

applying for benefits who is not a U.S. citizen. For each such member, it is necessary to show an alien registration card, such as INS forms I-151, I-551, I-94, or a reentry permit.

- Social Security numbers for all household members applying for benefits. This information is required by the Food Stamp Act of 1977 as amended by P.L. 97-98. These numbers are used by local DHS offices to check the identity of household members, prevent duplicate participation, and to make mass program changes easier. They are also used in computer matching and program reviews or audits to make sure a household is eligible for Food Assistance benefits. This may result in criminal or civil action or administrative claims against persons who get Food Assistance benefits fraudulently.
- Proof of medical expenses for anyone in the household 60 years of age or older, or receiving Social Security Disability or supplemental Security Income benefits, or who is a disabled veteran or a disabled surviving spouse or child of a veteran.

In addition, bringing the following items may help to process the application faster:

- Birthdates of all household members.
- Record of child care payments.
- Record of child support payments made.

### REPORTING CHANGES

Food Assistance households will be given information on their obligation to report changes in their circumstances once their case is opened. Changes can be reported by calling or writing to the local DHS office.

### REAPPLICATION

Food Assistance households are certified for a period of one to 12 months, depending on their circumstances. Some households may qualify for a 24-month benefit period. Households are told when to reapply to be sure they will continue to get Food Assistance benefits without any interruption in their benefit period.

### HEARINGS

Any Food Assistance applicant or recipient who believes that an action taken on his/her case is not correct may ask for a hearing. This is a review of the case by a hearing official. It may be asked for by writing, calling or visiting the local DHS office, which will provide full information about hearing rules. A friend, relative or anyone else may help an applicant or recipient prepare for a hearing and may attend with him/her.

### INFORMATION

For more information about Food Assistance benefits, or to express any dissatisfaction about operation of the program, contact this local office. (County Stamp: Name, Address, and Telephone Number).



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Department of Human Services (DHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHS office in your area.

"In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Under the Food Stamp Act and USDA policy discrimination is prohibited also on the basis of religion or political beliefs.

To file a complaint of discrimination, contact USDA or HHS. 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). Write HHS, Director, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Room 506-F, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington D.C. 20201 or call (202) 619-0403 (voice) or (202) 619-3257 (TTY). USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers."

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Previous edition may be used.

# FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS IN MICHIGAN

This publication gives information about the Food Assistance Program, including: 1. Eligibility facts; 2. The application process; 3. Rights and responsibilities of persons who apply for and receive Food Assistance benefits, and 4. A telephone number to call for more information.

Esta publicación contiene información acerca del Programa de Asistencia de Alimentos, (anteriormente el Programa de Estampillas de Alimento) incluyendo: 1. Elegibilidad; 2. El proceso de la solicitud; 3. Derechos y responsabilidades de las personas que solicitan y reciben los beneficios de Asistencia de Alimento; 4. Un número de teléfono para recibir más información.



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
Department of Human Services

## WHAT ARE FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS?

Food Assistance benefits are issued into a food account using electronic technology and a debit card known as the Michigan Bridge Card.

## WHAT CAN YOU BUY WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS?

The Bridge Card is used to buy (1) any food or food product for human use, or (2) seeds and plants for use in a home garden to produce for your own use. Most grocery stores that accept the Bridge Card display the Quest logo.

You cannot buy nonfood items such as (1) soap, (2) pet food, (3) tobacco, (4) paper products, (5) alcoholic beverages, (6) hot foods ready to eat, (7) lunch counter items or foods to be eaten in the store, or (8) vitamins or medicines.

## WHO CAN GET FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS?

Any "household" that meets the income and other basic eligibility rules shown below can get Food Assistance benefits. A household may be one person or a group of people who live together and customarily buy and prepare their food together.

A person who is a boarder or lives in an institution (with some exceptions) cannot get Food Assistance benefits.

## WHAT IS EBT?

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is the way Michigan distributes Food Assistance benefits. A Michigan Bridge Card, including a personal identification number (PIN), allows access to a recipient's account.

The Bridge Card can be used at USDA-certified retailers with point-of-sale devices. Only the recipient and their authorized representative can access the EBT account.

## WHAT IS INCOME? HOW MUCH CAN A HOUSEHOLD HAVE?

Income is all money received or expected to be received by all household members. However, not all kinds of income are counted.

Total countable income within a set limit for a household's size is used to determine eligibility for Food Assistance benefits. One or more allowable income deductions may be subtracted to determine the value of the benefits the group may get.

Allowable deductions are:

- A standard deduction.
- A 20 percent deduction from any earned income.
- A deduction for any dependent care;
- A deduction for monthly medical expenses of more than \$35 (only for senior and/or disabled members or disabled veterans or disabled surviving spouses or children of a veteran).
- A deduction for shelter expenses that are more than half of household income after all other deductions are subtracted.
- A deduction for child support paid for a child outside of the household.

## WORK REGISTRATION

Unless deferred, household members age 16 through 59 must agree to participate in employment-related activities if referred. Information regarding work requirements will be given at application and review.

## FOOD ASSISTANCE TIME LIMITS

\*Special work requirements and time limits apply if you are not deferred from Food Assistance work requirements and are able-bodied (not disabled) adult who is at least 18 years old and less than 50 years old, and have no children in your household. Your specialist will give you a "Time Limited Food Stamp Notice" that explains these requirements. If you have questions, be sure to contact your specialist.

## CITIZENSHIP/ALIEN STATUS

U.S. citizens and certain lawfully admitted aliens are eligible for Food Assistance benefits.

## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Anyone has the right to apply for Food Assistance benefits. The local Department of Human Services (DHS) office will give or mail an application on the day requested. Requests can be made in person,

by phone, by mail, or by someone else who can do this for the household. The application must be completed and turned in at the local DHS office. Help will be given with this form upon request. The application will be taken when it is turned in, even if the worker cannot see the applicant on that day.

You can also apply online at <http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges>.

Each applicant must be interviewed. In most cases, the interview is conducted by telephone unless you request an in-person interview or you are applying for cash benefits also.

Eligible households will get their benefits by the 30th day after turning in the filing form and/or the application. **Those with little or no money may be able to get Food Assistance benefits within seven days.**

## SSI/FOOD ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS

Application for Food Assistance benefits may be filed at the local Social Security Administration (SSA) office if the applicant and everyone who lives and eats with him/her is applying for or receiving SSI benefits. The local SSA office will send the application to the local DHS office. The DHS office will approve or deny the application within 30 days. Contact the DHS office if a notice is not received by that time.

This service is intended to make it easier for some SSI households to get Food Assistance benefits. Anyone who wishes to do so may still apply at the local DHS office.

## INFORMATION ITEMS

Applicants should have the following items ready when they apply:

- Proof of person identification and residence in the county, such as a driver's license.
- Proof of gross income for all household members from all sources.
- Proof of house payments, insurance, and taxes; or rent payments.
- Proof of utility (gas, electric, wood, fuel oil, telephone, etc.) expenses.
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) papers for each household member

\*These requirements are temporarily suspended but you may still volunteer for assistance from the MWA.