HOW TO APPLY FOR AND USE

BASIC FOOD BENEFITS

Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

DSHS 22-297(X) (Rev. 7/18)

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INTRODUCTION

Basic Food (federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) helps people buy groceries.

The amount of Basic Food you can receive is based on your family size, countable income, and monthly expenses such as housing, utilities, child support, and medical costs.

For an estimate of the monthly Basic Food amount you could receive, call 1-877-501-2233.

When you get Basic Food you may qualify for other programs too:

- Free or reduced school meal program;
- Special nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

If you would like more information or have specific questions about your situation, call 1-877-501-2233 or visit our website at www.washingtonconnection.org

Who can get Basic Food?

- Live in Washington State
- Have income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
- Meet citizenship or alien status requirements

Who can't get Basic Food?

- A fugitive felon
- An undocumented alien

There may be other requirements based on your family's situation.

How do I apply for Basic Food?

There are three ways to apply for Basic Food:

- Online at www.washingtonconnection.org
- In person at the local DSHS Community Service Office, or
- By mail:

  DSHS Customer Service Center
  PO Box 11699
  Tacoma, WA 98411-6699

You can request a paper application by calling 1-877-501-2233.

Complete and turn in your application as soon as you can. If you qualify, your benefits start from the date you turn in your application. We will process your request within 30 days.

What happens after I turn in my application?

Once we receive your application, you will have an interview to ensure we understand the information on the application. Interviews are held over the phone or at your local DSHS Community Services Office.

During the interview, we will:

- Explain program rules;
- Ask you questions about the information on your application;
- Ask you for proof of certain information;
- Give you a copy of your rights and responsibilities;
- Explain the purpose, appropriate use, and penalties of misuse of the Basic Food program;
- Explain anything you don't understand.

If you need help with the interview process, someone who knows your circumstances can apply and be interviewed on your behalf. This person is called an authorized representative.

What should I bring to the interview?

You must provide proof of:

- Your identity;
- Family income;
- Immigration status of any non-citizen household members, including sponsor's income and resource information if applicable.

We may also ask you to provide proof of any unclear information.

After the interview, we will give you a letter listing any proof we still need. We will help you get proof of the things we need during your interview. You will have at least ten days to provide the proof.

What happens if something changes in my household circumstances?

If your household only receives Basic Food, you need to tell us if your total gross household income goes above 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. You can tell us of the change in writing, by telephone, in person, or online at www.washingtonconnection.org. You must report the change by the 10th of the month following the month your income increased. For example, if you have a change that occurred today, you must report by the 10th of next month.

Household Size	Monthly Income Limit
1	$1,307
2	$1,760
3	$2,213
4	$2,665
5	$3,118

If your household receives other benefits in addition to Basic Food, you must report according to Washington Administrative Code 388-418-0005.

You will be told in writing how the change affects your food benefits. If you don't agree, you may talk to an eligibility worker, a supervisor, or the community services office administrator. If you still don't agree, you may ask for an administrative hearing.

If I am eligible, when will I receive my food benefits?

When you first apply, your benefits are issued after we receive all the information we need to decide you are eligible.

- On average, we approve applications for eligible households in about 10 days.
- Nearly half of all applications are approved in less than six days.

After your initial Basic Food amount is issued to you, the day of the month you receive your Basic Food won't change. The specific day your food benefits are available is printed on your approval notice.

Your benefits are available on weekends and holidays, and any benefits you have not spent by the end of the month are carried over to the next month.

How long will I receive Basic Food?

When you are eligible for the Basic Food Program you will receive a letter from us that tells you:

- If you are eligible;
- How many months in your certification period; and
- The amount of food benefits you will receive.

Half way through your certification period (six months for most households) you will receive a Mid-Certification Review to complete. We use the report to update information about you, the people in your home, your household income, and certain expenses. This is to make sure you are receiving the correct benefit amount. You can also complete the review over the phone.

About 45 days before your Basic Food is set to expire you will receive a notice with an Eligibility Review form to fill out if you still want food benefits.

Complete and return the Eligibility Review form to:

DSHS Customer Service Center
PO Box 11699
Tacoma, WA 98411-6699

We will send you a letter to have an interview over the phone or in your local DSHS Community Services Office. You must complete this interview to find out if you are eligible to receive more food benefits.

Does the Department have a Non-Discrimination Policy?

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write:

USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

What is the Washington EBT QUEST card?

The Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system is a safe, convenient, and easy way for you to get your food benefits each month.

- You must use the card to get your benefits.
- The card works similar to an ATM card, but the food benefits on it can only be used to buy food.
- Your benefits will be put in an account set up for you.
- Your benefits can only be used with your secret personal identification number (PIN)

What is an EBT PIN?

Every time you use your card, you must enter 4 secret numbers. These numbers are called a:

PIN (Personal Identification Number)

**** = PIN (4 secret numbers)

These are the ways to get a PIN:

- If you get your card at your local DSHS office you will choose your PIN at that time.
- If the card is sent to you through the mail – you must call Customer Service to choose your new or replacement PIN.

Don't throw it away! You need these 4 numbers and your card to get your benefits.

Don't write your PIN on your card and don't share your PIN with anyone not in your household! Keep your PIN in a safe place and not in the same purse or wallet as your card.

If you lose your card or it is damaged, the PIN is still good. A replacement card will have the same PIN. The PIN won't change unless you ask that it be changed.

What is an alternative card holder?

You may choose someone else to help you use your benefits. This person is called an alternate card holder.

The Alternate Card Holder

- Is chosen by you.
- Will receive their own Washington QUEST card and PIN at a local DSHS office
- Will be able to spend your benefits.

If you choose someone to be your alternate card holder, choose a person you trust. Remember, lost or stolen benefits won't be replaced. For more information or to get an authorization form, call 1-877-501-2233.

When should I call EBT customer service?

EBT Customer Service
1-888-328-9271

TTY State Relay Number
1-800-833-8388

Braille TTY State Relay Number
1-800-833-6385

Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week toll free when:

- You need to know the balance in your food or cash account.
- Your card is lost, stolen, or damaged.
- You want to hear your last 10 transactions for your cash or food benefit account.
- You want a replacement card or PIN by mail.

Customer Service Representatives can also help you:

- Find a place nearby where you can use your card.
- Get a 2-month history of your transactions.
- Report problems with ATMs.
- If you speak a language other than English.

What can and can't I do with my EBT card and benefits?

Misuse of your Washington QUEST card is a state and federal crime!

Appropriate Use

You or a member of your household may use your Basic Food benefits to buy food items such as:

- Breads and cereals
- Fruits and vegetables
- Cheese, milk, and other dairy products
- Meats, fish, poultry, and eggs
- Most other food Items that are not sold as prepared hot foods
- Seeds and plants that produce food

Illegal Use

It is not legal to:

- Use food benefits on your EBT card for any purpose other than to buy food for eligible household members.
- Exchange your food benefits for anything of value (trafficking). Examples of illegal trafficking include exchanging food benefits for cash, anything other than buying food from an authorized retailer.
- Give your benefits to anyone who is not in your Basic Food household.
- Use Basic Food benefits to buy non-food items such as household supplies, vitamins, medicine, pet food, tobacco, or alcohol.

Penalty for Illegal Use

- Disqualified and lose your benefits for at least one year and up to a lifetime. The disqualification continues even If you move to another state.
- Subject to fines.
- Subject to legal action, including criminal prosecution. DSHS will cooperate with state, local, and federal prosecuting authorities to prosecute trafficking Basic Food or SNAP benefits.

Use your benefits on time

Your food assistance benefits are intended to meet the current needs of your household.

We may cancel the Basic Food in your account if you don't use any within 365 days.

Q: Can you use your EBT card out of state?

A: The Washington QUEST card is accepted nationwide at retailers participating in the EBT program. Look for the QUEST sign or check with the store before trying to use your QUEST card. Stores that sell food may or may not participate as providers of cash benefits.

Q: Can you return a purchase made with your card?

A: Yes! For example: if milk you just bought is spoiled, you can bring the spoiled milk and the receipt back to the store. Your food account is credited for the return. You will not receive cash for the return if the item was purchased using your food benefits.

Q: Can I get cash back from the food benefits on my EBT card?

A: No. Any food benefits you haven't used at the end of the month are available in the next month.

Q: If I move out of state, can I keep receiving Basic Food?

A: Basic Food is for Washington residents only. You will need to call the customer service center at 1-877-501-2233 to close your case so you can apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in the state where you now live. You can still use the benefits that were issued on your EBT card while you lived in Washington.

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Take a Fresh Look

Basic Food

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