emergency resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
Legal Aid of Nebraska	legalaidofnebraska.org 402-348-1069 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

A Note on Navigating Nebraska's System

Nebraska has two critical distinctions that advocates must know: the January 2026 purchase restriction (soda/energy drinks; candy November 2026) and the partial lifetime drug felony ban for distribution convictions. Nebraska Appleseed is the primary advocacy organization tracking both issues. The 165% BBCE is lower than neighboring states — households near the 165% FPL ceiling that would qualify in Iowa, Kansas, or Missouri may not qualify in Nebraska. For justice-involved populations: the household's other eligible members CAN still receive SNAP even if one member is disqualified.

This guide was compiled using information from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 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 dhhs.ne.gov or accessnebraska.ne.gov or by contacting your local office.