

Food Stamp Information for Students



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Bellingham, WA 98225
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This material was funded in part by the USDA Food Stamp Program. Basic Food is available to all regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, or political belief.

What is the Basic Food Program?

The Basic Food Program, also known as Food Stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), helps increase the amount of money that people with low-income or no income have available to purchase food. It is administered through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

How does it work?

Every month, Food Stamp benefits are put directly onto an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card, which is similar to a bank card. It is used to purchase food at most grocery stores.

Where can I get help with an application?

The Opportunity Council is available to help complete applications over the phone, in our office, in your home, or wherever is convenient for you. Call (360) 734-5121 ext. 233, or 1-800-649-5121 for more information. Walk- in help is available Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. at Opportunity Council located at 1111 Cornwall Ave in Bellingham.



Income Guidelines

An individual or family must qualify under these guidelines to be eligible to receive food stamps. Effective through September 30th, 2009.* See "Documents to bring" page if you have questions about how student loans affect eligibility.

Number of Applicants	Monthly Maximum Gross Income (before taxes)
1	\$1,805
2	\$2,429
3	\$3,052
4	\$3,675
5	\$4,299
6	\$4,922
7	\$5,545
8	\$6,169
9	\$6,792
10	\$7,415
Each Additional Person	+ \$600

*Income guidelines change each year in October.

- For Basic Food, you are considered a student if you are:
 - Between the age of 18 through 49;
 - Physically and mentally able to work; and
 - Enrolled in an institution of higher education half-time or more as defined by the institution:
 - Whatcom Community College – 6 credits and above
 - Western Washington University – 6 credits and above
 - Bellingham Technical College – 6 credits and above
- If you are a student, your status as a student begins the first day of the school term and continues through vacations.

You are **Not** considered a student if:

- You graduate, are suspended or expelled, drop out, or do not intend to register for the next school term other than summer;
- You are enrolled in courses not considered higher education:
 - English as a Second Language (ESL)
 - High school completion and GED courses;
 - Courses that are not a part of the regular college program; or
- You participate in a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program contracted by a college.

If you are a student, you must meet at least **ONE of the following conditions to be eligible for Basic Food:**

- Have paid employment and be working an *average* of at least twenty hours per week;
- Be participating in a state or federal work study program (you are only eligible while you work and receive money from work study);
- Be responsible for more than half the care of a dependent person who is age five or younger;
- Be responsible for more than half the care of a dependent person who is between age six and eleven (DSHS must determine that there is not adequate child care available during the school year for you to work 20 hours a week or take part in a work study program);
- Be a single parent responsible for the care of your natural, step, or adopted child who is age eleven or younger;
- Be an adult who has the parental responsibility of child who is age 11 or younger if the child's parents or your spouse do not live in the home.

Documents to bring when submitting your application in person

- **Identification** – Bring one of the following:
 - Driver's license
 - Birth Certificate
 - School records
 - Contact information of a person outside of the household who can verify who you are.
 - Passport
 - Alien Registration Card
 - State ID

- **Proof of Income** (If you have income) Bring one of the following:
 - Pay stubs/Award letters
 - Written or verbal statement from employer
 - Bank statement showing direct deposit

Note: Educational assistance in the form of **grants or loans** issued from Title IV of the Higher Education Amendments (Title IV - HEA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (such as Pell grants, federal or state college work study, and BIA higher education grants), and grants, loans, or work study issued under any program within the Department of Education to an undergraduate student **are NOT counted into your monthly income.**

➤ **Social Security Number**

- **Proof of Living Situation** – Bring one of the following:
 - Lease/Rental agreement
 - Written statement from roommates verifying your situation
 - Statement from landlord outlining your rental agreement
 - Contact info or written statement from someone who can verify your circumstances
 - Mortgage documentation

If applying for Food Stamps **for yourself only**, and you are living with roommates with whom you do NOT buy or share food, bring:

- A written statement from roommates stating that you do not buy or prepare food together.

Options for Submitting your Application

- **Take it to DSHS**

Monday through Friday. 7:00 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.

No appointment needed. Bring a completed application and your documentation to DSHS, at 4101 Meridian St. in Bellingham. DSHS is on the #3 and #4 bus lines.

Call 1-800-735-7040 for more information.

- **Take it to Opportunity Council**

Monday through Friday. 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

No appointment needed. Take a completed application and your documentation to Opportunity Council, at 1111 Cornwall Ave in Bellingham. Call (360) 734-5121 for more information. It is a good idea to call ahead before you come in.

- **Mail It** – Mail the application to:

DSHS, Region 3 HUB Imaging Unit B37-1

P.O. Box 6057, Arlington, WA 98223-9800

If you mail your application, you will be sent a letter with a date to come into DSHS and the documentation to bring with you.

- **Complete an application online:** www.foodhelp.wa.gov/basic_food.htm

Helpful Resources

Apply for Food Stamps online!

Foodhelp.wa.gov Website

www.foodhelp.wa.gov/basic_food.htm

- Find a link to the online Basic Food (Food Stamp) Application in the right-hand column. Click on *Apply Here* and you will be redirected to the DSHS Online Services Application site. Follow the directions to complete an application online.
- If you believe you are eligible for Food Stamps, you can *estimate* the amount of Basic Food benefits you could receive by clicking on the *Benefits Estimator* link under the “Am I Eligible?” section of the page.

Northwest Community Resources Website

www.nwcommunityresources.org

- Find a link to Opportunity Council’s Resource Page here. Use this resource to find services for children, education, food, health, housing, jobs, and utilities in Whatcom County.
- Find a link to information on discounted landline telephones and cell-phone services.

Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP)

Once you are on Food Stamps you will be eligible for a discounted local telephone service (land line). After the discount is applied, it will cost \$8/month (plus tax) for basic service. Some of the connection fees may be waived.

- * Verizon (county service) 1-800-483-4000
- * Qwest (Bellingham service) 1-800-244-1111

When you call, tell them that you have a DSHS ID number and want to participate in the Washington Telephone Assistance Program program, also known as the "Lifeline Program" or "Link-up." For more info visit www.nwcommunityresources.org/communication

Administrative Fair Hearing Rights

If you disagree with any of the decisions that DSHS makes concerning your benefits such as: denial, termination, or reduction of benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing to appeal that decision. You must respond within 90 days of receiving the letter regarding the decision you wish to appeal. At the hearing you may represent yourself, choose a lawyer, or any other person of your choice to represent you. You can get free legal advice through the CLEAR legal help line at 1-888-201-1014 or attend Street Law at the Bellingham Public Library.

To request a hearing, contact your local office:

Whatcom County DSHS Community Services Office 1-800-735-7040

Or write to:

The Office of Administrative Hearings

PO Box 424890

Olympia, WA 98504-2489

If you feel that you are not receiving adequate service through the local DSHS office, you may contact the Customer Service hotline at 1-800-865-7801.