

1. The basics

The Food Stamp Program can help you buy food. If you are eligible, you'll get an "Oregon Trail Card" to use at the grocery store. Paper Food Stamp coupons aren't used any more.

You may be able to get food stamps if:

- You work and earn low wages
- You work part time
- You do not work
- You are on welfare or other programs
- You are elderly or disabled and have a small income
- You don't make enough money to feed your large family

If you qualify for the program, you'll get benefits within 30 days of turning in the first part of the application. In some cases, you can get food stamps earlier, within seven days. Be sure to tell DHS if you need to get food stamps soon or you have another kind of emergency. You can find more information on this in the next section.

2. How to apply

Get an application at the local DHS office. Fill in your name, address and signature on pages one and two. Turn these two pages in at the office right away. If your

application is approved, your first month's food stamp amount will be based on the day you turned them in.

DHS will then set up an interview with a worker. If you don't come to the interview, you can ask for another one. If you have a problem that keeps you from coming to the interview, be sure to ask DHS for help.

If you are working, be sure to let DHS know. They can plan your interview for a time when you aren't on the job.

If you need food stamps right away, you might be able to get them sooner. You can get food stamps within seven days if one of the following is true:

- You earn less than \$150 per month, and your cash and bank accounts total \$100 or less.
- The total of your monthly income, cash and money in the bank is less than your total housing and utility costs for a month.
- You are a migrant or seasonal farm worker and have very little money.

When you turn in pages one and two, DHS will see if you qualify for the seven-day food stamps. If you do, your interview will be held within a few days.

If you miss the interview, you won't be able to get your food stamps within seven days. You would have to wait the usual amount of time. Be sure to ask DHS for help with problems that keep you from coming to your interview.

If you don't have enough food to feed your family until you get your food stamps, tell DHS. They can help you get an emergency food supply.

3. The interview

Before you come to your interview, fill out the rest of the application and bring it with you. You will also need to bring:

- Your completed application form.
- Your identification (picture ID such as a driver's license is best).
- Social Security cards for everyone in your household who wants Food Stamps.
- Proof of your rent and utilities costs (copies of bills or receipts).
- Proof of your income (pay stubs).
- Proof of the amount of your assets (bank statements).
- Proof of your legal status in this country, if you are not a citizen.

If you can't bring all of this information to the interview, you'll have 30 days to turn it in. The 30 days is counted from the date you turned in

pages one and two of the application. You need to tell your worker if you have problems getting the information you need.

At the interview, the worker will ask about your housing costs, who lives with you and your income and your assets (things like cars and bank accounts).

4. Are you eligible?

After you've turned in all the information, DHS will figure out if you qualify for food stamps. If you do, you'll get an Oregon Trail Card as soon as possible. (At some offices, you'll get the card during your interview. You can use the card as soon as you find out you're on the program.)

Oregon Trail Cards are used in special card scanners at the grocery store. The card uses money from your special food stamp account. To find out how much money is in your account, you can call 1-888-997-4447. (It's a free call.)

If you don't qualify for food stamps, you'll get a "denial notice." Please read it carefully to find out about your rights.

If you think DHS made a mistake, you can:

- Ask your worker to explain the reason you were denied.
- Ask to talk to your worker's supervisor.
- Ask for a hearing about the denial. You need to ask for a hearing within 90 days of getting the denial notice. The notice will give you more information about hearings.

5. Other kinds of help

DHS offers many services that can help people on Food Stamps. DHS may be able to help you:

- Get a first job or move to a better job.
- Pay your child-care bills.
- Get medical coverage or child support.
- Get help with family problems.

To find out more about these services, ask your worker.



Equal opportunity

This is an equal opportunity program. DHS will not discriminate against anyone. This means DHS will help all who qualify. DHS will not deny help to anyone based on age, race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs or disability. Benefit decisions, hearings or any program services shall occur without discrimination. You can file a complaint if you think DHS singled you out because of any of these reasons.

If you have questions or need this document in a different format, please contact your local DHS office.

You can file a complaint if you think discrimination occurred against you in the Food Stamp Program by writing to: Director, Office of Civil Rights

USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Western Region
550 Kearny Street, Room 400
San Francisco, CA 94108
Phone: 1-888-271-5983
TDD/TTY: 1-800-735-2922

We want to give you good service.

You can help by letting us know how we're doing.

You can use the "Client Comments or Grievance" form to tell us. The forms are in the lobby of all of our offices.

Tell us what you liked or did not like about your visit with us.

Your opinion is important to us.

Your guide to



The Food Stamp Program