

# Ohio 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 ODJFS at [jfs.ohio.gov](http://jfs.ohio.gov) or [benefitsnow.ohio.gov](http://benefitsnow.ohio.gov).

## Section 1: What Is SNAP?

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

Ohio uses a 200% FPL income threshold through BBCE with no asset test — among the most accessible states in the Midwest. Ohio has fully lifted the drug felony ban and calls SNAP 'Food Assistance.' The state serves over 1.3 million residents per month across diverse communities from Cleveland and Columbus to the economically distressed Appalachian counties of southeast Ohio. Benefits are delivered on the Ohio Direction Card.

### Ohio SNAP: Key Facts at a Glance

- 200% FPL gross income limit through BBCE — no asset test for most households
- Full drug felony ban lift — no conditions or requirements
- SNAP called 'Food Assistance' in Ohio; benefits on the Ohio Direction Card

- Ohio's Appalachian counties (Hocking, Athens, Meigs, Gallia, etc.) have some of the highest food insecurity rates in the state
- OhioMeansJobs Centers statewide for ABAWD work requirement compliance
- Ohio Benefits portal ([benefitsnow.ohio.gov](https://benefitsnow.ohio.gov)) for online applications

## Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

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### 2.1 Residency

You must currently reside in Ohio. 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 ODJFS 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

Ohio uses Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. There is no asset test for most households. This makes Ohio one of the most accessible SNAP states in the Midwest — significantly more permissive than neighboring Indiana (130% FPL) or Kentucky.

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

### Ohio 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 (at least one member 60+ or disabled) have no gross income limit — only the net income limit applies. Ohio uses BBCE at 200% FPL. 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

#### Ohio Deduction Note

Ohio's Appalachian counties in the southeast — Hocking, Athens, Meigs, Gallia, and others — have some of the state's highest poverty rates and housing cost burdens relative to income. In these areas, the excess shelter deduction is often the decisive factor in both qualifying and maximizing benefit amounts. Urban areas like Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati have seen

rent increases; always report full housing costs. Ohio also has significant heating costs in winter; the Standard Utility Allowance can be very valuable.

## 2.5 Asset Limits

For most Ohio BBCE-eligible households, there is NO asset test. Savings, vehicles, and investments are not counted or verified. Exception: elderly/disabled households whose income exceeds 200% FPL face a \$4,250 asset limit. Primary home and one vehicle are always exempt.

## Section 3: Work Requirements

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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 OhioMeansJobs Centers
- 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. Ohio enforces ABAWD rules in most counties, though county-level waivers may apply in some areas with high unemployment.

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.

#### Ohio ABAWD Note

Some Ohio counties — particularly in the Appalachian southeast — may have ABAWD waivers based on high local unemployment. Contact your county ODJFS office to confirm current waiver status in your area. OhioMeansJobs Centers offer employment and training programs

that satisfy ABAWD requirements statewide. If you live in a distressed county and cannot find 80 hours/month of qualifying work, ask your caseworker specifically about geographic waivers.

### 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 Ohio Benefits ([benefitsnow.ohio.gov](https://benefitsnow.ohio.gov)), by phone, or in person at your ODJFS office. Submit documentation before your benefit period runs out — the agency cannot retroactively restore lost months.

## Section 4: Required Documents

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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 Ohio 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 is higher)
- 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

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### Step 1: Check Your Eligibility

Use the SNAP eligibility calculator at [snapeligibilitycalculator.com](http://snapeligibilitycalculator.com), call 1-866-244-0071, or visit your local ODJFS office.

### Step 2: Apply

Method	Details
Ohio Benefits Online	<a href="http://benefitsnow.ohio.gov">benefitsnow.ohio.gov</a> — apply online 24/7, upload documents, manage benefits. Recommended.
Phone	Call 1-866-244-0071 or your local county ODJFS office.
In Person	Visit your local county ODJFS office. Find locations at <a href="http://jfs.ohio.gov/county-offices">jfs.ohio.gov/county-offices</a> .
By Mail	Download application from <a href="http://jfs.ohio.gov">jfs.ohio.gov</a> ; mail to your county ODJFS office.

### **Step 3: Attend Your Interview**

After submitting, ODJFS 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**

ODJFS 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**

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### **6.1 Experiencing Homelessness**

You do not need a permanent address to apply. ODJFS 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**

Ohio has fully lifted the federal drug felony ban. Individuals with any drug-related felony conviction are fully eligible for SNAP (Food Assistance) 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 Appalachian Ohio — Special Considerations

Ohio's Appalachian region — covering approximately 32 counties in the southeast — has among the highest food insecurity rates in the state, yet also has some of the highest rates of SNAP-eligible individuals who have not applied. Key factors: many residents are self-employed or in informal work arrangements (ask about how farm and gig income is calculated); transportation to ODJFS offices can be difficult (use the Ohio Benefits online portal when possible); and county-level ABAWD waivers may be available in some Appalachian counties with high unemployment. The Ohio Benefit Bank ([ohiobenefits.org](http://ohiobenefits.org)) provides free application assistance across the state, with particular focus on underserved rural areas.

## 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/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 and document requests.

#### 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 ODJFS 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 Columbus ([columbuslegalaid.org](http://columbuslegalaid.org), 614-224-8374) or your local legal aid organization for free legal assistance.

## Section 8: Key Contacts and Resources

Resource	Contact / What They Help With
ODJFS SNAP Line	1-866-244-0071   <a href="https://jfs.ohio.gov">jfs.ohio.gov</a>
Ohio Benefits Portal	<a href="https://benefitsnow.ohio.gov">benefitsnow.ohio.gov</a> — apply, manage benefits, upload documents
County ODJFS Office Locator	<a href="https://jfs.ohio.gov/county-offices">jfs.ohio.gov/county-offices</a> — find your local office
OhioMeansJobs Centers (E&T)	<a href="https://ohiomeansjobs.com">ohiomeansjobs.com</a> — employment training for ABAWD compliance
Ohio Benefit Bank	<a href="https://ohiobenefits.org">ohiobenefits.org</a> — free SNAP application assistance, especially in rural areas
Feeding America Ohio (Food Banks)	<a href="https://feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank">feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank</a> — find food banks across Ohio
Ohio 211	Dial 211   <a href="https://oh211.org">oh211.org</a> — food banks, emergency resources, benefits navigation
Legal Aid Society of Columbus	<a href="https://columbuslegalaid.org">columbuslegalaid.org</a>   614-224-8374 — free legal help with SNAP appeals

### A Note on Navigating Ohio's System

Ohio's 200% BBCE, no asset test, and full drug felony ban lift make it one of the most accessible SNAP states in the Midwest. The Appalachian region deserves particular attention from advocates — high food insecurity, remote geography, and lower application rates mean significant unmet need. The Ohio Benefit Bank is the most important access point for rural residents. County-level ABAWD waivers in high-unemployment Appalachian counties are worth verifying for any client in that region.

*This guide was compiled using information from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), 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 [jfs.ohio.gov](https://jfs.ohio.gov) or [benefitsnow.ohio.gov](https://benefitsnow.ohio.gov) or by contacting your local office.*