

Nutrition Assistance Programs

Contributors:

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this module, you will be able to:

1. Describe currently available nutrition assistance programs
2. Explain who may be eligible to receive nutrition assistance
3. Explain what foods are allowed on nutrition assistance programs



SNAP

SNAP is the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, a federally funded assistance program, which is overseen by the USDA but run by the individual states. In 2011, this program served more than 45 million people, or 1 in 7 Americans.

SNAP was previously known as "Food Stamps," but SNAP benefits are now received via an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. Paper food stamps are no longer used. Each month, benefits are wirelessly transferred to the recipient's account. Cash benefit programs, such as the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, can also be used with the same card for ATM withdrawal. SNAP benefits are not cash benefits.

SNAP benefits can only be used at authorized retailers, including supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores and farmer's markets. The program allows recipients to purchase food items, or plants and seeds that will produce food. However, alcohol, tobacco, pet food, and hot prepared food are not eligible for SNAP benefits.





Controversial "Foods"

There is some controversy about allowable purchases, since snack foods such as chips, crackers and cookies, and high sugar beverages such as soda and juice are covered by SNAP benefits. The rationale is that it would be too administratively expensive to restrict SNAP benefits to healthful foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. You can read more about this controversy [here](#), and you can also read the rebuttal from USDA.

SNAP Eligibility

Eligibility is based on household size, assets, income and certain living expenses such as rent, child care, and heating/cooling. There is an eligibility calculator available on-line. If someone is eligible, it will automatically take them to an application form. There are also easier to use, paper applications available for seniors. To explore the MA SNAP Website, go to: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/snap/>



Monica is a 30 year old single mother of two children Manuel and Darby, ages 9 and 12 respectively. All three are US citizens. She is currently living in East Boston with her kids, paying \$1200 in rent for a 1 bedroom apartment. She also must pay heating, cooling and electricity, which can run up to \$200 a month. Monica works at a local sub shop, earning \$500 per week. She is not receiving child support from the father of her children. Using the SNAP eligibility tool, is Monica eligible to receive SNAP benefits? If so, how much?

WIC: Women, Infants & Children

WIC is a Federal grant program, not an entitlement program, and it is widely regarded as one of the most successful social programs. Each year, Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding for the program. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service administers the program and allocates funding to the state WIC agencies to pay for WIC foods, nutrition education and administrative costs.

This program provides supplemental food, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women as well as infants and children up to age five who are determined to be at nutritional risk. From 1996-2011 the allocated for WIC was sufficient to provide for all eligible applicants. In 2009, 15 million women and children were eligible to participate in the WIC program.

WIC benefits include:

- Personalized nutrition information
- Referral services
- Breastfeeding support
- Health screenings
- Educational workshops
- Checks to buy healthy foods



WIC Approved Foods

- Cereals
- Whole grain bread
- Tortillas
- Brown Rice
- Juice
- Cheese
- Milk & Soy Milk



- Beans
- Fruits & Vegetables (fresh, frozen, and canned)
- Baby Food

WIC Eligibility Criteria

- Categorical: Pregnant, Post-partum or Breastfeeding mothers, and children up to age 5
- Residential: State Residency to receive benefits from that state
- Income: 100-185% of the poverty line
- Nutrition Risk: determined by a health professional, via medical or dietary based criteria
 - Example: iron deficiency anemia (medical) or poor diet history (dietary)

WIC Income Guidelines

To be eligible on the basis of income, applicants' gross income (i.e. before taxes are withheld) must fall at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. The guidelines for WIC are shown below.

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly
1	\$20,665	\$1,723	\$795	\$398
2	\$27,991	\$2,333	\$1,077	\$539
3	\$35,317	\$2,944	\$1,359	\$680
4	\$42,643	\$3,554	\$1,641	\$821
5	\$49,969	\$4,165	\$1,922	\$961
6	\$57,295	\$4,775	\$2,204	\$1,102
7	\$64,621	\$5,386	\$2,486	\$1,243
8	\$71,947	\$5,996	\$2,768	\$1,384
Each additional family member	+\$7,326	+\$611	+\$282	+\$141

Application to WIC

Detailed information about applying to WIC can be found [here](#).

WIC offices are located throughout the Massachusetts. Potential applicants can call 1-800-WIC-1007 to set up an appointment. Applicants should bring the following to the appointment:

- Proof of current household income for all members of your household (Pay stubs within 30 days, letter from employer, or proof of participation in Medicaid, MassHealth or SNAP)
- Proof of Massachusetts residence (Utility bill, rent or lease agreement, bank statement, bank book/checkbook, ID)

card/license, or postmarked mail at that address)

- Proof of Identity (Driver's License, birth certificate, MassHealth card, Social Security card)

School Lunch Program

The School Lunch program is a federally-funded meal assistance program that provides nutritionally balanced meals at reduced or zero cost to students in public and non-profit schools as well as residential child care institutions. In 2010, this program provided meals to over 31 million children each school day.

Schools that choose to take part in the School Lunch Program receive cash subsidies and USDA foods from the USDA for each meal that is served. In exchange, the school must serve lunches that meet Federal Requirements, and must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children.

School Lunches must meet the nutrition recommendations set out by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Meals should contain no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories from fat, with less than 10 percent coming from saturated fat. Meals must also supply one third of the Recommended Daily Allowances for calories, protein, iron, calcium, Vitamin A and Vitamin C. Schools may use their discretion regarding specific foods and methods of preparation.

School Lunch Program Eligibility

Any child who attends a participating school may purchase a meal through the School Lunch Program. Children of families at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals, and those between 130-185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced cost meals, where students can be charged no more than 40 cents per meal. Children with families above 185 percent pay full price for meals, but schools must operate their meal program as a non-profit program.

Schools send home meal applications at the beginning of each school year, however, children can sign up for the program at any time throughout the year. The school must supply an application upon request. If a family is receiving SNAP benefits, the child will automatically qualify for free school lunches.

Food Pantries

Food pantries are located in the community, typically in churches, community centers, and senior centers, and they provide free food to those who have a verified need (e.g., on Medicaid or supported by the Department of Transitional Assistance [DTA]). There are usually restrictions on the frequency of use by a family. Most of the food is provided by a food bank, and there are guidelines regarding nutritional quality; most do not accept "junk" food

Find a Food Pantry: <http://www.foodpantries.org/>

The Boston Medical Center Preventive Pantry

Families can visit the BMC food pantry twice per month and receive 3-4 days worth of food for their household each time. The BMC food pantry also provides perishable goods, such as fruits, vegetables and meats all year round. These are costly items, and often lacking in a low-income family's diet. In 2011, the Preventive Food Pantry served over 6,700 patients and their families each month.

This is also a therapeutic food pantry. If needed, food is provided that is appropriate for someone on a special diet. For example, patients with diabetes will be provided a carbohydrate controlled diet. A prescription from a physician is needed for a patient to receive food from the pantry. The Pantry Manager is a Registered Dietetic Technician, and is qualified to determine what foods are appropriate for specific therapeutic diets.



The BMC food pantry also has a Demonstration Kitchen, run by a Chef/Registered Dietitian. The Demonstration Kitchen educates patients on ways to prepare foods that will complement the therapeutic diet as prescribed by their physician.

To learn more visit: <http://www.bmc.org/nutritionresourcecenter/foodpantry.htm>

Two Dollars a Bag Program

This is a local Boston nutrition program that provides produce to patrons for a donation of \$2. The produce is supplied from surplus stocks from wholesale vendors, such as farms, trucking companies, and the New England Produce Center. Selection varies from day to day, and the truck changes location in the city throughout the day.

There are no eligibility or application requirements.



Fair Foods' TWO-DOLLAR-A-BAG SITES



CAMBRIDGE

St. Paul's Church
29 Mt. Auburn St
(Near Harvard Sq. Red Line)
Please arrive early to get a good place in line/ticket, doors open at 9:30.
Saturdays 11:00 – 11:30 AM

DORCHESTER

Adams Templeton
455 Adams St
(Near Ashmont Red Line)
Fridays 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Bellflower Apartments
24 Bellflower St.
(17 Bus from Andrew)
Alternating Fridays 12 – 1 PM
Begins May 4

Blue Hill Boys & Girls Club
15 Talbot Ave.
(Behind Franklin Field)
Tuesdays 5 – 6 PM

Cardinal Medeiros Manor
11 Woodcliff St.
(off Blue Hill Ave.
near Grove Hall)
Alt. Thurs. 1:30 – 2:30 PM
Begins May 3

Lower Mills Apartments
2262 Dorchester Ave.
Alt. Wed. 3:30 – 4:30 PM
Begins April 25

Franklin Hill/Wayne Apts.
140 American Legion Hwy
at Franklin Hill Ave.
Alt. Wed. 1 – 2 PM
Begins May 2

Dorchester (cont.)
Codman Global Ministries
675 Washington St. at Euclid St.
Saturdays 12:30 – 2:00 PM

FIELDS CORNER

Pasciocco Development
330 Bowdoin St. at Quincy St.
(17 Bus from Andrew)
Fridays 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Cleveland Middle School
11 Charles St
(Near Fields Corner Red Line)
Thursdays 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Kelly House/Dor House
1363 Dorchester Ave.
Fridays 3:30 – 4:30 PM

Vietnamese Comm. Center
42 Charles St.
(Near Fields Corner Red Line)
Alt. Wed. 10:30 – 11:30 AM
Begins May 2

JAMAICA PLAIN

Back of the Hill Apts.
100 S. Huntington Ave.
(Near Heath St. Green Line)
Alt. Fri. 11:30 – 12:30
Begins April 27

Pond St./M.M. Collins Apts.
29 Pond St.
(off Centre St.)
2nd Tuesday of the month
2:30 – 3:30 PM

Nate Smith House
155 Lamartine St.
(Near Stony Brook Orange Line)
Alt. Wed. 11 – 12
Begins April 25

Jamaica Plain (cont.)

Amory St. Building
125 Amory St
(22 Bus toward Ruggles)
Thursdays 3 – 4 PM

Franklin Park Villa Co-Op
131 Morton St.
(16/21 Bus toward Forest Hills)
Fridays 10:30 – 11:30 AM

MATTAPAN

Simco's on the Bridge
1500 Blue Hill Ave.
(Jubilee Church)
Saturdays 3 – 5 PM

REVERE

1st Baptist Church
209 Beach St.
2nd and 4th Saturdays
of the month 11:30 – 1:00

ROSLINDALE SQ.

ABCD Headstart
Behind 19 Corinth St.
at Cohasset St.
Alt. Wed. 3 – 4 PM
Begins May 2

ROXBURY

Hawthorne Youth Center
9 Fulda St.
*Bags must be pre-ordered.
Please call Sam at (617) 427-0613
by Tues. of site week to order.
Thanks!*

Alt. Fri. 5:30 – 6:30 PM
Begins May 4

Marcus Garvey Apts.
44 John Eliot Sq.
Alt. Thurs 1:30 – 2:30 PM
Begins April 26

Roxbury (cont.)

Walnut Park Senior Bldg.
(A.K.A. the Round Building)
1990 Columbus Ave.
(19 Bus towards Fields Corner)
Fridays 5 – 6 PM

Warren Gardens
45 Walnut Ave.
(off Circuit St.)
Alt. Wed. 5:30 – 6:30 PM
Begins May 2

Whittier St. Apartments
180 Ruggles St.
(near Ruggles Orange line)
Thursdays 3:30 – 4:30 PM

SOMERVILLE

Cobble Hill Apts.
74 Washington St.
(Back parking lot
near Sullivan Sq.)
Alt. Wed. 12:30 – 1:30 PM
Begins April 25

SOUTH BOSTON

Mary Ellen McCormack
345 Old Colony Ave.
(Near Andrew Red Line/
St Monica-St Augustines)
Fridays 2:00– 3:00 PM

West Broadway Task Force
115 Orton Marotta Way
Between C & D Streets
(Near Broadway Red Line)
Tuesdays 1 – 2 PM



SOUTH END

Blackstone Park
Washington St at
W. Brookline St.
(Near Cathedral Housing)
Tuesdays 2:30 – 3:30 PM

Grant Manor
1860 Washington St.
(E. Lenox St. entrance)
Saturdays 10:30 – 12:00

St. Botolph House
70 St. Botolph St
Thursdays 1 – 2 PM

WEST QUINCY

Momissete Legion Post
84 Liberty St. (off Copeland St.)
Alt. Wed. 3:30 – 5:00 PM
Begins April 25

How Two-Dollar-a-Bag Works:

- Bring bags, we'll fill them up!
- If we're late, please wait. We're old women & old trucks!
- Wonderful vegetables and an assortment of other products!
- No ID required.
- Visit Two-Dollar-a-Bag sites often. New products are offered daily!
- Questions? Please call Site Director, Harry Moody, at (857) 312-2591.

Look for the sky-blue Signs!

Eat Healthy – Be Happy – Give

218 Adams St. P.O. Box 220168 Dorchester, MA 02122

(617) 288-6185

www.fairfoods.org

Current as of May 2012

Child Nutrition Outreach Program

The mission of the Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) is to increase participation in the National School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program. CNOP is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and administered by Project Bread. The program focuses primarily on assisting targeted low-income communities with a high percentage of children eligible for free and reduced price school meals, but assistance is available to all school districts in Massachusetts.

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program gives meals to children 18 years old and younger in eligible Massachusetts communities. This program helps children in low-income families to have a healthy summer and start the school year ready to learn.

For more information on the Summer Food Service Program, call 1-800-645-8333 or visit www.meals4kids.org. To find a meal site near you, visit www.meals4kids.org/find-summer-meal-site.

Resources

- SNAP <http://www.mass.gov/snap>
- WIC <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/food/wic/>
- School Lunch Program <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/>
- Food Pantry Finder <http://www.foodpantries.org/>
- BMC Preventive Food Pantry <http://www.bmc.org/nutritionresourcecenter/foodpantry.htm>
- Two Dollars a Bag Program http://www.fairfoods.org/index.php?page=dollar_bag.htm
- Child Nutrition Outreach Program (CNOP) <http://www.meals4kids.org>