
Public Assistance Programs is a series of publications that describe state and federal programs that provide assistance in the form of health care, income, food, housing, and child care. Each work in the series describes an individual program. Please see the list on the last page for other works in this series.

Overview

Nutrition assistance programs increase the food purchasing power of low-income households. Food Support is the largest of the nutrition assistance programs. The program is also called “Food Stamps” or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The majority of the funding is from the federal SNAP program. However, Minnesota also administers a state-funded food assistance program for certain lawfully present noncitizens who are not eligible for the federal SNAP benefits. Most food support households also receive some form of public income assistance.

In federal fiscal year 2023, the federal and state government spent \$1.2 billion on food support benefits. There were an average of 230,363 households in Minnesota that received food support. The average amount households received was about \$434 each month.

This publication focuses on the food support program but also includes information at the end on a variety of other nutrition assistance programs funded by the federal and state governments.

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Administration

Congress

Congress established the Food Support¹ program in 1964 after a series of pilot projects (including one conducted in St. Louis County) demonstrated the program's feasibility. The federal Food Support law establishes eligibility criteria, benefit calculations, work requirements, and other provisions for program funding, administration, and fraud detection.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

The Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture supervises the administration of the Food Support program nationwide. FNS establishes specific program rules and regulations, such as certification standards, the development of application forms, and the elements of the program's work requirements. FNS also must approve any request from a state agency for a waiver from program requirements.

Minnesota State Legislature

The legislature has assigned the administration of the Food Support program to the counties under the supervision of the state Department of Children, Youth, and Families. The legislature has also defined what constitutes food support theft ([Minn. Stat. § 393.07](#), subd. 10, para. (c)).

State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

DCYF supervises the administration of the Food Support program in Minnesota, including required quality control and management evaluations.

Counties

Counties administer the Food Support program. The county agency determines if a household meets federal eligibility requirements and enables DCYF to issue food support benefits directly to eligible recipients.

Eligibility Requirements

Food support assists households composed of eligible single individuals and families. Generally speaking, the basic "food support household" consists of individuals living together who purchase and prepare meals in common. (For a more detailed definition of food support household, see Additional Eligibility Requirements, on page 7.) A household qualifies for the Food Support program if it satisfies certain eligibility requirements or if its income and assets are below the program's established limits.

¹ In Minnesota, the program is referred to as Food Support. The federal program was called Food Stamps until October 1, 2008, when its new name became effective: SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Categorical Eligibility

A household composed entirely of general assistance (GA), Minnesota supplemental aid (MSA), or supplemental security income (SSI) recipients is generally categorically eligible for food support, regardless of the household's income or assets. A categorically eligible household may, however, receive zero food support benefits if its income available for food purchases under the program's guidelines exceeds the maximum allowable food support benefit. (See the maximum allotment chart on page 11.)

A household in which at least one member of the household is receiving, is eligible to receive, or is authorized to receive Transition Year Child Care or Basic Sliding Fee child care is also generally categorically eligible for food support. To be considered categorically eligible for food support, someone in the household must apply and be determined eligible for one of these child care programs. Being on the Basic Sliding Fee child care waiting list does not meet the categorical eligibility criteria. In addition, households participating in the Diversionary Work Program are categorically eligible for food support.²

A household composed entirely of Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) recipients is also generally eligible for federally funded food support assistance. However, because MFIP combines cash assistance and food assistance in one program, MFIP recipients receive their food assistance benefits as a "food portion" of their total monthly MFIP grant, rather than receiving a cash grant and a separate food support monthly allotment. However, the two kinds of MFIP benefits (cash and food) are electronically segregated on the family's electronic benefit transfer card. This ensures that the family can only use the food portion of their MFIP benefit to purchase food items that are approved under SNAP, from a retailer that has been approved under that program.

Income Limits

Except for "categorically eligible" households, a household must have income below the maximum income limits established by Congress to qualify for food support. The income limits apply both to earned income and unearned income. Income that is received from certain sources, such as a minor child's earnings, low-income home energy assistance payments, or irregular income that is less than or equal to \$30 per calendar quarter, is excluded from the income limits.

To be financially eligible for food support, a household that is not categorically eligible and that has no elderly or disabled member must meet both a gross monthly income test and net monthly income test. ("Gross monthly income" means a household's total nonexcluded income, before any deductions have been made. "Net monthly income" means gross income minus all deductions allowed by the program.) To qualify for food support, such a household must have gross income that is at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG) and net

² The Diversionary Work Program will be repealed effective March 1, 2026 (see [Laws 2023, ch. 70](#), art. 10, § 98).

income that is at or below 100 percent of those guidelines. A household that includes someone who is elderly or disabled must meet only the net income test.

The gross and net income limits are based on family size. The limits in effect for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia beginning October 1, 2024, are shown in the table below.

The 2010 Legislature changed the food support income and asset limits so that all food support applicants and recipients must receive a Domestic Violence Brochure, and it is a mandatory part of the food support application packet. Distribution of this brochure, which is funded with federal TANF monies,³ allows the state to increase food support income limits and remove asset limits. The gross income limit for food support is 200 percent of FPG and there is no asset limit.

The pre-2010 income limit of 130 percent of FPG and asset limit of \$4,250 for elderly/disabled and \$2,750 for other food support units applies in the following situations:

- when a member of a categorically eligible food support unit has an intentional program violation
- when a member of a food support unit fails to comply with reporting requirements
- when the primary wage earner fails to comply with work requirements
- when a food support unit member is convicted of a drug-related felony

³ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant program that provides income assistance to eligible low-income families.

Food Support Income Limits
(Effective October 1, 2024)

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income 200% of FPG	Gross Monthly Income 130% of FPG	Maximum Net Monthly Income 100% of FPG	Annual Income 100% of FPG
1	\$2,510	\$1,632	\$1,255	\$15,060
2	3,407	2,215	1,704	20,440
3	4,303	2,798	2,152	25,820
4	5,200	3,380	2,600	31,200
5	6,097	3,963	3,049	36,580
6	6,993	4,546	3,497	41,960
7	7,890	5,129	3,945	47,340
8	8,787	5,712	4,394	52,720
Each additional member	897	583	449	5,380

A household's net monthly income is calculated by subtracting all of the applicable allowed deductions from the household's gross monthly income.⁴ The Food Support program permits the following deductions from gross income:

- 20 percent of any earned income
- a standard disregard of \$198 for a household size of one to three people, and higher for larger households
- out-of-pocket dependent care expenses, when the care is related to a household member's employment, training, or education
- regularly recurring medical expenses over \$35 per month (applicable only in households with an elderly or disabled member) if the medical expenses are not paid by insurance
- an excess shelter cost deduction for families who must pay more than 50 percent of their monthly income for shelter, including utilities. The maximum monthly shelter deduction is \$672 for households without an elderly or disabled member; there is no maximum for households with an elderly or disabled member.
- A standard shelter deduction for homeless households of \$179.66
- legally owed child support payments

⁴ Beginning in 2025, the Department of Revenue is allowing taxpayers to opt in to advance payments of the Minnesota Child Tax Credit. The Department of Human Services submitted a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to exclude recurring advance payments of the Minnesota Child Tax Credit when determining SNAP countable income, but the waiver request was denied.

Asset Limits

To be eligible for food support, households may have no more than \$2,750 in countable assets.⁵ Households with at least one member who is age 60 or older may have up to \$4,250 in countable assets. “Countable assets” include the following:

- cash-on-hand, savings, stocks and bonds
- property and vehicles used for recreational purposes
- the loan value of each nonexcluded licensed vehicle that is greater than \$4,650. Some vehicles may be totally excluded, if they are: used for income-producing purposes; annually producing income consistent with their fair market value; used for long-distance travel (other than daily commuting) for work; used as the home; needed for the transportation of a household member with physical disabilities; or needed to carry fuel or water to the household. If the vehicle has an equity value of no more than \$1,500, it is not counted as a resource.

“Countable assets” do not include the following:

- the value of the household’s residence; property that produces income or that is essential to the employment of a household member (such as rental homes or farmland)
- business assets
- property that is directly related to the maintenance or use of an excluded vehicle
- household goods and personal effects
- the cash value of life insurance policies
- burial plots
- disaster relief payments
- resources that have cash value that are not accessible to the household (for example, irrevocable trust funds)
- resources such as those of students or self-employed persons that have been prorated as income
- the value of certain Indian lands
- state and federal earned income tax credits
- energy assistance payments
- resources of a household member who receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or public assistance benefits
- certain types of retirement accounts including: 401(a) (employer-sponsored retirement plans for state and local government and some other tax-exempt entities including 401(k)s and Keogh plans); 403(a); 403(b); 408; 408(a) (including IRAs and Roth IRAs); 457(b); 501(c)(18)
- the value of gift cards

⁵ In Minnesota, there is no asset limit due to the provision of the Domestic Violence Brochure.

- certain IRS tax-preferred education accounts and qualified Achieving a Better Life Experience program accounts

The federal Food Support law prohibits households from transferring ownership of their assets in order to qualify for food support. Households that do so are ineligible for program benefits for a period of up to one year.

Additional Eligibility Requirements

In addition to financial need, the following conditions must be met in order for a person to be eligible for food support benefits. Food support recipients must also meet the following criteria:

- be citizens of the United States or a lawfully present noncitizen
- reside in a “household”
- register for work and fulfill job search requirements
- furnish their Social Security number to the state agency
- comply with periodic reporting requirements

Each of these requirements is discussed in detail below.

Food support recipients must be citizens of the United States or lawfully present noncitizens.

Most noncitizens, including those lawfully present in the country, were initially made ineligible for the Food Support program by the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (the federal welfare reform act). Congress subsequently restored food support eligibility for many lawfully present noncitizens in the Agriculture Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 and in the 2002 Farm Bill. Lawfully present noncitizens may be eligible to receive food support benefits if they fall into one of the following categories:

- persons lawfully residing in the United States for five or more years
- persons lawfully residing in the United States who are receiving payments or assistance for blindness or disability
- persons lawfully residing in the United States on August 22, 1996, who were 65 or older at that time
- children lawfully residing in the United States who are currently under age 18 (when a child becomes 18, the child is no longer eligible for food support under this provision)
- asylees
- refugees
- people whose deportation was withheld
- persons who are paroled into the United States for a period of at least one year
- persons who have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty in the United States by a spouse, parent, or certain other family members residing in the same household⁶

⁶ Also included in this category are noncitizens whose child or parent has been battered or subjected to battery or cruelty ([7 CFR 273.4\(a\)\(6\)\(i\)\(G\)](#)).

- American Indians born in Canada
- other noncitizen American Indian applicants who are members of a tribe whose members are eligible for programs provided by the United States
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- Amerasians from Vietnam
- Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants
- veterans or persons on active military duty (this category also includes their spouses and dependent children)
- persons who are lawfully residing in the United States and who were members of a Hmong or Highland Laotian tribe at the time the tribe assisted U.S. personnel by taking part in a Vietnam-era military or rescue operation (this category may also include their spouses or unremarried surviving spouses and dependent children)
- victims of a severe form of trafficking⁷
- lawful permanent residents who have, or can be credited with, 40 qualifying quarters of coverage under Social Security ([8 U.S.C. § 1612](#) (2001))

Food support recipients must reside in a “household.” The Food Support program generally defines a “household” as an individual or group of individuals who live together and who customarily purchase food and prepare meals together for home consumption. The program also requires certain groups to be considered to be in the same household even if they purchase food and prepare meals separately. Spouses who live together, children under the age of 22 who live with their parents, and children under the age of 18 who are under the parental control of another household member must be included in the same food support household.

There are, however, certain exceptions to these requirements. Elderly or disabled individuals can be separate households if they purchase and prepare food separately. Also, under certain circumstances, elderly persons who are unable to purchase or prepare food separately are nonetheless deemed to be separate households. Boarders and residents of most institutions are not eligible for food support regardless of how their food is purchased and prepared.

Food support recipients must register for work and fulfill job search requirements. Certain persons are exempt from work requirements. These requirements are discussed in more detail below.

Food support recipients must furnish their Social Security number to the state agency. This requirement is intended to help in the prevention of fraud and abuse.

⁷ A victim of a severe form of trafficking is a noncitizen who is forced into the international sex trade, prostitution, slavery, and forced labor through coercion, threats of physical violence, psychological abuse, torture, and imprisonment. The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 provides that victims of severe forms of trafficking are eligible for federal public assistance benefits to the same extent as a noncitizen who is admitted into the United States as a refugee. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003 also expanded eligibility for food support to the minor children and spouses of victims of trafficking and, in some cases, their parents and siblings.

Food support recipients must comply with periodic reporting requirements. Most households that receive food support must submit an income report once every six months in order to continue to receive benefits.

In addition, federal restrictions make the following persons ineligible for food support:

- postsecondary students between the ages of 18 and 50 who are physically and mentally fit and who are enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education, unless they are receiving assistance through MFIP⁸
- the head of a household who has voluntarily quit a job (ineligible for 90 days)
- households containing members who are on strike, unless the household was eligible before the strike
- undocumented immigrants or temporary residents
- most persons in institutional settings
- persons who have committed intentional program violations
- a person in a household that has been disqualified because one or more members of the household failed to comply with work requirements

⁸ Upon federal approval, students who meet certain criteria and are enrolled in a higher education institution that has been designated as a Campus-Based Employment and Training Program for Students Enrolled in Higher Education will qualify for the student exemption for SNAP eligibility. ([Minn. Stat. § 142F.103](#))

State-purchased Food Support Benefits for Certain Lawfully Present Noncitizens

The 1998 Legislature acted to provide food assistance from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, to certain lawfully present noncitizen state residents who were not eligible for federal food support. Utilizing an option made available to states in the federal 1997 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, the legislature created the Minnesota Food Assistance Program (MFAP), which provides state-funded food support benefits to lawfully present noncitizens who are ineligible for the federal Food Support program solely because of their citizenship status ([Minn. Stat. § 142F.13](#)). An example of this is lawfully present noncitizens who have resided in the United States for less than five years and do not fall into another eligibility category. MFAP recipients must meet all applicable Food Support work requirements (discussed below), or they will be subject to sanctions for failure to participate.

The 1999 Legislature made MFAP permanent. It also modified the eligibility for the program, so that effective July 1, 2000, the program would be limited to eligible lawfully present noncitizen residents who are age 50 or older. The 2000 and 2001 Legislatures each delayed the implementation of this provision, so that lawfully present noncitizen residents under age 50 remained eligible for MFAP until July 1, 2003. Beginning July 1, 2003, the program was limited to eligible lawfully present noncitizens who are age 50 or older.

Benefits

Food Support Allotment

Food support is used to purchase food and food products, excluding alcohol, tobacco, and pet food, in approved stores. Individuals over 60 (and their spouses), persons who are blind or disabled, and homeless individuals can also use food support to purchase meals in authorized restaurants. In addition, food support can be used to purchase hot foods or hot food products through nonprofit meal delivery services, at communal dining facilities, and at institutions serving meals to persons with substance use disorders, battered women and children, and homeless persons.

Food support households receive a certified allotment based on the calculation of their monthly net income. Each household's allotment is based on the "Thrifty Food Plan"—a plan developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that estimates the minimum amount of food a household needs to maintain an adequate diet. In 2021, the USDA reevaluated the Thrifty Food Plan based on current data to reflect the cost of a healthy diet.⁹ This is the first non-cost-neutral update since the Thrifty Food Plan was implemented in 1975. As a result, maximum Food Support benefits increased 21 percent more than they would have if the Thrifty Food Plan had not been reevaluated. Food support benefits are issued on a monthly basis.¹⁰

⁹ The reevaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan was directed by Congress in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-334) and by Executive Order 14002.

¹⁰ The Food Stamp Act of 1977 eliminated an original requirement that eligible households pay cash for the food stamps.

Maximum monthly food support allotments are set annually by the federal government and vary by household size. The current maximum allotments are shown below.

Household Size	Maximum Allotment
1	\$292
2	536
3	768
4	975
5	1,158
6	1,390
7	1,536
8	1,756
Each additional member	220

Emergency Aid

Households in “immediate need” must be issued food support on an expedited basis. County agencies must issue food support within five working days to the following households:

- households with less than \$150 gross monthly income and no more than \$100 in liquid assets
- destitute migrant or seasonal farm worker households with no more than \$100 in liquid assets
- households whose actual monthly housing and utility costs are greater than the total of their gross monthly income plus their liquid assets

There is no limit to the number of times a household can receive expedited benefits, as long as the household provides the county agency with certain required information before they again receive expedited benefits.

Farmers’ Markets

Federal food support benefits may be used to purchase eligible food and food products at farmers’ markets. The Minnesota Humanities Center administers the Market Bucks program in partnership with Hunger Solutions Minnesota. The program provides an incentive for federal food support recipients to buy fresh, locally grown produce and has created and sustained a network of farmers’ markets that accept federal food support benefits.

In addition, the 2015 Legislature established the Healthy Eating, Here at Home program to provide incentives for low-income Minnesotans to use federal food support benefits for healthy purchases at Minnesota-based farmers’ markets ([Minn. Stat. § 138.912](#)).

Issuance of Food Support

Food support benefits are issued directly to program recipients. Since October 1998, benefits have been issued to all Minnesota recipients in an electronic debit card format known as Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). Household members use their EBT card to access their food support benefits electronically at the point of sale (i.e., the grocery store). As part of the 1996 federal welfare reform, all states were required to move to EBT systems by October 1, 2001.

Other Food Support Program Features

Work Requirements

The federal Food Support law requires that people receiving food support benefits must register for work and participate in SNAP Employment and Training activities unless they are exempt.

The following food support recipients are exempt from mandatory registration and participation in SNAP Employment and Training:

- a person who also receives assistance under the GA, MFIP, or MSA programs
- a child under age 18
- a person age 60 or over
- a person who is ill, injured, or incapacitated and certified as unable to work
- a person whose presence in the home is required to care for a child under age six, or for an injured, ill, or incapacitated household member
- a person who receives or has applied for unemployment insurance and who is required to register for work with the state Department of Employment and Economic Development
- a person who is participating regularly in a substance use disorder treatment and rehabilitation program
- a self-employed person who is either working at least 30 hours per week, or who receives earnings that are at least equal to 30 hours a week at the federal minimum wage
- a student who is enrolled at least half-time in a recognized education program
- refugees receiving the Matching Grant Program

Each nonexempt adult member in a food support household who does not meet federal SNAP work requirements must participate in SNAP Employment and Training for each month that the household is eligible for food support. Persons who are exempt may volunteer for SNAP Employment and Training and receive SNAP Employment and Training services to the extent that funds are available.

SNAP Employment and Training participants receive an orientation and an employability assessment. An employability plan is created for each participant that is based on the participant's assessment. The employability plan must include referrals to available remedial or

skills training programs, if needed, and to available programs that provide subsidized or unsubsidized employment.

Food support recipients who are required to participate in SNAP Employment and Training but who do not cooperate with SNAP Employment and Training requirements without good cause lose eligibility for the Food Support program for themselves and, if they are the principal wage earner, for the entire food support household. The disqualification period is between one and six months, depending upon whether it is the first, second, or third failure to meet program requirements.

Under the 1996 federal welfare reform law, an otherwise eligible able-bodied adult who is between the ages of 18 and 54 and is without dependents (ABAWD) is only eligible to receive food support for three months in a 36-month period, unless the person is exempt from the time limit or is meeting the monthly work requirements. After using up these “three free months” of eligibility, in order to “earn” additional months of eligibility for food support, the ABAWD must work at least 20 hours per week (averaged monthly), or must participate in employment and training activities.

The 1997 federal Balanced Budget Act amended the ABAWD requirement to allow states to exempt 15 percent of the state’s ABAWDs who have used up their three free months of food support eligibility, so that they may continue to be eligible for food support. DHS has implemented this ABAWD exemption provision in two steps. First, effective December 1, 1997, the state exempted ABAWDs who receive assistance under the GA program from the three-out-of-36-month time limit. Second, effective September 1, 1998, the state also exempted ABAWDs who receive assistance under the Refugee Cash Assistance program from this time limit.

Funding and Expenditures

The federal government finances food support benefits. In addition, the state and counties finance the administration of food support.

During federal fiscal year 2023, the federal and state governments spent \$1,201,020,636 on food support benefits to eligible households in Minnesota. Almost all of these expenditures are for the federally funded SNAP.

Recipient Profile

Most food support households also receive some form of public income assistance.

There were an average of 230,363 Minnesota households receiving food support benefits each month during federal fiscal year 2023. Each household received an average monthly allotment of \$433.66 in food support benefits.

Other Nutrition Assistance Programs

The state administers several other nutrition assistance programs described below. Some of these programs receive federal funding and others are solely funded by the state.

In addition to these programs, the 2023 and 2024 Legislatures provided onetime funding for grants for prepared meals food relief, funding for emergency food distribution facilities, and funding for Minnesota food banks.¹¹

General Food Assistance Programs

The **Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** is a federal program that distributes U.S. Department of Agriculture food commodities to states. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families contracts with the seven Minnesota regional food banks to distribute TEFAP foods to more than 300 food shelves, Tribal food programs, on-site meal programs, and shelters. Food is distributed based on county-level poverty and unemployment data to ensure equitable distribution. In 2022, nearly 10 million pounds of food were distributed in Minnesota. TEFAP foods consist of a variety of canned and dried foods, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, meat, and dairy products.

The **Minnesota food shelf program** provides funds to food shelves and Tribes to: (1) purchase, transport, and coordinate the distribution of nutritious food to needy individuals and families; (2) purchase personal hygiene products; and (3) cover certain administrative expenses.¹² The Department of Children, Youth, and Families distributes funds to Hunger Solutions to distribute to qualifying food shelves and Tribes across the state (about 240 grantees). Food shelves are available to households with income at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Households are automatically eligible if they participate in certain public assistance programs, such as MFIP or child care assistance. In 2022, there were over 5.5 million visits made to Minnesota food shelves.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC program)** is a federally funded nutrition and education program administered by the Minnesota Department of Health through local public health or human service agencies. WIC provides supplemental food benefits, nutrition education, information and referrals to other services, and parenting support to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, or post-partum women; infants; and children up to age five. To be eligible for food benefits and services, an individual or family must have a family income at or below a certain amount or receive public assistance; be at nutritional risk; and live in Minnesota.¹³

¹¹ See [Laws 2023, ch. 70](#), art. 12, § 33, and art. 20, § 2, subd. 24, para. (i); and [Laws 2024, ch. 115](#), art. 22, § 2, subd. 9, para. (b); and [ch. 127](#), art. 53, § 2, subd. 9, para. (d).

¹² See [Minn. Stat. § 142F.14](#)

¹³ See [Minn. Stat. §§ 145.891](#) to 145.897; [145.899](#).

Food Assistance Programs for Students

The **National School Lunch Program**, first established in 1946, provides federal meal assistance to students in public and private schools. The program provides nutritional standards and funding for school lunch and breakfast programs. The federally assisted meal programs are administered by the Minnesota Department of Education under the rules established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The federal government sets reimbursement levels for each meal served based on a student's family income. Minnesota has supplemented federal school meal funds with state aid payments for many years.¹⁴

The federal government also has a program called the **Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**. CEP provides additional federal funding to schools that participate in the program. A school that participates in CEP agrees to provide all meals served at that site at no cost, regardless of the student's family income. The reimbursement is such that any school with more than 62.5 percent of free lunch eligible students has the full cost of its meals covered by the federal government. For the 2022-23 school year, a school could participate in CEP if the school had at least 40 percent of its students qualify for free meals and would receive 60 percent more funding if free meals were offered to all students. For the 2023-24 school year and later, the USDA has lowered the minimum CEP eligibility percentage from 40 percent to 25 percent.

Free School Meals for Kids. Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, Minnesota is providing additional state funding so that, regardless of income, every student attending a school participating in the federal school meals program is eligible for one free breakfast and one free lunch every school day. The state aid equals the difference between the applicable federal reimbursement rate at that school site for a free meal, as determined annually by the USDA, and the actual federal reimbursement received by the participating school for the breakfast or lunch served to the student, including any CEP reimbursements. A school site with more than 62.5 percent of its students eligible for a free meal must participate in the federal CEP program. Other school sites eligible for the CEP program are encouraged to participate in the program to leverage federal funding and reduce the cost to the state of the free school meals for kids program.

In addition, the state pays an additional state aid of 12.5 cents per student lunch served to help support school lunch programs, and 20 cents for each half-pint of milk that is served to kindergarten students outside of the breakfast or lunch programs. For more information on the nutrition programs administered by the Minnesota Department of Education, see *Minnesota School Finance: A Guide for Legislators*, November 2024.

The **Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program** is a federally funded program administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families in coordination with the Department of Education to provide low-income households with \$120 per eligible school-aged child to buy groceries during the summer months. The benefits are pre-loaded onto a Summer

¹⁴ See [Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.111](#) to 124D.119.

EBT card and may be used to purchase approved groceries at authorized retailers such as grocery stores and farmers markets.

Population-specific Programs

The Minnesota Board on Aging administers **senior nutrition services** that are funded through the federal Older Americans Act.¹⁵ Senior dining services (also referred to as congregate meals) provide nutritionally balanced meals to individuals age 60 and over, and their spouses, at various sites in the community. Home-delivered meals provide meals to homebound individuals age 60 and over in their place of residence. There is no charge for these services, but donations are requested to pay for the cost. Each year, about 21,088 individuals are served congregate meals, 23,313 are served home-delivered meals, and grocery delivery is provided to at least 70 individuals.¹⁶

The **American Indian Food Sovereignty Funding Program** is a state-funded program established by the 2023 Legislature to improve access and equity to food security programs within Tribal and American Indian communities.¹⁷ Eligible recipients of funding include federally recognized American Indian Tribes or Bands in Minnesota or nonprofit organizations or fiscal sponsors with a majority American Indian board of directors. Funds provided under this program must be used to promote food security in American Indian communities by: (1) planning for sustainable food systems; (2) implementing food security programs; (3) providing culturally relevant training for building food access; (4) purchasing, processing, producing, transporting, storing, and coordinating the distribution of food; and (5) purchasing seeds, plants, equipment, or materials to preserve, procure, or grow food.

The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** is a federally funded program providing payments for meals and snacks served at adult care centers, child care centers, family child care providers, at-risk after school care centers, and emergency shelters that is administered by the Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Agriculture sets minimum guidelines that meals and snacks must meet to be eligible for payment.

¹⁵ See [Minn. Stat. § 256.9752](#).

¹⁶ Individuals receiving services under the medical assistance waivers may also be eligible for home-delivered meals. In fiscal year 2023, 10,130 individuals received home delivered meals through the alternative care program, elderly waiver, brain injury waiver, community alternative care waiver, and developmental disabilities waiver.

¹⁷ See [Minn. Stat. § 142F.15](#).

About This Series

Public Assistance Programs is a series of publications that describe state and federal programs that provide assistance in the form of health care, income, food, housing, and child care. Each work in the series describes an individual program.

Current works in this series include:

- Overview of Public Assistance Programs
- General Assistance (GA)
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medical Assistance (MA)
- MinnesotaCare
- Subsidized health coverage through MNsure
- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- Food Support
- Housing Support

Please see the health and human services area of the House Research website for more information about these programs and related topics.

Earlier Versions

Information in the series was originally published as the *Minnesota Family Assistance: A Guide to Public Programs Providing Assistance to Minnesota Families*, which was a comprehensive guide to these programs.



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