

South Carolina 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 DSS at dss.sc.gov or 1-800-616-1309.

Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

South Carolina uses the standard 130% FPL income limit and enforces an asset test. **CRITICALLY:** South Carolina is the **ONLY** state in the entire nation that enforces a **FULL LIFETIME BAN** on SNAP for people with drug felony convictions — regardless of rehabilitation, treatment completion, or time since conviction. This is a critical distinction that every advocate, nonprofit, and community organization in South Carolina must know. Other eligible household members can still receive SNAP, but the person with the drug felony conviction cannot.

South Carolina SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- Standard 130% FPL gross income limit — South Carolina does NOT use BBCE
- Asset limits: \$2,750 most households; \$3,750 for elderly/disabled households

⚠️ CRITICAL: South Carolina is the ONLY state with a full, permanent lifetime SNAP ban for drug felony convictions

- Healthy Bucks: dollar-for-dollar match on fresh produce at participating SC farmers markets
- Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) activates after hurricanes — important for coastal SC communities
- DSS Benefits Portal (benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov) for online applications

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in South Carolina. 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 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

South Carolina uses the standard federal 130% FPL gross income limit and does NOT use BBCE. Most households must pass both income tests and an asset test. Categorically eligible households (receiving TANF/Family Independence or SSI) bypass standard income and asset tests.

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

South Carolina 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	\$1,644	No limit*	\$1,266	\$292
2	\$2,226	No limit*	\$1,714	\$536
3	\$2,808	No limit*	\$2,163	\$766
4	\$3,391	No limit*	\$2,611	\$994
5	\$3,973	No limit*	\$3,059	\$1,155
6	\$4,555	No limit*	\$3,508	\$1,386
7	\$5,138	No limit*	\$3,956	\$1,532
8+	+\$583/person	No limit*	+\$449/person	+\$177/person

* Elderly/disabled households have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. South Carolina uses standard federal 130% FPL, NOT BBCE. 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

South Carolina Deduction Note

Coastal South Carolina (Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head, the Lowcountry) has seen significant rent increases from tourism-driven housing demand. Seasonal workers in these areas may have

fluctuating income — always report income drops promptly, as a decrease can increase your benefit amount that month.

2.5 Asset Limits

South Carolina HAS asset limits. Most households: \$2,750 in countable assets. Elderly/disabled households: \$3,750. Primary home, one vehicle, and retirement accounts are generally exempt.

Asset documentation needed: Bank statements (most recent month) for all checking and savings accounts. Investment account documentation if applicable.

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 SC Works Centers (scworks.org)
- 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. South Carolina enforces ABAWD rules in areas without active waivers.

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.

South Carolina ABAWD Note

Some South Carolina counties may have ABAWD waivers based on local unemployment conditions — verify with your DSS county office. SC Works Centers offer employment and

training programs that satisfy ABAWD requirements. Contact your county DSS office or visit scworks.org to find available E&T activities in your area.

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 DSS Benefits Portal (benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov) and SC PATH (apply.scpaath.sc.gov), by phone, or in person at your DSS 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 South Carolina 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

4.4 Asset Documentation

Bank statements (most recent month) for all checking and savings accounts. Investment account documentation if applicable. Primary home and one vehicle are always exempt.

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 1-800-616-1309, or visit your local DSS office.

Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
SC PATH Online	apply.scpaath.sc.gov — South Carolina's online SNAP application portal. Available 24/7.

Method	Details
DSS Benefits Portal	benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov — manage existing benefits, upload documents, renew.
Phone	Call 1-800-616-1309 or your county DSS office.
In Person	Visit your county DSS office. Find locations at dss.sc.gov/county-offices .

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 (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. 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

⚠️ CRITICAL — SOUTH CAROLINA IS THE ONLY STATE WITH A LIFETIME SNAP BAN FOR DRUG FELONY CONVICTIONS. If you have any drug-related felony conviction — regardless of when it occurred, whether you completed treatment, or how long ago the conviction happened — you are permanently ineligible for SNAP in South Carolina. This ban applies even to convictions from decades ago. However: other eligible members of your household CAN still receive SNAP benefits. Your income will be excluded from the household benefit calculation, but your spouse, children, and other household members who do not have a drug felony conviction may still apply and receive benefits. Contact South Carolina Legal Services (1-888-346-5592) to explore whether expungement could restore your eligibility.

⚠️ For Nonprofits and Advocates: The Drug Felony Ban in South Carolina

South Carolina's lifetime drug felony SNAP ban is the only one in the nation and affects thousands of South Carolinians — particularly those who have completed their sentence and are rebuilding their lives. When working with justice-involved individuals, always flag this immediately. Explore expungement options through SC Legal Services. Ensure all other eligible household members apply even if the person with the conviction cannot.

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 Healthy Bucks Program

South Carolina's Healthy Bucks program provides a dollar-for-dollar match on fresh fruits and vegetables purchased with SNAP EBT at participating farmers markets — up to \$25 per visit. This effectively doubles purchasing power for produce and is available at markets statewide. Look for Healthy Bucks signage at farmers markets or contact your county DSS office for a list of participating markets.

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 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 South Carolina Legal Services (lawhelp.org/sc, 1-888-346-5592) for free legal assistance.

Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
DSS SNAP Line	1-800-616-1309 dss.sc.gov
SC PATH (Online Application)	apply.scpath.sc.gov — apply for SNAP
DSS Benefits Portal	benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov — manage existing benefits
DSS County Office Locator	dss.sc.gov/county-offices
SC Works Centers (E&T)	scworks.org — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Harvest Hope Food Bank	harvesthopeforsc.org 803-254-4432 — food assistance across SC
Healthy Bucks Program	Contact your county DSS or farmers market for participating locations
South Carolina Legal Services	lawhelp.org/sc 1-888-346-5592 — free legal help; drug felony expungement guidance
SC 211	Dial 211 — food banks, emergency food, benefits navigation

A Note on Navigating South Carolina's System

South Carolina's most critical distinguishing feature is the permanent lifetime drug felony SNAP ban — the only one in the nation. Every nonprofit and advocacy organization in South Carolina

working with justice-involved populations must know this. Other household members are still eligible and should be encouraged to apply. For advocates: help clients understand the drug felony ban clearly, explore expungement options through SC Legal Services, check county ABAWD waiver status, and promote Healthy Bucks at farmers markets to stretch produce purchasing power.

This guide was compiled using information from the South Carolina Department 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 dss.sc.gov or benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov or by contacting your local office.