

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE PROGRAM SUMMARY (FORMERLY KNOWN AS FOOD STAMPS)

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is a federal food assistance program that provides low-income families assistance to supplement their household income in order to purchase the food they need for a nutritionally adequate diet. Benefits are issued via Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (EBT cards) to eligible households.

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is the state terminology for the program. The federal term is Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The federal agency that oversees the state's administration of the program is the USDA. The State of NC uses a county administered and state supervised model for administering benefit programs and services.

Applications must be completed and determined eligible or ineligible within 30 days from the date of application. Households are screened to determine if they meet the criteria for expedited FNS benefits. If determined to be eligible for expedited/emergency service, the household is entitled to receive benefits within 7 days from the date of application. If the household needs an EBT card because they do not have one already, applications must be authorized no later than 4th/25th days respectively.

All active cases that have been determined eligible to receive FNS benefits are assigned a certification period. This period is either 6 months or 1 year depending on household composition and at the end of that certification period the household must complete a recertification. The recertification is a review completed by the client and used by the Eligibility Worker to determine if the household continues to be eligible for FNS and if any adjustment needs to be made to the eligible benefit amount based on any changes in circumstance that may have occurred.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for FNS is determined by taking many factors concerning the household circumstances into consideration. The primary items that are taken into consideration to make the initial determination concerning a household's eligibility are: income, household composition, citizenship/immigration status and resources.

1. **Income:** A household may be eligible for FNS if the household has a total income that falls below the appropriate gross income limits for their household size. Eligibility workers determine which income limit applies to the household based on information obtained during the application interview.

2. **Household Composition:** Some individuals must participate in FNS as one household even though they purchase and prepare their meals separately. If one of the following applies to the household, the household cannot claim separate household status and must participate as one household:

- Individuals living together who purchase/prepare their food together
 - Spouses living together or individuals representing themselves as a married couple
 - Individuals under 22 living with a parent
 - Individuals under 18 under the parental control of a non-parent adult living in the home
 - Two unmarried adults living in the same home who are parents of a mutual child
3. **Citizenship/Immigration Status:** All individuals receiving FNS benefits must be US Citizens or immigrants admitted to the United States under a specific immigration status.
4. **Resources:** Some households may be subject to a resource test.
- Households may have \$2,250 in countable resources
 - Households may have \$3,250 if at least one person is age 60 or older or disabled
 - Certain resources are not counted, such as homes, buildings and land
 - Other resources such as money in checking or savings accounts, cash on hand, etc. are countable if the household is determined to be subject the resource test

The full FNS Policy Manual can be located at:
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/ei-30/man/>