

SNAP

Advocacy Guide

An advocate's guide to the
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program (SNAP) in Massachusetts



MLRI

MASSACHUSETTS
LAW REFORM
INSTITUTE

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SNAP ADVOCACY GUIDE

About Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) is a statewide nonprofit poverty law and policy center. Our mission is to advance economic, racial, and social justice through legal action, policy advocacy, coalition building, and public information and to promote policies that meet the fundamental needs of traditionally underserved, low-income populations. We defend against policies and actions that harm and marginalize people living in poverty and advocate for systemic reforms that achieve social and economic justice. Our activities include advice, litigation, policy analysis, research, technical assistance and public information.

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MLRI dedicates this Guide to anti-hunger advocates throughout Massachusetts who work tirelessly to help low-income households obtain the nutrition benefits to which they are entitled and who work to preserve and protect basic benefits for families in poverty.

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- Wellspring Foundation

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Introduction

SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the nation’s “first line of defense against hunger.” SNAP remains a highly effective 100 percent federally-funded program. National economists estimate that every \$1 in SNAP benefits triggers up to \$1.70 in economic stimulus to the local economy during recessionary times.

Because of pandemic boosts, during 2021 and 2022 SNAP brought over \$3 billion in federal nutrition dollars to one in seven low-income Massachusetts residents, with food purchases made at over 5,000 local grocers. However, Congress ended the boosted pandemic benefits in February 2023, and DTA issued the last extra payment for February on March 2nd.

Receipt of SNAP not only gives low-income households resources to purchase healthy food – it also triggers:

- automatic free school meals status (breakfast and lunch) for elementary and secondary school students;
- regulated utility (natural gas and electricity) discounts;
- free or reduced fees for museums and cultural events through the Mass EBT Card to Culture program;
- access to the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets, farm stands and CSAs.
- eligibility for help with internet/broadband costs and computers through the federal Affordable Connectivity Program.

During the pandemic, students K-12 who qualified for free or reduced price school meals – including all children getting SNAP – received Pandemic EBT during the summer months and for days they missed school for COVID reasons. Pandemic EBT benefits will stop after summer 2023. Starting summer 2024, certain children will be issued approximately \$120/summer through Summer EBT.

This SNAP Advocacy Guide produced by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) walks you through the core eligibility rules for SNAP including: how to apply, what proofs are needed, how much income is counted and benefits calculated, how the household composition rules work and more. It also includes advocacy tips on how to fix SNAP problems, such as inaccurate denials, inappropriate verification demands, how to file an appeal and what happens in a hearing. This Advocacy Guide tool is for low-income households, community organizations and legal services advocates.

SNAP remains a critical safety-net program in difficult economic times. It is especially important for low-income older adults and persons with disabilities to remain in the community, as a work support for low-wage families, and for homeless and unemployed individuals in economic crisis.

About the SNAP Program

Congress first created the Food Stamp Program in 1964 to reduce hunger by increasing the food-buying power of low-income households. The landmark Food Stamp Act of 1977 modernized the Food Stamp program by removing the “purchase” requirement and made other important changes that enabled more low-income households to access benefits. In 2008, Congress renamed the program to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (most states, like Massachusetts, adopted this name). SNAP was most recently reauthorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. During the Trump Administration, state and national advocates joined forces to successfully protect and defend cuts to SNAP. We thank all of the Massachusetts anti-hunger organizations for their fantastic advocacy to protect this important program!

In Massachusetts, the SNAP program is administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). Since 2015, and in collaboration with MLRI and the Massachusetts SNAP Coalition, DTA has focused its efforts on improving customer service and timely processing, lowering DTA Assistance Line wait times, improving applications and forms, and simplifying reporting rules. Between 2015 and early 2020, DTA: created a specialized Senior Assistance Office (SAO) for low-income older adults; increased the number of SNAP Outreach Partners; implemented an “Elder/Disabled Simplified Application Project” to extend SNAP certification periods and reduce burdensome reporting; created the DTACONNECT.com online platform and the DTA Connect mobile app; and overhauled SNAP application and recertification forms.

DTA’s investments in improving the SNAP infrastructure allowed DTA to quickly respond when the pandemic hit in March 2020. Between March 2020 and November 2022, the SNAP caseload in Massachusetts increased by 40 percent. When COVID-19 struck, DTA quickly implemented an option to apply by phone, caseload wide text messaging, waived interim reporting, simplified recertifying benefits, and issued SNAP “Emergency Allotments” and Pandemic EBT. MLRI is grateful that DTA robustly pursued federal options to boost benefits, improve access, and ensure continuity of benefits during the pandemic.

However, in December 2022, Congress passed and the President signed an “omnibus” Consolidated Appropriations Act to end the Emergency Allotments early (previously they were tied to state and federal public health emergency declarations). Congress did agree to fund a permanent “Summer EBT” program, but with benefits at a much lower level than under P-EBT. This Guide has been updated to reflect the changes in the SNAP Emergency Allotments.

The Massachusetts SNAP Gap

As this Guide is updated as of March 1, 2023, federal SNAP benefits continue to serve over 1 million Massachusetts residents in over 640,000 households - 1 in 7 people in the Commonwealth. The majority of SNAP recipients are older adults, persons with severe disabilities, children, and adults struggling with temporary unemployment or under employment.

The MassHealth (Medicaid) program currently serves approximately 2 million low-income Massachusetts residents. Roughly 600,000 MassHealth recipients have income below 150% FPL and are likely eligible for but not receiving SNAP. The Baker Administration took steps in July 2021 to “close the SNAP Gap” by allowing persons applying with a paper application for MassHealth and Medicare Savings Program (MSP) to apply for SNAP with a simplified “checkbox” on the form. The Administration then added the simplified checkbox to the online MassHealth Connector in July 2022. The SNAP/MassHealth application is shipped to DTA for follow up on missing information, with SNAP benefits retroactive to the date of the SNAP checkbox application. This is a game changer!

In August of 2022, the SNAP Gap/Common Apps Coalition celebrated a huge legislative victory: [Chapter 174 of the Acts of 2022](#) was signed into law on August 10, 2022, creating M.G.L Chapter 6A, Section 18AA. This law now requires the state to develop a simplified “common application” for more means-tested programs including SNAP, WIC, cash assistance, health care, fuel assistance, childcare and other critical benefits. MLRI expects the common application to be implemented under the Healey/Driscoll Administration, hopefully in early 2023.

Stay informed, get involved!

MLRI coordinates the *Massachusetts SNAP Coalition*. This is a coalition of anti-hunger agencies, health care and homelessness providers, faith-based organizations, community action programs and legal services advocates. State agency staff from DTA and the Department of Public Health, as well as USDA’s Northeast Regional Office staff frequently attend. Formed in 2000, the Coalition meets monthly, by Zoom on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Coalition members share updates on state and federal SNAP policy, child nutrition, WIC and other anti-hunger programs that affect Massachusetts households.

If you would like to receive *email updates* on SNAP and child nutrition program policy changes, announcements of Coalition meetings or trainings, and state and national legislative action alerts, contact: Pat Baker at pbaker@mlri.org or Vicky Negus at vnegus@mlri.org.

To get legal advice and representation on your individual case, contact your local Legal Services office by going to: Masslegalhelp.org/findlegalaid

Additional State and National SNAP Resources

The following national and state organizations and USDA provide a wealth of important information on SNAP program and other nutrition programs.

- Food Research Action Center: frac.org
- Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: cbpp.org
- Feeding America: feedingamerica.org
- Project Bread: projectbread.org

Sources of Law:

Federal: DTA must administer the program in accordance with laws set by Congress, the federal regulations issued by USDA, and any waivers or demonstration projects approved by USDA.

- The federal regulations are printed in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 C.F.R. § 271 et seq.).
- USDA publishes proposed, interim and final rules at the following link: fns.usda.gov/snap And you can also find USDA's policy memos and program updates the same link.

State: The DTA SNAP regulations are printed in Chapter 106 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (C.M.R.), found at Mass.gov/lists/department-of-transitional-assistance-regulations

- To sign up to get alerts when DTA proposes regulation changes for comment, go here: Mass.gov/service-details/department-of-transitional-assistance-legal-notice

DTA policy guidance: DTA issues a wide range of guidance on the SNAP and cash program policies and procedures:

- The **DTA Online Guide** has detailed information written for DTA case managers on cash and SNAP, useful for case advocacy: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/the-department-of-transitional-assistance-online-guide>
- In addition to the Online Guide, in the past, DTA issued guidance through Operations Memos or monthly Transitions newsletters. MLRI has posted DTA's older policy memos and ongoing Transitions here: Masslegalservices.org/library/directory/benefits/dta-policies-materials

Part 1

Application and Proofs

1 How do I apply for SNAP benefits?

You have the right to apply for benefits – whether or not DTA thinks you are eligible. This is a fundamental right of all Massachusetts residents and the SNAP rules require DTA to encourage individuals who inquire about SNAP to apply. [106 C.M.R. §361.130](#). DTA still needs to determine if you are eligible, but no one should discourage you from filing a SNAP application.

There is NO wrong door! You can:

- *Apply online:*
 - through [DTAConnect.com](#) on a computer or from a smartphone.
- *Apply by phone:*
 - Call the DTA Assistance Line at (877) 382-2363 and press #7 .
 - Persons age 60 or older can call the Senior Assistance Office at (833) 712-8027. See **Question 25**.
- *Apply through your healthcare application or renewal:*
 - When you apply for or renew your MassHealth or Medicare Savings Program (MSP) coverage, you can check the “apply for SNAP” checkbox, which is sent to DTA for follow up.
- *Apply in person at any local DTA office:*
 - Each DTA office *must accept* the SNAP application the same day you walk in. [106 C.M.R. §361.130](#).
 - Every local DTA office also has *special scanning equipment* for you to submit documents to your case. See **Question 15**.
 - If you go in person, the local office should screen you for expedited (emergency SNAP), do an interview (if needed), give you an EBT card and accept any forms or documents you bring in. See **Question 3** about expedited SNAP.

Part 1 ✦ Application and Proofs

- *Mail or fax in a paper application:*
 - Paper SNAP applications in multiple languages are available at [Mass.gov/SNAP](https://www.mass.gov/SNAP). See **Question 14**. If you would rather apply with a paper application than online or by phone, DTA has to mail a paper SNAP application to you the same day you ask for one. [106 C.M.R. §361.140](https://www.mass.gov/SNAP)
 - Adults 60+ can fill out a much shorter “SNAP Application for Seniors” Also available at [Mass.gov/SNAP](https://www.mass.gov/SNAP)
- Apply through a *SNAP outreach provider* by calling:
 - The Project Bread Food Source Hotline at 1-800-645-8333
 - Call a local SNAP Outreach Provider, list available here: [Mass.gov/snap-outreach](https://www.mass.gov/snap-outreach). The local Councils on Aging, as well as the Food Bank of Western MA and Greater Boston Food Bank do SNAP enrollment.

See SNAP application rights: [106 C.M.R. §361.140](https://www.mass.gov/SNAP).

Your right to apply with minimal information

You have the right to *file* a SNAP application with just your basic information - your name, address, signature and the date. [106 C.M.R. §361.130](https://www.mass.gov/SNAP). You will still need to give DTA more information later, but don't delay filing a SNAP application because you don't have all the information or proofs.

If you already have a working EBT card

The SNAP application asks if you already have a Massachusetts EBT card (from past receipt of SNAP). If you have one with your name on it that works, you can still use it once your SNAP case is approved. If you tell DTA you do not have an EBT card, DTA will mail you a card, or you can go to the local DTA Office to pick one up. See **Question 86**.

Signing the application

Your *electronic, ink, or verbal signature* is your agreement that the information you provide to DTA is truthful and accurate. When you sign the application, you agree that you understand your rights and responsibilities to follow the rules, including your obligation to report changes when required.

Your right to retroactive SNAP benefits

If you are approved for SNAP within 30 days of when you apply, you should get benefits paid *back to the date* DTA received your *signed* application. [106 C.M.R. §361.080](#). For example, this would be the date you applied by phone or online, or the date DTA received your SNAP checkbox application from MassHealth (which is typically overnight).

Cash assistance applications while applying for SNAP

If you are applying for DTA's cash assistance benefits (TAFDC or EAEDC), DTA must treat your application for cash *as an application for SNAP*. You do not need to file a separate application or have a separate DTA interview. [106 C.M.R. §361.160](#). DTA must also process your SNAP benefits, even if they decide you are not eligible for cash assistance. [106 C.M.R. §365.120\(A\)\(1\), \(A\)\(2\)](#).

If you apply for SNAP and you might be eligible for cash, the DTA SNAP case worker is supposed to connect you to a cash case worker who should help you apply for cash benefits. For example, you might be eligible for EAEDC if you have no income and are 65 or older or disabled. You might be eligible for TAFDC if you have no or very low income and are pregnant or have children. DTA should ask you if you want to apply for these benefits.

Please contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if DTA did not start a SNAP application for you on the same day that you applied for cash, or if you were denied cash benefits but DTA did not process SNAP benefits for you from your cash application.

See MLRI's TAFDC and EAEDC Advocacy Guides for more on these cash benefits, available here: [Masslegalservices.org/LegalAdvocacyGuides](https://masslegalservices.org/LegalAdvocacyGuides)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

MassHealth Eligibility Operations Memos: EOM 2021-10 and EOM 2021-12 announcing the addition of the SNAP gap checkbox and SNAP signature sections to MassHealth and Medicare Savings Program applications, [available here](#). And MassHealth instructions on implementing the SNAP checkbox onto the HIX MassHealth Connector online application, implemented July 27, 2022, [HIX System Release Update #25 available here](#).

2 What happens after I apply?

Signing a SNAP application is the *first step*! There are *two* more steps:

- a phone *interview* with a DTA worker (interview may be waived during the pandemic, see **Question 10**) and
- sending *proofs* (if DTA needs them, see **Question 12**).

Note: If you would prefer to have your SNAP interview *in person*, you have a right to have an interview at a DTA office. See **Question 10**.

Getting an EBT card

Once DTA verifies your identity, DTA should also send you *an EBT card* and *PIN* in the U.S. mail. These come in two separate envelopes and can take about 5-10 days to arrive in the mail.

Here's what to know about the EBT card:

- Your EBT card has no benefits on it until DTA approves your SNAP case.
- DTA will not send you an EBT card if you tell them on the SNAP application that you have one.
- If you would rather go in person to get a card (for example, because you want an EBT card more quickly or do not have a reliable address), you have the right to visit a local DTA office to get one in person.
- Contact the DTA Ombuds Office if you need help getting a card by overnight mail or need to problem solve getting a card.

See **Question 86** on how to access your EBT benefits.

To learn more from DTA about EBT cards, visit

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/using-your-ebt-card#-get-a-new-card->

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

3 When am I eligible for expedited (emergency) benefits?

Expedited SNAP benefits are a *faster way* to get your first month of SNAP benefits - *within 7 days* of when you apply if you qualify.

You may be eligible for *expedited* SNAP if:

- you have \$150 or less in monthly gross income and \$100 or less in liquid assets (cash and money in the bank), ***or***
- your shelter costs are *higher* than your combined gross monthly income and cash and savings (DTA adds the value of the standard utility allowance to your rent or homeownership costs), ***or***
- you are a migrant household with \$100 or less in cash and savings.

Expedited SNAP rules: [106 C.M.R. §§365.800-365.850](#).

Example: Stella is 65 and earns \$200 a week in gross wages (before taxes) at her part time job, for a total monthly income of \$866 (weekly x 4.333). Stella pays \$500/month rent and separately pays heating costs. Her total shelter costs are \$1,360 based on her rent of \$500 plus the \$860 heating/cooling standard utility allowance. Because her shelter costs are higher than her gross income, Stella is eligible for expedited SNAP.

The SNAP rules require DTA to *screen* all applicants for expedited SNAP when DTA gets your application. [106 C.M.R. §365.800](#). To get *ongoing SNAP* benefits after the expedited month, you will have to provide proofs of all the other eligibility factors. [106 C.M.R. §365.850\(B\)](#).

You only need to verify your *identity* to qualify for expedited SNAP. You can provide proof of your identity when you apply. DTA will also verify your identity by confirming your SSN with SSA. See **Appendix C**.

The *amount* you get in expedited SNAP benefits is based on the date you apply and the “cyclical month” of your SNAP application. [106 C.M.R. §365.840](#). For example, you may get more than 1 month worth of initial benefits, depending on when you apply.

Part 1 ✦ Application and Proofs

If you received expedited SNAP, but *did not send DTA all required proofs*, DTA will send you a denial notice explaining what documents DTA was missing. If you get these in, DTA can reopen your SNAP case.

Note: You can only get expedited SNAP once every 12 months, unless you completed the full SNAP application the last time you applied (see DTA Transitions [FYI, December 2010](#), pg 8).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

4 What is Bay State CAP for SSI recipients?

In Massachusetts, many Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants and recipients can apply for SNAP directly through the Social Security Administration (SSA) when applying for or renewing SSI. This is called Bay State CAP or the SNAP “Combined Application Project.” [106 C.M.R. §366.910](#) Bay State CAP recipients often receive the same benefit amount as regular SNAP benefits or even higher. In some cases you may get more through regular SNAP if you have high rent or homeownership costs or unreimbursed health care costs.

If you meet the criteria for Bay State CAP, you *do not need to file* a separate SNAP application at DTA. DTA uses your SSI eligibility information to establish your benefits and send you an EBT card. [106 C.M.R. §366.910\(C\)](#).

You may qualify for qualify for Bay State CAP SNAP benefits if:

1. you are approved for SSI,
2. you are 18 or older and not living with a spouse,
3. you live alone, or live with others but purchase and prepare your own food separate from the others,
4. you do not have regular earned income, *and*
5. a portion of your SSI benefits is *federally-funded SSI*.

Part 1 ✦ Application and Proofs

When you apply for SSI and appear eligible to get your SSI claim approved within 30 days, the SSA Claims Representative *should* ask screen you for SNAP. (An SSI application is usually approved quickly for persons ages 65 and over with little or no income or assets, and persons with severe disabilities who were getting SSI before and the benefits were suspended due to hospitalization or other institutionalization.)

If you apply for SNAP through SSA, you do not need to send DTA any proofs. DTA will use the income and other information they get from SSA, including the amount of your shelter costs. [106 C.M.R. §366.910\(C\)](#) If approved, DTA will send you a Bay State CAP approval letter. DTA should also send you an EBT card and PIN. [106 C.M.R. §366.910\(E\)](#)

Your Bay State Cap SNAP benefits are certified for 36 months. [106 C.M.R. §366.910\(E\)\(3\)](#). When it is time to recertify your benefits, DTA should send you a *short* Bay State CAP Recertification form for you to fill out and send back to DTA.

If you are on Bay State CAP SNAP benefits, you are not required to report any changes to DTA. See **Question 94**. However, it is best to report directly to DTA if you move or there is a change your household composition because you do not want to miss any DTA notices, and your SNAP may go up. You have a right to switch from Bay State CAP to regular SNAP any time you would get higher SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §366.910 \(H\)\(2\)](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

SSA Policy Operations Manual: Section SI BOS01801.302; accessed February 2022: <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lrx/0501801302BOS>

5 Can I register to vote when I apply for SNAP?

Yes! DTA is mandated by federal law to ask all SNAP and cash assistance household members *who are over age 17 and U.S. citizens* if they wish to register to vote for any federal elections. [52 U.S. Code § 20506](#). Massachusetts state law also allows 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, [M.G.L. 51 §42](#). Here's what you should know:

- When you apply, recertify or change your address for your SNAP or cash assistance case, DTA is required to tell you how you can *register* to vote and *assist you* with voter registration. [106 C.M.R. §360.950](#).
- If you apply, recertify or change your address *in person*, DTA is required under federal law to physically hand you a Voter Registration packet. If do this *online or by phone*, DTA is also supposed to mail you a letter with a Voter Registration Form.
- If you complete a Voter Registration Form through DTA, DTA is required to send the completed form to your city/town election office with 5 business days.

IMPORTANT: Voter registration is optional. DTA will not deny or close your SNAP case if you choose to not fill out a Voter Registration Form.

If you have a current MA state ID or driver's license, you can also register to vote online, or get forms mailed to you. Go to the Secretary of State's [Register to Vote webpage](#) for more information on how to register.

Homeless individuals using the voter registration form can use the map on the form to indicate a location for voting purposes if they do not have a "conventional" address.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

6 Can someone else help me apply for SNAP?

Yes! You can always ask a family member, friend, or social services agency to help you fill out an application. They can also help you send in proofs, go with you to a local DTA office and/or participate in a phone interview with you - with your permission. See **Question 10** to learn more about the interview.

But *you should sign* the application and *participate* in the interview. That's because *you* are legally responsible for all the information on the application. DTA *must not conduct any SNAP interview* without you!

If the helping friend or agency gives DTA incorrect information – or leaves out information that is important to tell DTA – *you* may end up with a SNAP overpayment, or worse. The helping agency that gave DTA wrong information about your situation could be legally liable as well.

7 What is an Authorized Representative?

An Authorized Representative is someone you choose to act on your behalf and manage your SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §§361.300-361.330](#). This is similar to a “representative payee” for SSI or Social Security benefits.

The Authorized Representative does not need to have legal guardianship or a court appointment, but you do have to give *your voluntary written consent*.

DTA will ask you to sign a DTA form appointing this person, *Request to Choose Someone to Be My Authorized Representative*. See [Appendix C](#).

Based on your choice, the person you designate as an Authorized Representative can:

- sign the SNAP application on your behalf, receive DTA notices, report changes and talk about your case with DTA, and/or
- get a second EBT card to shop for you with your SNAP benefits. DTA can issue two EBT cards – one for you and one for the Authorized Representative.

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Be sure to *choose someone you trust*. If this person gives DTA incorrect information and you get too much SNAP, you might have to pay back an overpayment. [106 C.M.R. §§361.310 \(B\)](#).

DTA *cannot require you to have an authorized representative* if you do not want one. The only exception to this rule is for residents of substance abuse disorder treatment programs and some group home residents. [7 CFR 273.11\(e\) and \(f\)](#), and [106 C.M.R. §§361.350](#)

You can decide *how much authority* you give to your Authorized Representative. You can also ask DTA to *remove the person* who is your Authorized Representative from your SNAP case any time. For example, you may find a family member or friend is not spending your SNAP benefits appropriately.

For more information about the difference between a helping agency and an authorized representative, see [MLRI FAQ here](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

8 Can I give someone permission to talk with DTA about my SNAP case?

You have the right to give permission to anyone you trust to help you find out what’s going on with your SNAP case. This can be a social service agency, food pantry, legal services, a trusted family member or friend. This is *different* from appointing an *authorized representative*. See **Question 7**.

You can also call the DTA Assistance Line with an agency or friend on the line at the same time to help you. For example, you can do a “3-way” call.

Before anyone can talk with DTA about your case (if you are not with them by phone or in person), you need to send DTA a *written and signed statement* that allows DTA to share information with the person or organization helping you. [106 C.M.R. §360.400](#).

[Appendix C](#) has a sample *Client Consent Allowing DTA to Release Information to a Helping Agency*. You can also send DTA a handwritten or typed note (signed and dated) with the same information. There is no specific DTA form that must be used.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

9 How do I apply if I live in a group home, substance abuse center, or teen program?

Group home residents

If you live in a *licensed group home* for persons with disabilities, you may be eligible for SNAP benefits as a one-person household even though you live with others and share common meals. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(B\)](#). A licensed group home is one licensed by the state as a community-based residential facility and that has no more than 16 residents living there at a time. [106 C.M.R. §365.640](#).

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Some group homes act as the *Authorized Representative* for residents, especially those run by the Mass Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and, in some cases, group homes run by Mass Department of Mental Health (DMH). This means a group home manager may file a SNAP application for residents and/or the group home receives the EBT card for the resident.

Some group homes that are more transitional (short term) may have residents apply for SNAP and buy and prepare their own food. Some group homes have point of sale (POS) devices that allow the group home to swipe benefits off the EBT cards of residents to collect money for common food.

If you are not already getting SNAP when you join the group home, the group home must make *an individual determination* whether or not you can handle your own affairs, such as managing your cash or SNAP benefits.

If the group home determines that you do not have the physical or mental ability to handle your own affairs, the group home will file an application for SNAP on your behalf (act as an authorized representative to do your SNAP application).

If you apply for your own SNAP, you can choose whether to have the group home transact (keep) your EBT card to buy food or if you want to keep your own EBT card to make and buy your own food. See [7 C.F.R. 273.11\(f\)](#).

Residents of substance abuse disorder treatment centers

If you are a resident of a *licensed substance abuse disorder treatment program*, the SNAP rules say that the treatment program must be your Authorized Representative. [106 C.M.R. §365.610](#). Even if you apply for SNAP on your own, you must transfer your EBT card to the treatment program for food purchases while you are staying there.

“Sober houses” typically provide room and meals for adults transitioning from a treatment program and/or referred by a court or probation officer. Sober houses may be regulated at the local level but usually are not licensed or regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. If you live in a “sober house” or other roomer/board situation not licensed by the Department of Public Health, the sober house cannot take your EBT card unless you *voluntarily* appoint them as your authorized representative to transact SNAP on your behalf.

Note: Drug and alcohol treatment centers and group homes are responsible for any SNAP overpayments that happen while the person getting SNAP is

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a resident of the treatment center or group home. [106 C.M.R. §365.650](#). The only exception is if a group home resident applied for SNAP on their own, then the resident is responsible for any over-issuance. [7 C.F.R. 273.11\(f\)\(6\)](#).

Residents of teen living programs

If you are living in a *teen parent program*, the program is given the authority to decide if it will be the authorized representative and receive the SNAP benefits, or if it will allow you to apply for and spend the benefits yourself. [106 C.M.R. §365.620\(B\)](#).

When leaving a residential program

After you leave a group home or treatment center, the program *must return your EBT card to you*.

If you do not have an EBT card in your name, they should help you get one. When you leave, the group home or treatment center must give you back SNAP benefits in the following ways:

- If they have not yet used any of your SNAP for the month, they must return your entire monthly allotment.
- If they have already used some of your SNAP for the month but you leave *before* the 16th of the month, the program must give you back half of your allotment. If you leave *after* the 16th and the program has already used your SNAP for that month, you may not get any SNAP back.

For the rules on how your EBT benefits should be restored to you, see [7 C.F.R. 273.11\(e\)\(6\) and \(f\)\(5\)](#).

Contact the DTA Ombuds office or MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if you do not get back your EBT card or a portion of your benefits.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

10 Does DTA have to interview me?

During regular times, the federal government (USDA) requires DTA *to interview all applicants* for SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §361.500](#). The interview must be done by a DTA SNAP worker. Conversations you have with a SNAP Outreach partner are not the official SNAP interview.

As this book goes to print, under ongoing DTA COVID policies, the interview is not required if DTA has all the verifications they need to make a decision about your eligibility when they look at your application. See **Question 12** for mandatory proofs.

What to know about the SNAP interview:

The DTA interview is usually done *over the phone*. DTA should call you as soon as they get your SNAP application and *screen you* for emergency (expedited) benefits.

- DTA should *send you a letter* with the date and time a DTA worker will call to do the interview. Between the time DTA looks at your application and the date of the scheduled interview, DTA should also try to call you.
- The caller ID should say “COMM of MASS” or 877-382-2363.
- These calls come through DTA’s computerized phone system. If you pick up the call, you will hear an automated message asking you if you want to talk to a DTA worker. You may need to wait for a few minutes for the worker to come on the line.
- You can change the date and time of your scheduled interview on DTA Connect. You can also call the **DTA Assistance Line** *any time* after you apply to have your interview: **1-877-382-2363**.
- If you do not get any calls from DTA, check that DTA has your correct phone number. You can check or update your phone number on DTA Connect.

In-person and in-office interviews

You also have the right to an *in-person* interview at a local DTA office if you wish, and in a private space. [106 C.M.R. §§361.550](#) and [360.300](#).

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- DTA may *schedule you for an in-person interview* if you do list a phone number on your SNAP application. (Note, you can always use a friend or social service agency phone if you prefer a phone interview, and you can call the DTA Assistance line *anytime* and ask for a phone interview if you have access to a phone).
- You can also *ask for an in-person interview* if you cannot get through the DTA Assistance Line, or you are more comfortable talking with a SNAP worker in person.
- If you *apply for benefits in person*, you also have the right to have your interview the same day. DTA will likely tell you to call the DTA Assistance Line from your own phone if you have one, or arrange for you to sit in a DTA room and call the Assistance Line for your phone interview.
- When you do an in-person interview, DTA should offer you a *private room* where you can speak to a worker either using a DTA phone or if the worker is with you in person. DTA should never do the interview in the waiting area where others can hear you.

If DTA denies you an in-person interview, tell MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org. If you do not want to wait to have the interview, the DTA office should still screen you for expedited SNAP and issue you an EBT card if you need one.

If you miss the interview call

If you do not pick up when DTA calls, DTA should *leave a voicemail* and call back a couple of minutes later. Be sure to check for any messages. If you miss the phone call, you can still call the DTA Assistance Line anytime during business hours.

If you miss the scheduled interview and any follow up calls, DTA is *required* to send you a *written notice* called a “Notice of Missed Interview” (a “NOMI”). The DTA notice must say that you have the right to another interview. [106 C.M.R. §§361.500, 361.700\(B\)\(1\)](#).

If you do not have an interview *within 30 days* of when you applied, your SNAP application will be denied. [106 C.M.R. §361.700\(B\)\(1\)](#). You have the right to reapply for benefits. The denied application will not be held against you, but the start date of your benefits will be the date you reapply.

DTA *cannot deny your SNAP application or make you reapply* if DTA failed to contact you or send a notice about an initial interview, or failed to send a notice of missed interview (called a “NOMI”). You have a right to call the DTA Assistance Line and ask to speak with a Supervisor, or you can call the DTA Ombudsman office. You can also file an appeal to seek retroactive benefits.

DTA Online Guide: See Appendix G for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

11 What happens during the interview?

As this book goes to print, the SNAP application interview is only required if DTA does not have all the verification needed to make a decision about your application. See **Question 12** for mandatory proofs. If you send DTA all missing mandatory proofs, you do not need to have an interview.

During the interview, the DTA worker should:

- Screen you for expedited (emergency) benefits. See **Question 3**.
- Confirm the information you gave on your application *and* any information DTA gets through government databases.
- Review the documents you sent in, tell you *what* verifications (proofs) DTA needs and *when* they are due. See **Question 12**.
- Answer any questions you have and *offer to help* if you need help getting verifications or contacting a third party for information.
- Review the exemptions and the work rules if you or a household member is subject to the ABAWD 3-month time limit. (**Note, the ABAWD time limit is not in place right now.**) See **Question 60**.
- Tell you *how long* your benefits are certified for, *what changes* you need to report to DTA, and *when* you need to send back an Interim Report and/or a Recertification form. See **Question 94**
- Explain your rights and responsibilities, as well as the penalties for committing fraud or for other program rules.

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- Issue you an EBT card if one has not already been issued and you don't have one— either by mail or in person at the DTA office – and tell you how to use the EBT card.

SNAP interview rules: [106 C.M.R. §§361.500 - 361-550](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

12 What proofs does DTA need and when?

During the interview, the DTA worker should verbally tell you what proofs are required and ask if you need their help getting them. [106 C.M.R. §§ 361.550](#).

DTA should then send a *verification checklist* (called a “VC-1”) with *at least 10 days* for you to get the mandatory proofs back to them.

How much time you have for proofs

You have a *full 30 days* from the day you apply before DTA can send a denial notice. If you had an interview but some proofs are still missing by Day 30, DTA will send you a “pending denial notice.” [106 C.M.R. §361.930](#). This means you have *another 30 days* to get them missing proofs and not have to reapply. See **Question 21** if your proofs get in late.

DTA *cannot limit proofs to any single document*. Any document that proves an eligibility factor should be accepted. [106 C.M.R. §§361.640\(A\), 361.650](#). If you have trouble getting DTA proofs, *ask DTA for help!*

If you got SNAP or cash benefits *in the past and are re-applying*, DTA should not ask for permanent verifications you already gave them in the past, such as prove of your age or identity.

Mandatory proofs

The SNAP rules require that you provide proof of certain *mandatory eligibility factors*. [106 C.M.R. §361.610](#). This includes proof of:

- the identity of the head of household,
- your Massachusetts residence,

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- the Social Security Numbers (SSNs) for all household members who are applying (you do not need to show DTA the SSN cards), current earned income or self-employment (for proving business expenses,
- unearned income that DTA cannot verify through a database,
- the last day of work, if you stopped work recently,
- immigration status if you or a household member is applying for SNAP but is not a U.S. citizen, **and**
- other proofs that DTA needs to be sure you are eligible.

Appendix C lists the *mandatory verification factors*, and document options. Some information can be *self-declared* (see **Question 13**) or is *optional*, meaning not required to approve your case, (see **Question 14**).

Trouble shooting

Missing wages: If you have trouble producing missing wage information or your last day of work, DTA can do a “collateral contact” and contact the employer directly for proof. If there is a missing pay stub, DTA should be able to figure out the missing week of income from other pay stubs.

Terminated income: DTA should not ask for proof that income has ended except in very limited situations. If you are asked to prove that a job or other income ended, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org

A new baby: Do not wait until you have an SSN for the baby. DTA should add the baby to your SNAP or cash case without needing an SSN until your next recertification or for 6 months after birth (whichever is later).

Immigrant status: If DTA is waiting on a response from USCIS to confirm your immigration status or for proof of 40 quarters of work history, DTA should issue you SNAP for up to 6 months pending the results of their SAVE query or your confirmation of 40 quarters of eligible work. See **Question 48**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

13 What information can I self-declare?

You can *self-declare* the following information for SNAP eligibility:

- Your *household composition* – for example, if you live with others but purchase and prepare most of your food separately.
- The *U.S. citizenship* of any household member.
- Your *date of birth*.
- Your *shelter expenses* such as your rent or homeownership costs, and the type of utilities you pay for.
- Your *childcare or adult dependent care* expenses.
- If you are age 60+ or get a disability-based benefit, your out-of-pocket *medical expenses* up to a capped amount.
- Your *college student status*.

See list of SNAP verifications at application: [106 C.M.R. § 361.610](#).

DTA should accept your self-declaration unless DTA determines the information is *questionable*. See **Question 17**.

You can *verbally tell DTA this information* when you talk with a SNAP worker, or you can write down this information on your SNAP Application, Recertification or Interim Report forms. You can also send DTA a written statement that you have signed and dated. See [Appendix C](#) for a sample self-declaration form for shelter and dependent care costs.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

14 What proofs are optional?

DTA needs certain information beyond your income to calculate the amount of your SNAP. These are considered *optional verifications or proofs*.

This means that, DTA *cannot deny* your application for benefits – but the SNAP amount will be calculated without these deductions if DTA does not get the information or proofs they need. [106 C.M.R. § 364.450\(B\)](#).

Optional information includes your:

- shelter (rent, home ownership) and utility costs,
- childcare or adult dependent care costs,
- health care costs (if eligible to claim them),
- child support you pay to a child outside the household
- business expenses for self-employment income.

Trouble shooting

If you are self-employed or pay child support for a non-household member, double check the SNAP math.

DTA can deny you SNAP case if your gross income exceeds 200% FPL because you failed to verify either the child support you pay or your self-employment business expenses. However, if your gross income (without those proofs) is under 200% FPL, DTA cannot not deny your SNAP case. But you might get lower regular SNAP if you do not verify child support you pay or your costs of doing business if self-employed.

See **Questions 65 and 75 through 82**.

15 How do I send DTA my documents?

You can send documents to DTA many ways. [106 C.M.R. §361.650](#).

1. **Take a photo and upload your documents** through DTA Connect. The documents go straight into your DTA case record. This is the *fastest way* to get DTA proofs! See **Question 23**.
2. **FAX** documents to DTA at **617-887-8765**.
3. **MAIL** documents to: Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)
P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420.
4. **Hand-deliver** documents to any local DTA office in person. DTA should help you scan them directly into your case and give you back your original documents.

Trouble shooting tips:

Urgent action: If you need DTA to take quick action on your case, ask to speak with a DTA worker or manager who can look at the documents. Currently, DTA has a “self-service” model in local offices and may tell you they cannot review the documents you bring in. If you need urgent help at a DTA office and do not get it, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

Pre-paid envelopes: DTA has *postage-paid envelopes* available at the local office with the DTA Document Center address in Taunton. DTA can also mail you these envelopes if you ask for them.

Tracking your documents: It’s best to upload your documents directly to your DTA Connect account. *If you mail or fax documents to DTA*, keep track of the date and proof that you sent DTA the documents in case documents get lost. Write *on each page* of the documents your name and your DTA “Agency ID” (if you know it) or the last 4 digits of your SSN.

Faxing proofs: If you are faxing a *double-sided document*, don’t forget to fax both sides! And photos or documents printed on gray or color paper do not fax clearly-send these documents in through DTA Connect.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

16 Should DTA help me if I am having a hard time getting proofs?

YES! DTA workers are required to help you get proofs if you tell DTA you are having difficulty. [106 C.M.R. §361.650](#). This includes offering to do a “collateral contact” – a call to a third party – to confirm information in your case. [106 C.M.R. §361.640\(B\)](#).

For example, a DTA worker can:

- Contact an employer for missing wage information
- Contact another state to confirm the date your out-of-state SNAP case closed.

If you need DTA to contact a third party for information, DTA will need the third party’s contact information and your permission for DTA to contact them. If you need DTA to do a collateral contact and a worker tells you they can’t do one, ask to speak with a supervisor.

In general, DTA *cannot require you* to agree to a third-party contact if you can verify the information they need some other way. Your privacy is important and must be respected. [106 C.M.R. §360.400](#).

If you have trouble getting proofs

If you and DTA cannot get the proofs they need, DTA must accept the *best available evidence* for verification of income, which may end up being your self-declaration. See [106 C.M.R. §363.210\(G\)\(3\)](#). For example:

- Your former employer refuses to give you proof about your pay and will not talk with DTA. DTA should accept your self-declaration.
- You are self-employed but you do not have detailed business records and make so little you do not file taxes.
- You have no other records of your income. DTA should accept your self-declaration.

If you have a disability that makes it hard for you to get proofs or comply with other DTA rules, see **Question 28**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

17 What if DTA does not accept the proofs I sent them?

DTA should accept *any documents* that reasonably prove your eligibility, unless the information is *questionable*. [106 C.M.R. § 361.640](#). DTA must review the individual circumstances of each household before determining whether information is questionable. And remember, DTA must offer to help you get proof by directly contacting a third party. See **Question 16**.

“Questionable” means the information you gave DTA is *inconsistent* with information you already shared with them or information they know about (e.g. through database checks). [106 C.M.R. §361.620](#).

Example: Sandy applied for SNAP. An RMV check shows that her ex-husband still registers his car at her address. During her interview she explained that she divorced her husband six months ago and he does not live with her. This information is not questionable and does not contradict what she said during her interview. Sandy has no control over her husband and does not own the car. Sandy should not be required to prove where her ex lives.

Trouble shooting tips

Proof of income from third parties: If income verification depends on the cooperation of a *third party* – such as getting wage information from an employer – DTA accept your self-declaration if the employer will not cooperate. This is the “best evidence available” rule under [106 CMR 361.610\(A\)](#). DTA should also offer assistance if you are having trouble getting a document. See **Question 16**.

DTA rejects proofs: If DTA does not accept the proofs you give them, the DTA worker must record the reason for rejecting your proofs in your SNAP case - in what are called “case narrative” notes. [106 C.M.R. §361.660](#).

Inaccessible proofs: If DTA asks you to prove something that you cannot provide or DTA fails to offer you help, you can speak with a Supervisor, call the Ombuds Office or file an appeal.

18 What if DTA questions my income or my living expenses?

Many low-income households have living costs that exceed their income. Households often borrow from family members or friends, run up credit cards, or have unpaid bills that lead to a utility shut off or eviction. None of this is fraudulent activity; it is how most households survive tough times.

If DTA thinks your income is too low to meet your rent or other costs when you apply for SNAP, a DTA worker may call and ask you questions about how you are getting by. *It is very important that you answer DTA's questions truthfully.*

These are typical situations that DTA should not consider questionable:

- If you *borrow money* from friends or relatives or borrow against your credit card to pay your expenses, that is not questionable. Loans are not countable income. See **Question 65**.
- If you get *cash contributions* for living expenses from persons who are *not legally obligated* to support you, that is also not questionable and, in most cases, that is not countable income. That could be a grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor who is just helping you out. See **Question 66**.

However, if you get *cash contributions money from legally responsible persons* for your living expenses, such as child support for your children or alimony from a spouse, that is countable income.

DTA should not ask for proofs *unless* the information you provide is deemed “questionable.” See **Question 17**. However, if your shelter costs or other expenses continue to exceed your income at the point of your SNAP *recertification*, DTA will likely ask you for more proof. That can include documents that show you are behind in your rent or utilities, or a statement from people you are borrowing money from.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

19 If I move, how do I report my new address?

It's important to tell DTA if your address changes so you don't miss important notices. Also, if you move and your shelter costs go up you may be eligible for more SNAP.

To report a change:

- *Call the DTA Assistance Line at 877-382-2363 and follow the prompts to update your address.*
- *Change your address through DTA Connect (See Question 23),*
- *Verbally report the change to a DTA worker on the Assistance Line or at a local DTA office, **or***
- *Mail or fax to DTA information about your new address, or upload it to your case on DTA Connect.*

Whenever you report a change of address, DTA should update your address in your case record.

If you update your change of address through the Assistance Line or DTA Connect, DTA will also mail you a form that says you have to send in information about changes in your household. This form is incorrectly sent to most households. You do not have to return this form unless you get SNAP and TAFDC or EAEDC.

See **Question 94** to see what changes you are required to report to DTA. If DTA reduces your SNAP when you move, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org

If your rent amount changes:

*If your rent has increased, your SNAP may increase if you report the change. Unless you get TAFDC or EAEDC, you are *not required* to report a change in your shelter costs until your next Interim Report or Recertification. See **Question 94**. This is especially important to know if your shelter costs go down.*

If DTA gets returned mail:

DTA mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Post Office. If you move and DTA does not have your new address, DTA letters will likely get returned to DTA. However, if you left a forwarding address with the U.S. Post office, DTA should use that information to update your address and send a check-in notice to your new address.

If you get DTA cash benefits in addition to SNAP

If you get TAFDC or EAEDC, DTA requires you to report within 10 days any changes in where you live and if the move causes changes to your rent. See **Question 98**. DTA also may close your cash case if they get returned mail for you, and/or if you move but do not respond to DTA letters asking you to verify your new address. DTA's policies for handing returned mail in cash assistance cases may not follow the law. If DTA closes your DTA benefits due to returned mail, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

20 Can I get my SNAP case reopened if I am denied for lack of proofs?

DTA must give you a full 30 days from the date you applied to get in proofs before your SNAP application is denied. They must send you a timely notice of the proofs needed and options for proofs.

If the proofs DTA needs are still missing by day 30, DTA will send you a “*pending denial notice*.” [106 C.M.R. §361.930](#). The SNAP pending denial notice should both list the specific proofs that are still missing and give you *another 30 days to bring in these proofs*.

This is also the policy if you got expedited (emergency) SNAP.

If you get the proofs to DTA within this second 30-day period, your case should get *reopened*. You do not need to reapply. [106 C.M.R. §361.940](#). However, your benefits may be prorated. See **Question 21**.

Example: Vicky applied for SNAP on June 1. She sent DTA most of the required verifications by June 29th but was missing wage stubs from one of her part-time jobs. Vicky was sent a denial notice dated June 30th telling her she was denied and listed the proofs missing (wage stubs from her part-time job). Vicky sends DTA the missing wage stubs on July 10. DTA should reopen Vicky’s SNAP application without making her reapply.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

21 What if DTA does not give me SNAP back to the date I applied (“pro-rating”)?

If DTA denies your SNAP benefits for missing proofs, you still have options. If you send DTA the missing proofs *within 30 days* of the denial, DTA should reopen your SNAP application. You do not need to reapply.

But DTA may only give you benefits starting with *the date DTA received the required proofs*, not the date you applied for SNAP. This is called “*pro-rating*.” DTA will start your benefits the date they got the proofs – not the day you applied - if they decide the delay was your fault.

Example: Louise applied for SNAP on June 1st but had trouble proving her earnings. She got a “pending denial” notice on June 30th. Louise finally sent DTA the missing pay info on July 10th. DTA approved her case, but only gave her SNAP starting July 10th.

Your SNAP benefits should not be “pro-rated” if the reason for the delay was *not your fault*. [106 C.M.R. §§361.910-361.920](#)

Example: In the above case, you learn that Louise told DTA that her employer initially refused to give her a statement about the missing wage information. You also learn that DTA office did not offer to contact the employer or otherwise help Louise. In this situation, the delay in getting the earnings proof was not her fault. DTA should not have prorated her SNAP benefits.

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A delay is not your fault if:

- DTA did not tell you which proofs they needed or what alternate proofs they can accept, or
- You sent DTA proofs but they did not look at them, or DTA did not inform you that the proofs you sent them were not adequate,
- DTA did not give you enough time to get in proofs, or
- DTA did not offer help if you had trouble getting the proofs.

Trouble shooting tips:

It is important to know that DTA's eligibility computer system (BEACON) is automatically programmed to decide whether the delay was DTA or the applicant's fault without diving into all the facts. And this "automated" decision may not be correct, especially if the DTA worker failed to offer help.

- If you think your SNAP was pro-rated to a date later than your date of application, you can ask DTA how they determined "fault." If you disagree with DTA's decision to prorate your benefits, you can talk to a Supervisor, the DTA Ombuds Office or file an appeal.
- You can figure out if your SNAP was "pro-rated" by checking the EBT amount DTA deposited on your card when your application was approved. You can see this information on DTAConnect.com.
- If you send DTA proofs *within 30 days* after you got a pending denial notice, call the DTA Assistance Line and ask them to review the documents you submitted.
- If you were denied or terminated from SNAP within the last 90 days for missing proofs, you still have a right to appeal. The hearing officer should accept any proofs you provide at the hearing under special "de novo" appeal rules and should also look at whether DTA was at fault for not doing its job. See **Question 104**. You should also reapply for benefits (to get back on quickly) even if you file an appeal for retroactive benefits.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section

22 How do I get information about my SNAP by phone?

Call the **DTA Assistance Line at 1-877-382-2363** to hear automated information about your case or speak with a DTA case worker. The IVR is in 6 languages. If you need to reach a worker directly without entering your identifying information (for example to apply for SNAP), press #7 at the start of the menu.

To get personal information on your case, you need to enter your identifying information. You have a choice to enter your SSN, EBT card number, or DTA Agency ID (found on all DTA notices), plus your year of birth. If you are worried about unauthorized callers trying to get your personal information, ask DTA about a “block” on this service. See **Question 32**.

Once you identify who you are:

Through *the Assistance Line’s Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system*, you can hear information about your case and report certain changes, 24 hours/7 days a week. The information provided depends on the status of your case, but generally includes:

- Your case status and EBT card balance
- The date your benefits are issued and monthly amount
- When things are due, such as verification requests or a Recertification
- The date that DTA last received a document from you

If you need to have an interview or complete paperwork to keep your benefits, the system should connect you directly to a worker when you call.

Additional services you can get from the DTA Assistance Line:

- Request a letter showing the amount of SNAP or cash benefits you receive (a “benefit verification letter”)
- Request and track the mailing of an EBT card
- Request for replacement SNAP if you lost food you bought with SNAP due to a fire, flooding or other disaster. See **Question 92**.
- Update your phone number.

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To speak with a DTA SNAP worker

Call Monday through Friday from 8:15 AM to 4:45 PM and follow the prompts to reach a case manager. The worker will ask for your name, your DTA Agency ID (if you know it) or your SSN. This helps the worker confirm who you are and look up your case. Be sure to ask the worker for their name and write it down

If you are calling because *you need an interview*, the DTA worker should do an interview on the spot and not tell you to call back later.

If there are long waits on the phone, sometimes DTA allows a “*call back*” option, meaning a DTA worker will call you back. Be sure to leave a phone number where DTA can reach you in the next 24-48 hours. If you have an urgent issue and do not have a call back option, you can always go in person to a DTA office or call the DTA Ombuds, see **Question 31**.

Other DTA staff you can reach through the DTA Assistance Line (follow the prompts):

- If you get DTA cash (EAEDC or TAFDC), direct transfer to your assigned case manager’s phone.
- Local office staff if you want to apply for cash.
- Access to Domestic Violence specialists (see **Question 32**).
- Access to Client Assistance Coordinator for a disability accommodation (see **Question 28**).
- Employment staff to learn about education/training programs
- The DTA Hearings Division
- The Overpayment Collections Unit

Trouble shooting tips:

Helping agencies. If you are calling on behalf of a client, be sure you sent DTA a signed client consent in advance. You can ask the worker to look up that information in BEACON if questionable.

Limited cell phone minute: If you are worried about your limited cell minutes, ask for a call back or try to use a landline or the phone of a social service agency line or friend with unlimited minutes.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

23 How do I get information about my SNAP case online or with my smartphone?

You can use DTA Connect to share updates with DTA, upload documents, fill out Recertification or Interim Report forms, view notices DTA sends you, and see important information about your case.

To set up a DTACConnect account you need an email address. To learn how to set up an account and see a list of what you can do with DTA Connect, see [“DTA’s Guide on DTA Connect” here](#).

DTA Connect is the mobile app for DTA clients. It is free and can be downloaded for iPhones at the App store or for Androids on Google play.

DTACConnect.com is an online portal for DTA clients.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

24 Does DTA send text messages or emails?

Yes! In addition to paper notices and information posted on DTA Connect, DTA reaches out to households at certain points via text and/or email with status updates and information on DTA benefits. For example, DTA texts/emails when DTA:

- receives your application
- schedules an interview, or you miss your interview DTA is missing proofs or when they get documents
- approves, denies or closes your SNAP case
- sends you an EBT card
- approves your Interim Report/Recertification

The text messages DTA sends will show up from “382 674.”

You can opt out by replying opt out to the text message. General texts about statewide information (e.g. vaccines) are sent in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Haitian Creole, and Vietnamese. Case specific texts are sent in English and Spanish. *And you can update your phone number* or add an email address on DTA Connect.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Never provide your personal information, EBT card number, or Personal Identification Number (PIN) to unidentified callers, or to a link provided via text or email. DTA will never ask for your PIN. Learn more at [Mass.gov/ProtectYourEBT](https://www.mass.gov/ProtectYourEBT).

25 What is the Senior Assistance Office?

The Senior Assistance Office (SAO) is a special DTA office designed for customers age 60 and over to answer questions and process SNAP cases. You can reach them directly by phone without entering any information. If there is a wait time, DTA will give you the option of leaving a message to get a call back from an SAO worker

Senior Assistance Office Phone: (833) 712-8027

The SAO is specially trained to work on SNAP cases for seniors, including discussing medical expenses. See **Questions 76 and 77**. If you are age 60 or older and you apply for SNAP, the SAO will do your phone interview, answer your questions and process your SNAP case. To find out more, check out the [DTA Senior Assistance Office webpage here](#).

26 What if I do not speak English?

If English is not your primary language, DTA must provide you with a bilingual DTA worker or communicate through a translation service.

When calling the **DTA Assistance Line**, DTA has a recording with the prompts you can push to get service in your language. The Assistance Line language capacity in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, and a separate prompt to push for other languages.

If you select a language other than English, then:

- You should be connected to a bilingual DTA worker, **or**
- The DTA worker should add a bilingual DTA interpreter to do a three-way call with you, **or**
- The DTA worker should use their language line interpreter service.

Under federal law, DTA must provide you with an interpreter if you need one. DTA should not tell you to bring your own interpreter. See [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d](#). DTA should not tell you

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to have a family member interpret for you.

**When you fill out the application,
be sure to tell DTA what language you prefer!**

DTA Online applications at DTAConnect.com are currently in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Cantonese, and Vietnamese.

DTA paper applications are available in 13 languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Italian, Polish, Arabic and English. You can download and print these applications at Mass.gov/SNAP.

DTA notices and forms (like recerts and interim reports) are currently only in English and Spanish. DTA also sends a standard flier in other languages that recommends you get the information translated.

DTA Connect and languages: The “preferred language” question on the DTAConnect.com online application currently defaults to English, even for applications filed in languages other than English. As of the writing of this Guide, DTA does not record the language of the application if it differs from the “preferred language” question answer.

Language Access Resources: For more information on the federal and state government’s duties to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP), see lep.gov and justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166

Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if DTA contacts an LEP applicant or SNAP recipient in English and/or refuses to provide an interpreter for a client who speaks a language other than English.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

27 What if I am deaf or hard of hearing?

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, DTA must ensure effective communication with you. [106 C.M.R. §360.510](#). This can include if you need interpretation, communication access real time translation (CART), or sign language interpretation to communicate with your case manager. DTA requires staff to be trained on and use auxiliary aids.

All DTA local offices [currently](#) have Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services.

VRI is an auxiliary aid to communicate with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals using remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter services. If you are Deaf or hard of hearing and would like ASL interpreter service through VRI, go to an office with VRI or contact a Client Assistance Coordinator to set up an appointment in advance.

DTA also has an option to communicate with a Client Assistance Coordinator via Zoom, with an ASL interpreter on the Zoom video.

For a list of DTA's Client Assistance Coordinators (CACs) available in each local office, go to [Mmass.gov/service-details/dta-disability-access](https://mass.gov/service-details/dta-disability-access)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

28 What if a disability makes it hard for me to apply or comply with DTA rules?

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires DTA to provide equal access to programs and services to qualified people with disabilities. [42 U.S.C. § 12132](#); see [106 C.M.R. §§360.250, 701.390](#).

Under the ADA you are a person with a qualifying disability if you have a disability that substantially impairs a major life activity, such as learning, understanding, walking, working, breathing, or caring for yourself. Disabilities include physical or mental health impairments, and intellectual disabilities. A temporary health problem like a broken leg may not be a disability under the ADA.

You can be disabled under the ADA even if you are not receiving any benefits on the basis of disability and even if DTA has decided you do not qualify for an exemption because of disability.

If a disability makes it hard for you do the things DTA asks you to do to get and keep your benefits, you can ask DTA for a **reasonable accommodation**. An accommodation may be appropriate if your disability makes it hard for you to:

- Understand DTA's notices and form
- Give DTA the verifications it asks for
- Communicate with DTA
- Meet deadlines or a specific rule or requirement

DTA must tailor the accommodation to what you need because of disability. Examples of accommodations can include DTA:

- Giving you extra help to meet a rule
- Giving you extra time to meet a deadline
- Changing a requirement or rule
- Naming someone to get copies of mail DTA sends you, or talk to DTA on your behalf (See **Question 7** on choosing to appoint an Authorized Representative)
- Providing an auxiliary aid (such as an ASL interpreter or large print notices)

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Example 1: Because of your learning disability, you need help understanding DTA notices and help completing the paperwork that DTA asks you to complete. DTA should accommodate you by explaining notices to you and by filling out the forms with you instead of requiring you to fill forms out by yourself.

Example 2: You have a hearing, vision, or other condition that makes it hard for you to communicate. DTA should ask you what kind of help you prefer to communicate with DTA. This help is usually called an auxiliary aid. DTA should try to provide your preferred auxiliary aid or work with you to find an acceptable alternative.

Example 3: Because of your disability, you have a hard time communicating with third parties. You need DTA to contact your health care provider to complete the special ABAWD Medical Report.

Trouble shooting:

When to request: An accommodation can be requested at any time, including after DTA has issued a notice stopping or lowering your benefits.

Scope of accommodations: DTA cannot require you to accept a specific accommodation (such as requiring a helper or authorized representative to act for the client). Instead, DTA should work with you to find an accommodation that you agree to.

Limits to accommodations: DTA is not required to provide an accommodation that fundamentally alters its program rules. For example, DTA cannot waive the federal SNAP law that requires a person with disabilities to receive a disability-based benefit, even if they cannot get SSI, EAEDC, MassHealth as disabled.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide that apply to this section.

29 **How do I ask DTA for an accommodation?**

DTA is required to ask all clients if they have a disability and need an accommodation. A DTA worker is supposed to ask these questions at application and recertification, and also when a client raises disability. You can ask for an accommodation at any time that you need one.

You can ask a DTA case worker to connect you to a Client Assistance Coordinator for an accommodation, or you can talk to the Client Assistance Coordinator in your local DTA office. Each DTA office has a Client Assistance Coordinator (CAC) who can help with the accommodation process and other disability related needs. You should explain why the disability means you need the accommodation you are requesting.

You can also talk to a CAC through a Zoom video conference through your computer at home or at a local DTA office.

Once you ask for an accommodation, the process to figure out what accommodation is appropriate is supposed to be interactive. For example, if you ask for something DTA says they cannot do, instead of denying your request, they should discuss other options with you.

DTA does not usually ask for medical proof that you need the accommodation. If DTA does ask for proof, you can ask the Client Assistance Coordinator to help you get it.

For a list of Client Assistance Coordinators in each local office, go to [Mass.gov/service-details/dta-disability-access](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dta-disability-access)

30 What are my rights if DTA denies my reasonable accommodation?

It is unusual for DTA to deny a request for reasonable accommodation. However, if DTA cannot approve the specific accommodation you ask for, they are supposed to discuss what they can do instead. If DTA has not approved an accommodation you think you need, though, you may appeal.

DTA should give you a written decision on your request for reasonable accommodation no later than 30 days from your request. If DTA denies your request, or any part of it, you can ask the DTA Central Office Accommodation Appeal Committee to review the decision by filling out the back of the form and sending it to DTA.

The Committee has 10 days to make a decision on the reconsideration request. You can also file your request directly with the Committee if the local office does not decide your request in 30 days.

If the DTA Central Office Accommodation Appeal Committee denies your request for accommodation in whole or in part or does not make a decision in 10 days from your request for a decision, you can request a hearing by filling out the back of the form and sending it to the Division of Hearings.

To get help with your request for review and/or your appeal, see **Appendix E** for a list of Legal Services offices. See also **Part 6** on your appeal rights.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide that apply to this section.

31 How can the DTA Ombuds Office help?

DTA has a special DTA Ombuds Office to handle client complaints and concerns. You can call the Ombuds Office any time you need help fixing your SNAP case.

DTA Ombuds Office: 617-348-5354

If you get an answering machine, leave a detailed message with your full name, your DTA Agency ID or SSN, and a phone number where you can be reached. If you do not get help with your case, contact an advocate. You also have the right to appeal any decision made by DTA See **Part 6**.

32 What if I have concerns about my safety and access to my case information?

DTA can take steps to protect you from people who may try to harm you or steal your personal information two ways:

First, if you are concerned about safety or unauthorized persons accessing your information, ask DTA to **put a “block”** on getting case information from DTA Connect or the automated part of the DTA Assistance Line. You can still talk to a live DTA worker over the phone or in person at a local DTA office but not through DTA Connect or the automated Assistance Line. Call DTA at **1-877-382-2363** and ask a worker to put a block on “online services.” You can remove the block at any time by calling DTA.

Second, you can also ask DTA for a **“heightened level of security”** on your case. This means that DTA will put extra privacy protection on your case, which can be very important for victim of domestic violence or violent crimes.

If you ask for heightened security, DTA will only talk with you *in person* at your local DTA office, or, during the pandemic, in specific ways you set up directly with them. You also won’t be able to use DTA Connect or the Assistance Line IVR. To ask DTA for heightened security, you need to fill out and send to DTA a Request for Heightened Level of Security form.

DTA has Domestic Violence Specialists in each DTA office to assist individuals who are experiencing DV. For information and ways to contact DV specialists at a local DTA office, go to <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dta-domestic-violence-services>

You can also talk to a DV specialist through a Zoom video call from your personal computer/smartphone or from at a local DTA office. Tell a DTA worker or the DV specialist if you want a virtual Zoom call.

33 What is a Photo EBT card and who needs to have one?

A small percent of DTA cash assistance (TAFDC) and SNAP households are issued EBT cards with a photo of the head of household. But the majority of cash and SNAP households do not need have a photo on their EBT card because they are “exempt” from the photo EBT rule.

Regardless of what your card looks like, all EBT cardholders and their household members have the *same rights* when using the EBT card to buy food. See additional information here: [Masslegalservices.org/photoEBT](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mass-legalservices-photo-ebt)

NOTE: Photo EBT cards do not include the household’s address nor date of birth. In general, the EBT photo card is *not a substitute* for a government issued ID card for any legal purposes such as: boarding an airplane, entering state or federal buildings that require ID, purchasing cigarettes or alcohol, or getting medications requiring ID.

There are generally *two* types of DTA EBT cards in Massachusetts:

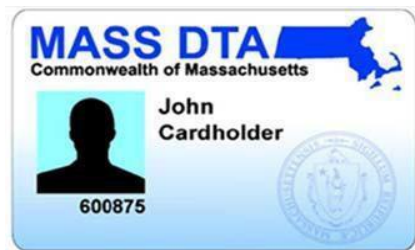
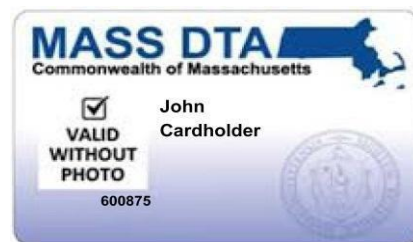


Photo EBT Card for “mandatory” (non-exempt) recipients.



“Valid-without-Photo” issued to exempt recipients.

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The back of each DTA EBT card states: “**This card may be used by any household member.**” All household members are authorized to use the EBT card at the grocery store. The PIN is your electronic signature.

Here are your **customer rights**:

- Stores must allow all household members to use the card, whether or not their name or picture is on the EBT card.
- Stores may not set up “SNAP-only” checkout lines nor refuse to let you use self-checkout lines.
- Store clerks must not treat SNAP recipients differently from other shoppers who use credit or debit cards.
- Stores must not ask to see your photo EBT card unless it is store policy to ask for ID of all debit or credit card customers.

Federal rules protect the right of all authorized members to use the EBT card and to not be discriminated against: [7 C.F.R. §274.7\(A\)](#), [7 C.F.R. §274.8\(b\)\(5\)\(iv\)](#) and [7 §C.F.R..278.2\(b\)](#).

Households EXEMPT from photo EBT card

You do not need a photo EBT card if you are the head of household (the person whose name is on the card) and you are:

- Age 60 or older
- Disabled or blind
- Under age 19
- Homeless
- A victim of domestic violence
- A person with a sincerely held religious belief.

DTA also does not issue photo EBT cards for authorized representatives nor for adults applying on behalf of their eligible dependents but *not applying for* themselves, such as a non-citizen applying on behalf of eligible children.

If you have a photo EBT card but you later became exempt from the photo EBT rules (for example, you turn age 60 or become disabled), you can ask for a “Valid-without-photo” EBT card. DTA will issue you a new EBT card without a photo and not charge you any replacement fee.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide that apply to this section.

Part 2

General Eligibility Rules

34 What is a SNAP household or assistance unit?

A SNAP household is an individual, or a group of individuals living together, who receive SNAP together. DTA also uses the term “assistance unit”.

The SNAP rules look at whether people who live together “*customarily purchase and prepare*” food together and consider their income in calculating the household benefits. In some cases, people who don’t typically buy and prepare food together still need to be in the same household. [106 C.M.R. §361.200](#). **Question 35 and 36** discuss who must be included in your SNAP household.

In contrast, needs-based cash assistance programs such as TAFDC, EAEDC and SSI, as well as MassHealth, consider who has a *legal responsibility* of persons who live together: spouses to spouses, parents to minor children. The SNAP rules are different.

This is a fundamental concept of the SNAP program, but it can confuse low-income households and advocates because the household rules are different from other needs-based programs.

35 Can I get benefits separately from other people I live with?

If you *buy and prepare most of your own food separately*, you should qualify for your own SNAP benefits – unless you are required to get SNAP

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with certain family members. See **Question 36**. The SNAP rules assume that it costs less money for a group of people to share the costs and time of buying and preparing food.

You are not required to store your food separately or to use a different stove or refrigerator. You are also not required to have cooking facilities to qualify for SNAP. [106 C.M.R. §361.200](#).

If you are sharing an apartment with others, you are *not required* to list your roommates on your SNAP application. You do not have to list their names, SSN or other information – *unless* you are buying and preparing most of your food with them. There are exceptions to this household rule if you are living with a spouse, your children under age 22 or your parents if you are under age 22. See **Question 36**.

Even if you have little or no income to buy your own food, you can still be a separate SNAP household. Many individuals get food from food pantries, periodic free meals, or they borrow money for food. This is not questionable. DTA should only ask for proof of your living situation or how you are getting by if the information you provide appears “questionable.” See **Question 17**.

Example 1: Jane and Steve are roommates who share an apartment. Jane recently lost her job and has no income. She started getting food from a local food pantry. Jane and Steve occasionally share a meal together, but most of the time they use their own food to prepare the *majority* of their food separately. Jane and Steve can be separate SNAP households.

Example 2: Sally is a single mother with one child. She is 25 years old and shares an apartment with her older sister, Rhonda. Sally pays half of the rent. She purchases and prepares the majority of her own food for herself and her child. Sally and her child can be a separate SNAP household from Rhonda.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

36 Who cannot be a separate SNAP household?

People who live under the same roof – whether or not related – who *purchase and prepare most of their food together* must be in the same SNAP household. They cannot be separate households.

Additionally, under the federal SNAP rules, some people who live together must be also in the same SNAP household, *even if* they buy and prepare most of their food separately. For example:

- A child under age 22 who lives with their parent(s) or stepparent(s) must be in the same SNAP household as the parent. [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(A\)\(3\)](#).
- A child (other than a foster child) under age 18 who lives with a responsible adult must be in the same household as the adult – regardless of relationship. [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(A\)\(2\)](#). There only exception to this rule if where adult is not exercising financial support or supervision of that child.
- A legally married couple who lives together must be in the same household, even if they never share food or meals together. [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(A\)\(1\)](#).

Example 1: Kelly is a single parent, age 20, of a 1-year-old daughter. They live with her parents who work. Kelly receives TAFDC for herself and her baby. However, due to her age, Kelly *cannot* get her own SNAP benefits and must be part of her parents’ SNAP household (if they get or are applying for SNAP). She and her baby are eligible as a separate SNAP household once she turns 22 if they purchase and prepare their food separately.

Example 2: Katherine is 65 years of age and receives Social Security. She cares for two grandchildren, ages 8 and 12, and receives child support for them. Katherine *cannot* get separate SNAP benefits for her grandchildren because they are minors, and she provides financial control and supervision for them.

Note: In joint custody situations, the parent who exercises most supervision gets SNAP benefits for child, even if the court order awards custody to

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other parent; if equal supervision, parents decide which parent receives SNAP for child. [DTA Hotline Q&A \(Feb. 2012\)](#).

How SNAP and TAFDC rules differ

Teen parents: Although a teen parent age 18 or older can get her own TAFDC grant for herself and her baby when living with her parents, the SNAP rules do not allow the teen to get her own SNAP benefits separate from her parents until she turns age 22. If her parents do not wish to apply for SNAP, the teen parent is not SNAP eligible.

Kinship families: A grandparent, stepparent, aunt, or other relative can receive separate TAFDC for a dependent child, without being on the TAFDC grant or having their income count. However, for SNAP, a relative who cares for a child under 18 in the home cannot get separate SNAP for that child.

See **Questions 43 and 44** on the option to opt out a foster child or foster adult.

Here's a quick summary of the household comp rules:

Scenario	Separate SNAP Household?
Unrelated persons who purchase and prepare most food <u>separately</u> from each other.	YES
Related persons – other than spouses or parents and children under age 22 – who purchase and prepare most food <u>separately</u> .	YES
Spouses who live together. Unmarried parents of children in common who live together.	NO
Persons under 22 years who live at home with their parents. Children under 18 living with adults who supervise them.	NO

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

37 What if I live with others but I have a disability that makes it difficult to prepare my food?

There are *two* options, even if you are unable to prepare your own meals:

Option 1: *If your disability makes you unable to purchase and prepare your own food*, you can get SNAP separately from the people you live with – even if they shop and cook food for you.

This option is available provided the *majority* of the food you eat is purchased with *your* income and prepared *for you* separate from the people you live with. However, this option is not available if you live with your spouse or parents (if you are under age 22) and they are doing the cooking and shopping for you.

There are many reasons why persons with disabilities might have meals prepared separately. You may have a special diet, eat meals at different times from others, or keep your income and living expenses separate from others. This should not prevent you from getting your own SNAP benefits.

Example: Tom is a 35-year-old disabled adult. He shares an apartment with a roommate, Joe. Because Tom is unable to buy and cook his own food due to his disability, Tom gives Joe money each month to buy his food and Joe prepares it. Sometimes they share a meal, but the majority of the food Tom eats is purchased with his own money and prepared separately. Tom qualifies for his own SNAP household.

Example: Tom is a 15-year-old disabled teenager and gets SSI. He shares an apartment with his dad. His dad uses a portion of his SSI income to buy food for the special diet recommended by his doctor. His dad also makes his food separately because of his strict dietary restrictions. Because Tom is under 22 – even though his dad buys and makes food separately for Tom – Tom does not qualify for his own SNAP. Tom and his dad must get SNAP together until Tom is age 22.

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Option 2: *If you are 60 or older and have a permanent disability, you may be able to get SNAP separately for yourself even though you share food bought and cooked with the people you live with.* [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(B\)\(4\)](#). To qualify for your own SNAP benefits, you must meet *three criteria*:

- Be severely disabled,
- Be age 60 or older, *and*
- The gross income of the other people you live with must be less than 165% of the federal poverty level (FPL).

If you do not get a benefit based on disability (such as Social Security Disability benefits), to prove your disability you can give DTA a statement from a physician that you cannot purchase food and prepare meals because of your disability. [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(B\)\(4\)\(a\)](#).

If you live with your spouse or your children under 22, they must be part of your separate SNAP household. [106 C.M.R. §361.200\(B\)\(4\)](#).

Example 2: Bertha is a 75-year-old disabled woman. She receives \$1,000 per month in Social Security benefits. Bertha lives with her 40-year-old daughter Mary, and Mary's two teenage children. Mary's gross income is \$1,200 per month. Mary purchases and prepares the meals for the entire household, including her mom Bertha. Since Bertha is *both disabled and over age 59*, she can qualify for a separate SNAP benefit. That's because her daughter Mary's gross income is below 165% of the federal poverty level for a family of three. Mary also has the option to apply for SNAP as a separate SNAP household with her children. The two separate households will receive more in SNAP benefits than if they were in one SNAP household of four persons.

Note: Households that are caring for frail elders or persons with disabilities and receive *adult foster care payments* can exclude ("opt out") the foster adult. This excludes the foster care payments as income and can increase the SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §361.240 \(F\)](#). **See Question 44.**

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

38 Are there special rules for seniors and persons with disabilities?

If you are an older adult 60 or older or meet the disability rules for SNAP (see **Question 39**) you may benefit from special rules including:

- More of your shelter costs can be deducted in the SNAP math. See **Question 81**.
 - You can claim out-of-pocket medical expenses to boost your SNAP benefits. See **Question 76**.
 - You may qualify for some SNAP benefits even if your gross income *exceeds* the 200% gross income test (but you must also meet the SNAP asset test). See **Question 63**.
 - If you are a legal immigrant adult, you may be exempt from the 5-year waiting period. See **Question 50**.
 - You may be eligible to apply as a separate SNAP household even if you live with others who buy and prepare food for you. See **Question 37**.
 - If you are 60 or older, you can use the DTA Senior Assistance Office for help. See **Question 25**.
-

39 How do I show DTA I am disabled?

Under the SNAP rules, you are considered to be disabled if you *receive* any of the following federal, state or private (pension) benefits:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or Social Security Disability benefits,
- EAEDC cash assistance benefits based on a severe disability,
- Certain disability retirement pensions,
- Railroad retirement disability benefits,
- Veteran’s disability benefits or benefits for a spouse or children, depending on severity of disability,
- MassHealth (Medicaid) for persons with disabilities (of if you had a disability determination, see below), *or*

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- TAFDC cash benefits where DTA determined the parent qualified as disabled (thus exempt from the TAFDC work rules and time limits).

Cash Assistance Disability Determinations

If you receive EAEDC or TAFDC cash assistance, in order to meet the SNAP disability criteria, you must meet the SSI standards of disability.

Currently, to show DTA you are severely disabled, DTA will ask you to complete an “EAEDC Medical Provider Statement” form. The form asks a medical provider to explain if your disability will last for 12 months or more or result in death. If they say yes, then DTA should list you as meeting the SNAP disability criteria in your case record.

MassHealth Disability Determinations

MassHealth does not regularly conduct disability evaluations unless required for a higher level of health care coverage. When MassHealth does a disability evaluation, they use DES disability standards to upgrade persons from MassCare Plus to MassHealth Standard and for CommonHealth. [130 C.M.R. §505.002\(F\)](#), [§519.007\(B\)](#) and [\(C\)](#).

MassHealth recipients often do not need a disability determination because the scope of health benefits is adequate to meet their needs. Individuals tend to apply for a disability determination if their income exceeds 133% FPL and they need more coverage under CommonHealth, or if they need long term nursing care services or other services not included in CarePlus.

Another reason to seek a MassHealth disability determination is if that would help you qualify for more SNAP benefits. The DES disability determination allows you to claim your out-of-pocket medical expenses and actual shelter costs that can boost your SNAP benefit. It can also help if you are an immigrant subject to the 5-year waiting period (see below).

To get a disability determination, fill out the *MassHealth Adult Disability Supplement*, and each of the Medical Records Release Forms. Send the full document to:

Disability Evaluation Services

UMASS Medical DES

P.O. Box 2796

Worcester, MA 01613-2796

For copies of the MassHealth Adult Disability Supplement, go to:

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[Mass.gov/doc/masshealth-adult-disability-supplement-english-0/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/masshealth-adult-disability-supplement-english-0/download)

Start this process by completing and submitting the disability supplement paperwork as soon as possible. It is possible that DTA may issue you back benefits based on disability.

For more information on the difference between MassHealth Standard and MassCare Plus, see MLRI's chart describing the programs here:

[Masslegalservices.org/content/careplus-table-comparing-benefits-standard](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/careplus-table-comparing-benefits-standard)

Immigrants and Disability Determinations

Legally present (LPR, parolees, battered) immigrants who are typically subject to the 5-year waiting period can be eligible without the waiting period if they get EAEDC and are severely disabled. DTA uses the information in the "EAEDC Medical Provider Statement" form to verify disability to skip the 5-year bar. See **Question 50**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

40 What if I am homeless or live in a shelter?

You do not need a permanent address, cooking facilities or a regular place to live to get SNAP. [106 C.M.R. §362.100](#).

- You can get benefits if you live on the street, are staying at a homeless shelter or a shelter for victims of domestic violence. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(B\)](#).
- You can also get SNAP even if you get free meals at the shelter or soup kitchen/meals program.
- You may also qualify for expedited (emergency) SNAP. See **Question 3**. And the *homeless deduction* should be used to calculate your countable income. See **Question 82**.

If you *do not have an address* where you can regularly pick up mail, you can have mail from DTA sent to a local organization such as a shelter that accepts mail for clients, or to a U.S. Post Office Box. If you have a smart phone or access to a computer, you can also use DTA Connect to see all the notices and forms DTA sends you. See **Question 23**.

Proof of identity and residence

When you apply, DTA will ask for *proof of your identity*. [106 C.M.R. §361.610\(G\)](#). DTA will also ask for your SSN (you can give it verbally if you know it).

Once DTA verifies your SSN through a data match, your SSN serves as proof of identity. And there are other ways you can prove who you are including a written statement from a staff person at a food pantry, detox program or shelter. [106 C.M.R. §361.640\(B\)](#).

DTA must accept reasonable proof that you are a Massachusetts resident. If you do not have proof because you are homeless, DTA should accept a self-declaration that you are a resident. If you are denied SNAP because DTA says you did not prove you are a Massachusetts resident, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

Homeless ABAWDs

If you are between age 18 and 49 without children and lack a stable nighttime residence, you may be *exempt* from the ABAWD (able-bodied without dependents) three-month time limit – once those time limit rules go back into effect. Note: **The 3-month ABAWD time limit is currently suspended.** See **Question 60**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

41 Am I eligible for SNAP if I live in a hospital, school, or other institution?

If you are living in a hospital, nursing home, prison or other institution for more than 30 days where you get the *majority of your meals* (more than half), you *do not qualify* for SNAP. Institutions include hospitals, boarding schools, nursing homes, mental health facilities, prisons and similar institutions. [106 C.M.R §361.240\(A\) and \(B\)](#).

However, there are a number of *exceptions* that permit residents of certain institutions to receive SNAP. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(B\)](#). You may still be eligible for SNAP if you live in the following settings:

- federally subsidized housing for the elderly,
- a group home that serve persons with disabilities and have less than 16 residents,
- a shelter for homeless individuals or families and shelters for victims of domestic violence,
- a teen parent living program *or*
- a drug or alcohol substance use treatment center (public or nonprofit). The center will require you to make them an authorized representative during your stay. If you move from the residential program, program should give you your EBT card and immediately report the change of address to DTA to ensure your SNAP benefits continue if you are still SNAP eligible. See **Question 9**.

Trouble Shoing Special situations

Home detention: If you are sentenced by a court to “home detention” (for example, you wear an electronic or prison bracelet at home), you are not considered to be living in an institution and should be SNAP eligible. See [DTA Transitions Q and A, pg 2 August 2001](#).

Battered individuals: A battered person who moves to *Domestic Violence shelter* can receive own SNAP benefits, even if still on SNAP grant of abuser from whom they fled. See [DTA Transitions Hotline Q &A pg 4 \(July, 2000\)](#)

Children in DCF or DYS Custody: You cannot include your children in your SNAP case if they have been placed in the custody of Department of Children and Families (DCF) or Department of Youth Services (DYS) for an extended period (more than 30 days). However, Social Security or other income received for the care of a *child in an institution* is not countable to rest of household. DTA Transitions Hotline Q&A, pg 4(June 2000).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

42 What if I am a boarder or I live in someone else's home?

If you rent a room in someone else's home and *do not get or pay for meals*, you are considered to be "a roomer." As a roomer, you can apply for SNAP as a separate household, so long as you purchase and prepare the majority of your meals separately from the other people in the house. [106 C.M.R. §361.230\(A\)](#). See **Question 35**.

If you live in someone else's home and you pay that person for a room and at least half your weekly meals, you are a "boarder." You are not eligible for SNAP benefits as a separate household. [106 C.M.R. §361.240 \(D\)](#).

If the household where you board is getting SNAP, DTA will either include or exclude you and your income in their SNAP benefits based on how much you pay for food. If excluded, DTA will then count what you pay for room and board (after certain deductions) as income to the host household.

If you do *not* pay a "reasonable amount" for meals, you must be included in the SNAP household of the household providing meals. That means your income will be counted in figuring the eligibility of the whole household. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(D\)](#). A "reasonable amount" is an amount that equals or exceeds the SNAP benefit level for your household size. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(D\)](#).

Example: Janet and Joe are both age 25 and married. They with Janet's mother, Fran who receives SNAP. Francis shoos and cooks for all of them. Janet & Joe pay Fran \$400/month for food and \$500/month for rent. They are considered "boarders" in Fran's home. Because \$400 is less for food than the maximum SNAP benefit amount for a household of 2, Janet & Joe must be part of Fran's SNAP household and their income counts. If Janet & Joe started purchasing and preparing most of their food separately, instead of giving Fran's money for food, they would not be required to be in Fran's SNAP household. They would qualify for their own SNAP benefits, depending on their income.

If you are 60 or older and/or disabled and live with others who provide meals for you, see **Question 37**.

43 What if I am caring for a foster child?

In general, children under age 18 and under the supervision of an adult must be part of the adult's SNAP household. However, if you have taken in a foster child, you can choose to *include or exclude* the child from your SNAP household benefits. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(F\)](#). And you can make this decision any time.

If you exclude your foster child from the SNAP case, the foster care payments and any other income you receive directly for the care of the child, such as child support or SSI, *will not count* as income to your SNAP household. For that reason, it is usually better to exclude the foster child to maximize the SNAP benefits for the rest of the household. However, the foster child cannot get SNAP benefits as a separate SNAP household.

Example: Sam and Susan Smith have two minor children of their own. They also care for a 10-year-old foster child, Jimmy, and receive \$600 per month in foster payments. The Smiths can apply for SNAP for themselves and their two children (a family of four), *excluding* Jimmy in the SNAP household and excluding the foster care payments. Alternatively, the Smiths can apply for SNAP for a family of five (2 adults, 3 children including Jimmy). In that case, their income plus the foster care payments will be used in the SNAP calculation.

For MLRI's Know Your Rights flier go to:

[Masslegalservices.org/content/foster-care-families-and-snap](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/foster-care-families-and-snap)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

44 What if I am providing adult foster care to an older adult or person with disabilities?

Adult Foster Care (AFC) is a special MassHealth program for frail elders and adults with disabilities who cannot live alone. [130 C.M.R. §408.410-438](#). MassHealth pays qualified AFC caregivers to provide in-home care to elder and disabled MassHealth recipients who would otherwise be in a long-term care facility. Sometimes, AFC caregivers may also be low income and qualify for SNAP benefits.

If you are responsible to care for a disabled adult under the Adult Foster Care program, you have the choice to *include or exclude* the adult fostered person from your SNAP household – even if he or she shares all meals with your family. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(F\)](#).

If the fostered adult is not included as a SNAP household member, *none* of the AFC payments paid to the caregiver or the income of the disabled adult counts for your SNAP benefits. In addition, none of the income of the disabled adult is counted (such as SSI or Social Security). In most cases, caregivers qualify for higher SNAP benefits. However, if excluded, an AFC adult cannot get SNAP benefits as a separate SNAP household.

Example: Frank and Emma Wilson provide adult foster care for Emma’s 88-year-old mother, Margaret, who lives with them. Emma takes care of her daily needs, including all her meals. Frank works part time earning \$1,800/month. The AFC Program pays Emma \$1,500 a month. Margaret also receives \$800 in Social Security. Under the SNAP rules, Frank and Emma can apply for SNAP benefits as a 2-person household, excluding Margaret. By excluding her, none of her Social Security income nor the AFC stipend count. DTA should only count Frank’s \$1,800 in earned income for a 2-person SNAP household. This is true even though the 3 of them purchase and prepare the household food together.

Option to exclude fostered adult:

A SNAP household can request that DTA remove a fostered adult from the SNAP household *at any time*. If you are getting lower SNAP benefits because a fostered adult is in the household and their income is being

counted (such as their SSI or Social Security), you can ask DTA to remove the fostered adult.

Disabled adults under age 22:

If the fostered adult is a disabled adult child under age 22 living with their parent who provides AFC care, unfortunately the family cannot exclude the fostered adult until they turn age 22 because of the SNAP household composition rules. See **Question 36**.

For MLRI’s “Know Your Rights” fliers go to:

[Masslegalservices.org/content/adult-foster-care-and-snap](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/adult-foster-care-and-snap)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

45 What if I am a college student?

Special SNAP eligibility rules apply to college students who are between the ages of 18 and 49 and enrolled *half-time or more* in a post-secondary institution (a college that requires students to have a high school diploma or GED to enroll). Most colleges consider half-time as typically two courses, 6 to 11 credits and full-time as typically 12 credits or more.

COVID 19 Note: As of March of 2023, the federal public health emergency is still in effect. The special student exemptions below are still in effect. We will update the Guide as this policy changes.

While the student rules sound complicated, **many students are SNAP eligible in Massachusetts!**

You may qualify for SNAP benefits while in college if you are low-income and meet *any* of the following:

- you have a \$0 Expected Family Contribution (EFC) based on your financial aid application (FAFSA) – *special rule during the pandemic*.
- you received a maximum Pell Grant or you were awarded federal work study, even if no work study job is available – *special rule during pandemic*
- you attend a *community college* in Massachusetts or another state

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- you attend the *Ben Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology* or *Quincy College* (a municipal college)
- you are enrolled in an *adult career and technical education program* (many offered by Voc/Tech high schools), **or** you are in a program that *does not require a GED or high school degree*— such as Adult Basic Ed and English for Second Language Learners
- you *receive MASSGrant* as part of your financial aid package
- you have a *work study job* (any hours of work), **or** your college awarded you *work-study* and you plan to accept a job if offered during the school year
- you are in college as part of a DTA-approved SNAP *education or training activity* or another government-sponsored education and training program
- you *care for a child living with you* who is under age 6, **or** a child age 6 to age 12 and either you are a single parent enrolled full time or you lack childcare to both attend school and work part-time.
- you receive *TAFDC benefits* (DTA cash if you are pregnant or parenting a minor child)
- you *receive a disability-based benefits* such as Social Security or SSI, EAEDC cash benefits, Veterans or MassHealth as disabled
- you have an *impairment or disability* that impacts your ability to both attend college and work 20 hours/week (the SNAP rules refer to being “physically or mentally unfit” to work and attend school)
- you are enrolled in college through the *Mass Rehab Commission* or a *mental health or substance abuse* rehabilitation program
- you are *working (non-work study job) an average of 20 hours a week or more, or an average of 80 hours/month.*

See [106 C.M.R. §§362.400 through 362.420.](#)

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Students on summer break/vacation

You are still SNAP eligible while on summer or vacation break as long as you are enrolled for the upcoming term. You are no longer considered “*continuously enrolled*” once you graduate, are suspended, expelled, drop out, or you are planning to enroll in college in the coming months but the term has not started yet. [106 C.M.R. §362.420](#).

Students living with spouse or parents

If you *live with your parents* and you are under age 22, you must be part of their SNAP household, even if you purchase and prepare your own food separately. If you are married and live with your spouse, you must be together in a SNAP household. See **Question 36**.

Students with meal plans

If you *live on campus* and get most (more than 2/3) of your meals through your meal plan, you do *not* qualify for SNAP. However, you may be eligible for SNAP when you are home during summer break if your family also gets SNAP, assuming you meet the other student status rules.

How SNAP treats financial aid and loans

The DTA SNAP rules *do not count any financial aid* in calculating your SNAP benefits. This includes federal, state, local and private financial aid. It includes loans, grants, scholarships, stipends and work study.

Verifying college student information

You can tell DTA in writing or verbally (for example, by phone) where you attend school and which of the above rules you meet. DTA should not ask for any proof of your student status unless the information you give them is found “questionable.” See **Question 17**.

Example: Terry applies for SNAP over the phone with DTA and sends in proof of his identity and resident. He tells the worker he is a Roxbury Community College student. DTA accepts his verbal statement and does not ask for any proof documents.

For more information, including Know Your Rights fliers and SNAP outreach fliers and infographics on SNAP for students, see: [Masslegalservices.org/Food4Students](https://masslegalservices.org/Food4Students)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

46 What if I have a criminal record or DTA says I'm a "fleeing felon" or violating my probation?

A criminal record, including a drug felony conviction, does not bar you from receiving SNAP benefits in Massachusetts. However, you can be barred from SNAP benefits if you:

- are "actively fleeing" prosecution or punishment for a felony, *or*
- violate a condition of probation or parole.

See [106 C.M.R. § 367.800\(D\)](#).

Fleeing felons

In order to bar you from SNAP as a fleeing felon, a law enforcement official must tell DTA of its intent to arrest you (within 20 or 30 days), and present to DTA an outstanding felony arrest warrant for any of the following National Crime Information Center Uniform Offense Classification Codes:

- Escape (4901)
- Flight to avoid (4902), or
- Flight-escape (4999)

See [7 C.F.R. §273.11\(n\)\(1\)\(ii\) and \(3\)\(i\),\(iii\)](#).

Parole/probation violators

To be considered violating probation or parole, law enforcement must be activity seeking to arrest you (within 20 or 30 days) to enforce the conditions of the probation or parole. [7 C.F.R. §273.11\(n\)\(1\)\(ii\) and \(3\)\(i\),\(iii\)](#).

Other SNAP rules:

Timely processing: DTA has to follow SNAP application timeliness standards. If it takes more than 30 days for DTA to verify this, DTA must process your application without taking into consideration fleeing felon or probation/parole violation status.

Treatment of income: If you are barred from SNAP benefits under these rules and you have income, all of your income counts against other members of your SNAP household. See **Question 74**.

House arrest: If you are sentenced to home confinement or home detention (for example, you have an electronic bracelet), you should not be denied SNAP because you are not still incarcerated. See **Question 41**.

Contact Legal Services if you are denied benefits because DTA determined you are a fleeing felon or violating your probation or parole. You can always ask to speak to a Supervisor, call the Ombuds Office or appeal

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

47 Who is considered a United States citizen?

You are a United States citizen if you were *born anywhere in the United States or its territories*, including Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. You are also a U.S. citizen if you were born in another country and then *naturalized*. [106 C.M.R. §362.200](#).

You may have “derived” U.S. citizenship if you were born abroad and at least *one of your biological parents* was both a U.S. born citizen at the time of your birth and lived in the U.S. at any time prior to your birth. If *both your parents* naturalized to U.S. citizenship before you turned age 18, you may also have derived citizenship. See [106 C.M.R. §362.210](#). Check with an immigration specialist if you think these rules apply to you.

The federal and state SNAP rules allow you to *self-declare your U.S. citizenship*, unless the information you provide is considered “questionable.” [106 C.M.R. §362.210](#). See **Question 13**. Note, U.S. citizenship of children should not be considered questionable solely because parents are immigrants. See [DTA Transitions Hotline Q&A, pg 2 \(March 2006\)](#)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

48 Am I eligible if I am a legal immigrant?

The SNAP eligibility rules for immigrants and refugees are very complicated. The SNAP eligibility rules affecting immigrants are different from cash assistance and MassHealth rules. See the chart in [Appendix D](#).

If you fall into one of the *three groups* below, you may qualify for SNAP. See [106 C.M.R. §§362.220-362.240](#). But for some categories of immigrants, you may also need to wait five years for SNAP benefits.

GROUP 1: Immigrants who have fled persecution

You qualify under the SNAP eligibility requirements if you:

- Entered the U.S. as a *refugee*,
- Granted *asylum* in the U.S.,
- Granted *withholding of deportation* or removal,
- A *Cuban/Haitian entrant*—defined as a national of Cuba or of Haiti granted humanitarian parole, has a pending application for asylum, is in removal proceedings or legal permanent resident status through special federal laws for Cubans and Haitians.
- A *Vietnamese Amerasian* immigrant (offspring of a U.S. citizen conceived during the Vietnam war),
- A *victim of trafficking in persons* (slavery or sex trafficking) and has applied for status under a special process with the Department of Health and Human Services, **or**
- *Nationals of Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine* who were granted certain legal statuses including those with Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), Humanitarian Parole or other special categories recently authorized by Congress.

If your immigration status falls under one of the above, *there is NO five-year waiting period*. That is true even if you got a green card (LPR status) after you had one of these refugee-type statuses.

GROUP 2: Green card holders, parolees and battered immigrants

You *may* qualify under the SNAP rules if you are:

- A *lawful permanent resident* (LPR), often called a “green card holder,”
- Granted *parolee status* for one year or longer, a status generally based on humanitarian or public interest reasons, (with the exception of certain Cuban, Haitian, Afghan, Iraq and Ukrainian evacuees who have special status as parolees – see above) *or*
- *Battered immigrant* who meets the requirements in **Question 51**.

Five year waiting period and exceptions for Group 2 immigrants:

Unfortunately, under federal law, some of the qualified immigrants listed above may need to wait five years in status to qualify for SNAP. The five starts from the date you entered into “qualified” status and includes the time the immigrant had parole or a pending VAWA before getting LPR status.

There are important exceptions. There is *NO five year wait* for:

- An immigrant child under age 18,
- An immigrant who is blind or has a severe disability *and* is receiving a state or federal disability benefit. See **Question 39**, *or*
- An immigrant with 40 qualifying quarters of work history. See **Question 49**.
- An immigrant from Haiti, Cuba, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Ukraine who was granted humanitarian parole, a Special Immigrant Visa or other special statuses for nationals from these countries (see below).

GROUP 3: Immigrants with other statuses

You meet the SNAP eligibility requirements, without the 5-year waiting period, if you:

- are a *Native American* born in Canada or Mexico (Native Americans born in the U.S. are already U.S. citizens),

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- were a *Hmong or Highland Laotian tribe member* during the Vietnam war or are the spouse, surviving spouse or unmarried dependent child of a tribe member, *or*
- are a *veteran of the U.S. military, an active duty service member*, or the spouse, widow or dependent of a veteran or active duty service member *lawfully residing* in the U.S. (even if not an LPR). See [106 C.M.R. § 362.240\(A\)](#) for a list of immigrants considered to be lawfully residing in the U.S.

Immigrants who are not SNAP eligible

Unless you fall within one of the above three groups, you are *not eligible* for SNAP for yourself. See [106 C.M.R. §362.220\(D\)-\(G\)](#). You may still file an application for U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant *dependents* who meet the SNAP eligibility rules. Your income will count in determining their benefits, but you will not receive any benefits for yourself.

Examples of *ineligible immigrants* include:

- Immigrant adults with LPR or parole status with *less than 5 years* in qualified status who do not meet the special exceptions above for certain countries, and are not disabled nor have 40 quarters of countable work history. See **Question 48**.
- Immigrants *lawfully present* or have work authorization under other provisions of federal immigration law but are not “qualified” immigrants. This may include applicants for asylum, applicants for adjustment (a relative or employer petition), immigrants granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or other statuses.
- An immigrant who is out-of-status or is undocumented, *or*
- An immigrant with a “non-immigrant visa” such as a college student, visitor/tourist, diplomat or business visa.

See **Question 52** for how ineligible immigrant parents can apply for eligible children, and **Question 54** for a description of how income of ineligible immigrants is counted to the rest of the household.

Resources and Trouble Shooting Tips:

Immigration documents: For copies of USCIS documents and a key to the USCIS immigration codes, see materials produced by National Immigration Law Center available at NILC.org/issues/economic-support/updatepage/

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Cuban and Haitian Nationals: DTA's Online Guide includes extensive guidance on the SNAP and cash eligibility of Cuban and Haitian entrants. See **Appendix G**. Note that Haitians and Cubans with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) may still qualify for SNAP if they entered or were granted other statuses, even if they have TPS. For information on the range of federal benefits available to Cuban or Haitian nationals who have pending asylum, humanitarian parole or are in removal proceedings, see also US Office of Refugee Resettlement's Fact Sheet, [Benefits for Cuban Haitian Entrants](#). See also US ACF Policy letter on [ORR Services for Cubans and Haitians without Work Authorization, Memo 19-06](#) of August 19, 2019.

Afghan and Iraq Special Immigrant Status and Parolees: DTA's Online Guide includes extensive guidance on the SNAP and cash eligibility of Iraq Afghan nationals and their dependents (spouses and children). See **Appendix G**. [See also USDA guidance re Afghan nationals issued October 15, 2021 and updated 1/5/23.](#)

Ukrainian humanitarian parolees: DTA's Online Guide includes extensive guidance on the SNAP and cash eligibility of Ukrainian parolees. See **Appendix G**. Note that Ukrainians paroled into the U.S. on or after February 24, 2022 are also eligible for SNAP and other federal benefits, regardless of the length of their humanitarian parole. [See USDA guidance re Ukraine nationals issued June 7, 2022.](#)

Pending Verification: If DTA has sent a request to USCIS for verification of immigration status, and that request is pending, DTA should issue SNAP benefits for up to 6 months pending the results (if the immigrant meets the other eligibility rules). [7 C.F.R. § 273.2\(f\)\(1\)\(ii\)\(B\)\(3\)](#) and [106 C.M.R. § 362.220\(C\)](#). If your documents are lost or stolen, contact Legal Services or an immigration specialist who can help you get replacement documents from USCIS and also provide an affidavit (sworn statement) on your status.

Expired documents: An expired document does not mean immigrant's legal status has expired. The DTA worker should presume the immigrant may still have current legal status and do SAVE check. [DTA Transitions FYI pg 9 \(Oct. 2007\)](#)

Fixing incorrect immigration information: USCIS has a special process to correct wrong or incomplete information in SAVE. See [USCIS.gov/save](#). You can also check your status here: [USCIS.gov/save/save-casecheck](#). However, you should work with an immigration specialist if you need to correct the information USCIS

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

49 How does my work history help so I don't wait five years for SNAP?

LPRs with **40 qualifying quarters (10 years)** of work history can often qualify for SNAP without the five-year waiting period. [106 C.M.R. § 362.220\(B\)\(7\)\(f\) and \(g\)](#). Establishing work history may also qualify you for TAFDC benefits, certain MassHealth benefits, or federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits if you are severely disabled or age 65 or older.

You can get work quarters credit for the following:

- *Work you did in the United States or a U.S territory.*
- *Work in any of 25 foreign countries where the U.S. recognizes work, including Europe, Australia, Chile, France, Japan, and South Korea, after certain dates (for example, work done in Ireland after Sept 1993 counts). See the DTA Online Guide page on LPRs [Verifying 40 Quarters](#) for the current list of allowable countries and dates.*
- *Work done by your spouse while married, including work done by a common law spouse even if you were not legally “married”, after separation but before divorce (you lose your spouse’s quarters upon divorce), and/or in the US and 25 foreign countries.*
- *Work done by your parents before you were 18. This includes work done by your parents before you were conceived, born, or adopted – including work done in the US and the approved foreign countries.*

Unfortunately, under the federal rules, only LPRs can claim work history to jump the 5-year bar. Parolees and battered immigrants cannot claim work history.

You can get credit for past work history even if you did not earn a lot. For example, based on the Social Security Administration’s [quarters of coverage tables](#), you will get credit for 4 quarters if you earned at least \$6,040 or more in gross annual earnings in calendar year 2022. In many cases, you may have worked for just one month or quarter and still get the full 4 quarters of countable work depending on your gross earnings.

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Note: Check with an immigration specialist before claiming credit for work done in the U.S. when the wage earner did not have work authorization or a valid Social Security Number. You can also correct your earnings record with Social Security in some situations if the earnings report is not accurate, but we recommend contacting an advocate to do this.

Restrictions on getting credit for work history

Under the federal rules, the LPR adult or child cannot claim credit for work done after December 31, 1996, if the *wage earner* also received one of the following federal means-tested benefits while working: TAFDC, SNAP, Medicaid or MassHealth, or SCHIP (health benefits for children).

If the wage earner was a grantee for an eligible child or spouse but *did not* receive any benefits for him or herself, the wage earner does not lose the right to claim the countable work quarters.

Example 1: Clara has been an LPR for 3 years. She recently lost her job in a factory. Her husband Jose, also an LPR, has been here for 8 years. They both have been working consistently and paying taxes since they arrived in the U.S. Clara has 12 quarters of work (3 years with 4 quarters in each year) and Jose has 32 quarters of work (8 years with 4 quarters in each year). The couple never received SNAP, Medicaid (MassHealth) or any other federal means-tested benefits. Clara can count her 12 quarters and her husband's 32 quarters of work for a total of 42 work quarters. Clara can apply for SNAP, she is not required to wait 5 years.

Example 2: Siobhan is from Ireland. She is age 31 and got her LPR status a few years ago. Her mother and father both lived and worked (and paid taxes) in the U.S. for 21 years, including for 8 years when Siobhan turned age 10 while she was staying with her grandmother in Ireland. Siobhan has been working as a home health aide, but her income is inconsistent, so she applies for SNAP. Siobhan can count her own work history for SNAP, but also her parent's work history in the U.S. before she turned age 18. Even though she is 30 and got her LPR status less than 5 years ago, she can likely qualify for SNAP through the combination of her current work history and her parent's work history when she was a minor.

Proving 40 quarters of work history

Work history can be confirmed through pay stubs, employer statement, union records, W-2, federal or state tax returns, SSA records, proof of self-employment earnings and business expenses, records of employment in other states, or from foreign countries where work history is accepted.

Receipt of Social Security survivor's benefits as a surviving spouse should be sufficient proof of work quarters for SNAP purposes because the deceased spouse's work quarter are used to calculate the survivor's benefits. See [DTA Transitions, Quality Corner, pg 6 \(July 2002\)](#)

DTA can also get information about an individual's work history through the SSA Quarters of Coverage History System (QCHS). If you think your spouse (or parent before you turned 18) may have work history, be sure to tell DTA so they can inquire about this person's work history as well. DTA should send the Social Security Administration a request for quarters of work history coverage.

DTA should issue you SNAP benefits for up to 6 months if you need time to verify work history or while DTA is waiting on a response from SSA. [106 C.M.R. § 362.220\(B\)](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

50 If I am a disabled immigrant, do I need to wait five years for SNAP?

You do not need to wait five years if you are a lawful permanent resident *adult* and you receive a disability-based benefit because of a severe disability. [106 C.M.R. §362.220 \(B\)\(7\)\(c\)](#). This policy also applies to battered immigrants and humanitarian parolees. If you are *under age 18*, you do not need to get a disability-benefit and there is no 5-year wait.

Question 39 explains the disability rules for SNAP and multiple ways you can qualify as receiving a "disability-based benefit," including through EAEDC or MassHealth.

51 What are the special immigrant rules for battered immigrants?

Immigrants abused by a spouse or parent (and the children or parents of abused immigrants) may be eligible for benefits even if their immigration status is pending. [106 C.M.R. §362.220\(B\)\(8\)](#). You may be eligible if you are no longer living with your abuser and you meet one of the following:

- Your spouse or parent is a U.S. citizen or LPR and filed a relative petition (usually called a USCIS Form I-130) to get you LPR status.
- You have a pending or approved self-petition for legal status as a victim of domestic violence. This is called a VAWA petition (“Violence Against Women Act”) or USCIS Form I-360.
- You have an approved or pending application for “cancellation of removal” or suspension of deportation filed as a victim of domestic violence.
- You are the dependent child of a battered immigrant who has filed for one of the above, even if you are not listed on the petition.

Five-year waiting period

If you are a battered immigrant adult, unfortunately the 5-year waiting period that applies to LPRs and humanitarian parolees also applies to you. [106 C.M.R. §362.220\(B\)\(8\)](#). But this 5-year rule does not apply to your minor children, nor to you if you are disabled and receive a disability-based benefit). [106 C.M.R. §362.220\(B\)\(8\)\(e\)](#). See **Question 50**.

Start date of the five-year waiting period

If you are a battered immigrant with a relative visa petition (Form I-130), the 5-year period starts the date the relative petition was filed (or the date that you entered the U.S. after it was filed if later).

If you are a battered immigrant who self-petitioned under VAWA, the start date for the 5-year period is the date that a “prima facie” determination was made by immigration officials for the VAWA petition (Form I-360) and not the date the final VAWA status was granted.

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Verifying eligible status

Some battered immigrants may have fled their abuser without documents. If so, DTA should accept a self-declaration from the battered immigrants as proof of filing for legal status while working with the immigrant to verify status. DTA should issue SNAP for up to 6 months if they or the immigrant have asked USCIS for verification of legal status and the request is pending. [106 CMR §362.220\(C\)](#).

Each DTA office has designated Domestic Violence specialists as well as protocol for handling communication with individuals who self-identify as DV victims. They can also help with verification issues. See **Question 32**.

Children of battered immigrants

There is no 5-year waiting period for *immigrant children* who are LPRs, have humanitarian parole status or are dependents of battered immigrants. [106 C.M.R. §362.220\(B\)\(8\)\(e\)\(3\)](#).

If you filed a self-petition under VAWA, it is possible your minor children may not be listed on the notices from the Department of Homeland Security. Most immigrant children have legal protections under the special rules for battered immigrants and other immigration statuses, a concept known as “derived status.” Contact an immigration specialist if this issue comes up.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

52 Can my children get benefits if I am an ineligible immigrant?

You have the right to apply for eligible household members, such as U.S. citizen children and spouses. If you or other household members do not have legal status or do not wish to receive SNAP, you can *exclude* yourself from the SNAP application.

When you apply for SNAP or cash, be sure to tell DTA if any member of your household wants to “opt out” of the application. You are not required to give proof of immigration status or supply an SSN for individuals in your household who you are not seeking SNAP for based on their immigration status. [106 C.M.R. §362.220](#).

However, if you are the immigrant parent of a child (or a spouse living in the household) and you are applying for your dependents, you still must give DTA information about your income and expenses. DTA will count your income in calculating the SNAP benefits for dependents.

DTA should only ask for proof of the U.S. citizenship of your children or other eligible household members if their status is “questionable.” [106 C.M.R. §362.210](#). Being a U.S. born child to immigrant parents is not questionable.

Further, receipt of SNAP for eligible dependents does not create “public charge” problems for the immigrant parent. See **Question 53**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section

53 Will getting SNAP benefits hurt my immigration status?

NO. It is safe to apply for and get SNAP for yourself if you are eligible, or on behalf of other eligible household members. It is also safe to get cash assistance for eligible dependents, such as your U.S. citizen children.

Public Charge

Sometimes federal immigrant officials ask immigrants applying for a Legal Permanent Resident status or admission to the U.S may be if they received certain public benefits. Immigration officials ask these questions to decide if an immigrant is likely to become a “public charge” – a determination that the immigrant is not able to support themselves and may rely on certain government benefits. If the immigration authorities determine someone is likely to become a “public charge,” the government can deny an application for lawful permanent residence, or deny admission (entry or reentry) to the United States.

There are only two types of benefits that *may* trigger a “public charge” determination:

- Programs that pay for long-term institutional care such as a nursing home, **and**
- Cash assistance benefits the immigrant receives for themselves, because they have little or no money, such as SSI, TAFDC and EAEDC. If the immigrant applies for eligible dependents, but not themselves, benefits for dependents do not trigger a “public charge” determination. In addition, cash special payments like the COVID stimulus payments or other benefits that are not needs-based, such as Unemployment benefits, are not considered for public charge.

In January 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) issued a Joint Letter to all states reiterating that receipt of *non-cash benefits such as SNAP* are not considered for public charge. Joint Letter [available here](#).

In September of 2022, the Biden Administration announced they issue updated federal regulations to confirm that receipt of SNAP and other non-cash benefits does not trigger public charge, [DHS press statement available here](#). These final regulations go into effect December 23, 2022, but the

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final rules are simply reinforcing existing policy. See important update from [Protecting Immigrant Families \(PIF\) here](#).

Reporting immigrant status information

DTA does not report immigrants to USCIS or Homeland Security. State SNAP agencies can only report immigrants who apply for benefits for themselves and show DTA a “final order of deportation.” See DTA’s longstanding policy in [DTA Transitions FYI, pg 8](#) (January 2004)

Further, State and privacy rules prohibit state workers from sharing information about your status with immigration authorities, unless you give written permission. The information on your SNAP application is private. [106 C.M.R. §360.400](#).

For more resources:

- Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) fliers and updates on public charge, [webpage here](#).
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, [Information about Public Charge and How It Might Affect You](#), updated March 22, 2021
- Mass Law Reform FAQs and updates: [MassLegalServices.org/publiccharge](#).
- Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition updates and FAQs: [MIRAcoalition.org/our-work/public-charge/](#)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section

54 How does DTA count the income of an ineligible immigrant?

Some ineligible immigrants live with other people who are eligible for SNAP, such as an immigrant parent living with U.S. citizen children. There are *two* different calculations depending on the immigration status:

Households with legally-present but ineligible immigrants

If you are *lawfully residing in the U.S.* but are ineligible for benefits – or you choose not to be part of the SNAP household – the SNAP benefits for the family members you live with are calculated using a special calculation. [106 C.M.R. §365.520\(B\)\(2\)](#).

The SNAP regulations define a broad group of immigrants who are considered “lawfully residing.” See [106 C.M.R. §362.240\(A\)](#). This list includes immigrants with work authorization such as applicants for asylum, TPS or pending VAWA petitions, as well as LPRs subject to the 5-year bar.

DTA’s calculation for households with lawfully present but ineligible immigrants involves *three* steps whether the ineligible but lawfully present immigrant is excluded and included in the calculation to arrive at the correct benefit under [106 C.M.R. §364.600\(C\)](#).

Example: Juana is an applicant for political asylum and was granted Employment Authorization. However, Juana is not eligible for SNAP until she is approved for asylum. Juana has two children who are both U.S. citizens. She currently earns \$1,250/month gross income and pays \$700 rent, plus heat and cooling costs. Her children have no income. Here’s how DTA calculates her benefits:

- **STEP 1:** DTA calculates SNAP for all household members, including the ineligible immigrant and their income.

DTA calculates the benefits for **three** people, including Juana and her two children. DTA counts all of Juana’s income and allows the income deductions. The SNAP would be \$740/month.

- **STEP 2:** DTA calculates SNAP for the eligible household members **excluding** the ineligible immigrant and their income. If the eligible children have countable income, their income is counted to determine their SNAP benefits.

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In Juana's case, the children have no countable income. The benefit for 2 persons with no countable income is \$516 a month.

- **STEP 3:** The household is eligible for the SNAP amount that is *lower* between Step 1 and Step 2. The rationale is so that households with ineligible immigrant members do not get more SNAP than if all members were U.S. citizens.

In Juana's case, the benefit for the children is \$516, the amount in Step-2 - which is less than the \$740 from Step 1.

Households with “undetermined status” members

If you are *an undocumented or in an “undetermined” immigrant status*, the SNAP benefit calculation is harsh. DTA will count *all* your income toward the eligible members, *without* considering your needs. [106 C.M.R. §365.520\(A\)](#). This calculation is identical to the calculation for households with a member who is sanctioned due to an Intentional Program Violation. See **Question 74**.

Example: In the case of Juana, above, suppose she does not have any proof of legal status. Because Juana has “undetermined status,” DTA will count 100% of her income against a SNAP benefit level for the 2 children only. The children will receive only \$461 in SNAP benefits.

55 Does the income of an immigrant's sponsor count?

If you *receive* financial support directly from the sponsor to pay for living expenses, that money treated as countable unearned income in calculating your benefits. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)\(7\)](#).

Example: Johann is an LPR from Germany. Every month his sponsor sends him a \$500 payment. DTA will calculate Johann's SNAP benefits counting \$500 of unearned income.

Sponsor's income you do not receive does not count if you are "indigent" (very low-income) and you *do not receive any payments* from the sponsor. "Deeming" is a legal term that means counting income from a third party – such as a sponsor – that you do not actually receive but is assumed to be available.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

56 Are there work rules for SNAP?

Any member of your household who is over 16 and under 60 years old – and not exempt – must register for work during the SNAP application process, this happens when you sign the application. [106 C.M.R. §362.310](#). SNAP work registration rules are different from the ABAWD time limit rules.

The SNAP ABAWD 3-month time limit is not in effect at this time. The “voluntary quit” rules, however, are in effect. See **Questions 58**. Check [MassLegalServices.org/DTA-COVID-19](#) for updates.

If you are between 16 and 59 years old, unless you are exempt, you agree when you sign the SNAP application that while you are getting SNAP:

- You will not quit a job where you are working 30 hours a week or more unless you have a good reason (“good cause”).
- If you are working 30 hours or more, you will not reduce your hours to less than 30 hours a week unless you have a good reason.
- If you are offered a job, you must accept it unless you have a good reason to refuse. See **Question 59** on “good cause.”

Exemptions from voluntary quit

The SNAP rules provide key exemptions from these rules. [106 C.M.R. §362.310\(B\)](#). These exemptions are relevant if DTA thinks you voluntarily quit while you are on SNAP or when you are applying (see **Question 57**) or reduced your hours, or if you are on strike (see **Question 59**). See **Question 58**.

The exemptions include if you:

- receive TAFDC or EAEDC benefits
- are pregnant (in your third trimester or later)
- are physically or mentally unfit for employment
- earn more than \$217.50 per week (federal minimum wage x 30)
- are a student enrolled in school at least half-time
- have applied for or get Unemployment Benefits

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- care for a child under age 6 or a person with a disability (this person does not need to live with you)
- are in a substance abuse treatment program

The voluntary quit rules while getting SNAP

If you are not exempt and you voluntarily quit a job without good cause *after the date you applied* for SNAP benefits, you are ineligible for three months but the rest of your household is still eligible. [106 C.M.R. §367.800\(E\)\(2\) & \(F\)](#).

Penalties increase for a second and third quit – to six months of ineligibility and twelve months, respectively. On the first quit, if you are the “head of household,” your whole household is ineligible for three months. On the second and third quit, if you are the head of household your whole household is ineligible for six months.

DTA voluntary quit punishments may be more severe than is allowed under the federal SNAP rules. Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if your SNAP is denied or stopped due to voluntary quit.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide for this section.

57 What happens if I quit a job shortly before applying for SNAP?

DTA can deny your SNAP application if you are not exempt from the “voluntary quit” rules (see **Question 56**) *and* you voluntarily quit a job without a good reason. [106 C.M.R. §362.310\(B\)](#)

The voluntary quit rule may apply to you if:

- you are not exempt from the voluntary quit rules (see **Question 56**),
- you quit a job where you were working 30 or more hours a week,
- you did not have a good reason for quitting or reducing work hours (see **Question 58**), *and*
- you are applying for SNAP within 60 days of quitting.

DTA must inform you about your rights and responsibilities when you apply for benefits, [106 C.M.R. §361.550](#), including telling you which household members are subject to the work requirements as well as the penalties for voluntarily quitting a job after you apply for benefits and/or refusing to comply with the work requirements.

Quitting a job before applying for SNAP

If you are the head of household and you voluntarily quit a job within the 60 days before you applied for SNAP with no good reason, DTA’s SNAP rules say that your *entire household* cannot get SNAP benefits for *three* months. [106 C.M.R. §367.800](#).

The disqualification penalties increase the second and third times the applicant quits a job without good cause.

This sanction or punishment on the entire household is more severe than is allowed under the federal SNAP rules. Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if your SNAP is denied due to voluntary quit.

Example 1: Frank worked for McDonalds until September 30th when he quit over a personal dispute with a co-worker. He applied for SNAP for his family on October 15th. He is subject to the voluntary quit rules. Because he quit his job within 60 days of his

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SNAP application, DTA says the whole family is ineligible for three months. If he can show he had a good cause reason for quitting his job the family is eligible as of the date he applied (October 15th).

Proof of income ending or termination from a job

Currently, DTA workers should *not* ask for proof of a job that has ended (terminated) nor count income that has ended. DTA should accept verbal or written statements about income that has ended.

The only exception to this COVID policy is when DTA gets conflicting earnings data from a database called Equifax or “The Work Number” that some employers (usually large companies or chains) use to report earnings.

If you need help getting information from a past employer, you can give DTA permission to make a “collateral contact” with the employer directly. See **Question 16** and **Appendix C. 106 C.M.R. §361.640(B)**. Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if you are asked to verify that a job ended.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON 5 Online Guide on this section.

58 What is considered a “good cause” reason if I quit my job?

There may be many good reasons why you had to leave a job or reduce your job hours. “Good cause” for quitting a job or decreasing your work hours includes:

- You lack state-standard childcare during the hours of your work, including when you lack special needs childcare for a disabled child.
- You have a family crisis or emergency that you have to deal with during your work hours.
- The employer makes unreasonable work demands, such as not paying you on schedule.

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- Employment becomes unsuitable because it is below the federal or state minimum wage; the work activity discriminates against you on the basis of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, or physical or mental handicap; there is a strike or lockout; the employment places unreasonable risks on your health or safety; the hours interfere with your religious observances; you are required to travel more than two hours/day or, if walking, to walk more than two miles round-trip.
- If you were working more than 20 hours a week, and, for reasons beyond your control, your employment stops or your wages go down.
- If the amount you are paid in a week equals what you would be paid if you worked at least 20 hours and you were paid the *federal* minimum wage, and, for reasons beyond your control, the employment stops or wages decrease. The federal minimum wage in 2022 is still \$7.25/hour – which means you need to earn \$145 or more per week before taxes.
- You left employment because it was seasonal or migratory, or you are between temporary jobs.
- Acceptance of another job or enrollment in a school or training program requires you to move away or to leave your job.
- You are under age 60 and resigned from your job but your employer considers it retirement.

See [106 C.M.R. §362.340](#) and the additional good cause provisions in [106 C.M.R. §362.330\(A\)](#).

You don't have to show good cause for leaving a job if you are exempt from the voluntary quit rules. [106 C.M.R. §362.340](#).

Even if not exempt, you do not need to prove “good cause” if you left employment because the employer fired you or asked you to quit, if you reduced your hours of work but did not leave your work, if you stopped a self-employment business or if you quit a job for a new job that fell through. [106 C.M.R. §362.340\(D\)](#).

If you need to show DTA good cause you need to verify the good cause. For example, give DTA a statement about the emergency situation with the name and phone number of someone who can confirm the information (a “collateral contact”).

If your SNAP is reduced, terminated, or denied due to voluntary quit, contact a local Legal Services advocate or contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

59 What are the rules if I am on strike?

There are negative SNAP rules that affect people who are on strike when they apply for SNAP. Only some strikers are subject to these rules.

You are not subject to the negative SNAP rules if:

- your former boss locked you out or permanently replaced you, *or*
- you are not on strike but you cannot work because other workers are on strike or because you are afraid to cross a picket line, *or*
- you were “exempt” from the SNAP “voluntary quit” rules on the day before the strike. Common exemptions include if you are 60 or older, care for a young child, or an eligible college student. See **Question 56** for a full list of who is exempt.

If you have to meet the striker rules and are striking when you apply, you cannot get SNAP *unless* your income was low enough before you went on strike that you would have qualified for SNAP.

If your income was low enough to qualify, DTA will count either the value of your current monthly income or the value of your income before you went on strike to calculate the SNAP benefits for your household – whichever income amount is higher. [106 C.M.R. §361.240\(E\)\(2\)](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide on this section.

60 What is the “ABAWD” 3-month time limit for childless adults ages 18 to 50?

Outside of the pandemic, many childless adults – ages 18 through 49 – can only get 3 months of SNAP in a 36-month period unless the individual is exempt from or meeting certain work rules. This federal SNAP rule affects individuals determined to be “able-bodied adults without dependents” or “ABAWDs.” See 106 C.M.R. §362.320.

You may be exempt from this rule if you have a short- or long-term incapacity or disability, are homeless, living with a child under age 18, are pregnant, attending college as a SNAP-eligible student, are enrolled in an approved education and training program or meeting other exemptions. You are also exempt if you are working or self-employed 20 hours a week or more. If not exempt, ABAWDs are required to engage in certain activities to continue their SNAP unless they have good cause.

The ABAWD time limit is currently not in effect. It will continue to be suspended in Massachusetts until at least July 1, 2023. . Check [MassLegalServices.org/DTA-COVID-19](https://www.masslegalservices.org/DTA-COVID-19) for updates about who may be impacted after July 1, 2023.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Users Guide for links to this section.

61 Can I enroll in an education or training through DTA’s “SNAP Path to Work” program?

YES. DTA works with many employment and training providers to offer job search, on-the-job training and training programs for SNAP recipients. These services are offered through DTA’s “SNAP Path to Work” program.

Any SNAP recipient age 16 or older can volunteer for a SNAP ET program. [106 CMR §362.310\(B\)](#). If you are approved, you do not need to pay for the training program. You can enroll and participate for free.

Plus, if you are doing an employment and training program through DTA, DTA will provide money for transportation and connect you to a voucher for free childcare if you have children.

The SNAP Path to Work providers should be able to:

- Help you update your resume
- Help you develop interview skills or look for work.
- Enroll you in education programs that include English as a second language, Adult Basic Education or GED.
- Enroll you in a community college or other certificate program to help you get a specific skill.
- Help you build other job skills.

To learn more and find a program, visit SNAPPathToWork.org

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

Part 3

Financial Eligibility

62 What is financial eligibility?

You must meet the SNAP *income tests* to get SNAP benefits. There *is no asset test* for most Massachusetts households. See **Question 67**.

There are three basic steps in the SNAP math:

1. Your *countable gross income* must be under the financial limit for your household size.
2. Your *countable net income* is determined after allowing certain deductions for shelter, dependent care and some other expenses.
3. Your *monthly SNAP benefit* is calculated by subtracting 30% of your countable net income from the maximum SNAP benefit for your household size.

The financial eligibility rules are confusing. **Part 3** walks you through the financial rules step-by-step.

Financial Calculation Tools:

- ✓ Check out our on-line and mobile-friendly SNAP calculator at [Masslegalservices.org/SNAPCalculator](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAPCalculator). An Excel spreadsheet calculator is also available at that link for quick calculations.
- ✓ For a simple one-page SNAP Worksheet, go to [Appendix A](#).

63 When do assets count?

There is **no** asset test for *most* SNAP households. The majority of states including Massachusetts use a federal option, known as “categorical eligibility,” which allows states to eliminate the SNAP asset test for most households. [106 C.M.R. §§363.110](#) and [365.180](#).

There are *four* situations when DTA will ask about your assets:

- **Expedited benefits:** If you need SNAP benefits quickly, you may qualify if you have less than \$150 in countable income and less than \$100 in *liquid assets* (cash on hand, money in the bank), or if your shelter costs exceed your income and liquid assets. [106 C.M.R. § 363.100](#). Having assets does not affect your ongoing SNAP, just your right to get expedited SNAP. See **Question 3** about expedited SNAP.
- **Households with at least one member 60 or older or disabled with gross income above 200% FPL:** If you are age 60 or older or disabled and your gross income exceeds this level, DTA will ask about assets. Your assets must be **below \$4,250**. Assets include bank accounts, stocks, bonds, real estate other than your home, etc. Assets do not include tax-deferred retirement or education accounts, your home or land it sits upon, a car or other excluded items. See [106 C.M.R. §363.130](#) lists countable assets, [106 C.M.R. §363.140](#) lists non-countable assets.
- **Income from assets:** Any income you receive from an asset does count as income, including interest earned on savings and dividends you receive. [106 C.M.R. § 363.220\(B\)\(5\)](#). This also includes withdrawals from your assets on a regular basis (vs one time). If interest is paid quarterly or annually, DTA will average it out over the three, or twelve, months. [106 C.M.R. §364.340](#). DTA may ask for bank statements, tax filings or other proof of the amount of interest or dividends you receive.
- **If you or a household member is disqualified** due to an intentional program violation (fraud) per [106 C.M.R. §367.800](#). These households must have less than **\$2,750** in assets.

Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if DTA says you are ineligible due to your assets and you think it is a mistake.

DTA Online Guide: See Appendix G for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

64 Is there a gross income test for SNAP?

Yes! Most SNAP households need to have gross income under 200% of the federal poverty level. *Gross income* is your monthly income before any taxes or deductions. [106 C.M.R. §364.370](#), [106 C.M.R. §365.180](#).

Household Size	Gross Income Test 200% FPL*
1	\$2,430
2	\$3,287
3	\$4,143
4	\$5,000
5	\$5,857
6	\$6,713
7	\$7,570

*These numbers are effective as of February 1, 2023. For the most up to date numbers, go to: [Masslegalservices.org/content/ma-snap-calculation-worksheet](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/ma-snap-calculation-worksheet)

1 and 2 person households

All eligible 1 and 2 person households with gross income under 200% FPL will receive at least the minimum SNAP benefit, currently \$23/month. See accordance with [106 C.M.R. §364.600\(A\)](#). See **Question 85**.

Households that Pay Child Support

If a household member *pays legally obligated child support* to a child outside the home, the child support is excluded from countable income – meaning it is also excluded in the gross income test. [106 C.M.R. §363.230\(O\)](#). See **Question 78**.

Households with members age 60 or older or disabled

There is no gross income test for households that include an elder or disabled member. However, to qualify for SNAP, the household must meet the *asset test and the net income test*. See **Question 63**. These households must also have very high shelter and/or medical expenses (very low net income) to qualify for any SNAP benefit. There is no minimum SNAP benefit for 1 or 2 person households in this situation.

Households with a sanctioned member

If you are a member of a SNAP household where an adult member has committed an IPV (fraud), the SNAP rules use a lower *130% FPL gross income threshold*. In the SNAP math, the sanctioned member is not included in the SNAP household size for the remaining members-however if the sanctioned member has income, their income is included. [7 C.F.R. §273.2\(j\)\(2\)\(vii\)](#). See **Question 74**. The sanctioned household is also subject to the asset test. See **Question 63**. **Appendix B** includes the charts for the 130% gross income and 100% net income tests.

See [106 C.M.R. §§365.180, 364.976, 364.950](#).

Snapshot of the SNAP income and asset tests

	SNAP Asset Test	Gross Income Test
<i>Family with children, pregnant woman</i>	NO	200% FPL
<i>Persons age 18-60, no kids, not disabled</i>	NO	200% FPL
<i>Elder/disabled household</i>	NO	None (if income below 200% FPL)
<i>Elder/disabled household – gross income > 200% FPL**</i>	YES	None
<i>Household member under sanction due to IPV</i>	YES	130% FPL

** Note, household’s net income must be low enough to qualify for a benefit. Households above 200% FPL gross income do not receive the \$23 minimum benefit.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

65 What income is not counted?

DTA looks at total monthly income to decide if you are eligible for SNAP benefits and how much you will get—but *not all income counts*. [106 C.M.R. §§ 363.220\(C\), 363.230](#).

Here are examples of income that *does not count* for SNAP:

- Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credits.
- Federal and state tax refunds and other non-recurring lump sums of money such as insurance settlements or back benefits from other programs. [106 C.M.R. §§ 363.130\(E\), 363.230\(I\), 363.140\(G\)\(6\)](#).
- Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020.
- VISTA, Youthbuild, AmeriCorps, and Foster Grandparent allowances, earnings, or payments for persons otherwise eligible.
- Legally obligated child support payments that you pay for a child who is living outside the home. See **Question 78**.
- Lump sum payments – such as inheritances, tax credits, damage awards, one time severance pay, or other *one-time* payments.
- Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot program payments funded (fully or in-part) by a private or nonprofit organization. Currently this includes: Family Health Project, Chelsea Eats, Cambridge Rise, United South End Settlements, Rise Up Cambridge and the Pediatric RISE Program.
- Reimbursements – money you get to pay you back for expenses, including training-related expenses and medical expenses. Payment received for certain DTA Employment and Training programs is non-countable as a reimbursement payment,

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- Anything you do not get as cash – such as free housing or food, or money that is paid directly to a landlord or utility company made by a relative, friend or agency that has no legal obligation to do so.
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) stipends paid to older workers doing part time community service work.
- Cash contributions given to you that provide for *part* of your housing, food or other needs that are paid by a person or agency that has no legal obligation to do so. See **Question 66**.
- Veterans Services (M.G.L. c 115) payments made by vendor payment directly to your landlord or utility company.
- Money earned by a child under age 18 who is attending high school or elementary school, provided the child lives with a parent or other responsible adult.
- Up to \$30 per household member in a three-month period that is not regular (such as money from odd jobs).
- Up to \$300 in a three-month period from private charities.
- All financial aid - federal, state and local and private - to college students. This includes grants, loans, scholarships, work-study, assistantships and fellowships. See **Question 45**.
- Loans from private individuals and financial institutions, including loans on the equity of a home (reverse mortgages). See **Question 66**.
- The first \$130 per month in training stipends.
- One-time payments, such as tax refunds, state and federal earned income tax credits (EITC), insurance settlements, and back benefits from other programs.
- Combat pay earned by a service member while they are actively serving in a federally-designated combat zone.

Verification of non-countable income

The SNAP regulations state that you do not need to verify non-countable income unless the information you provide is inconsistent or questionable. See [106 C.M.R. §§ 361.610\(A\), §§ 361.610\(K\), 363.210\(D\)](#). See **Question 17** regarding when something is considered “questionable.”

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

66 Does DTA count gifts or contributions?

If you get regular gifts from non-legally responsible friends or relatives (such as your parents if you are over 18, or your aunts and uncles), these gifts do NOT count as income as long as the money is designated for a *specific living expense* and *does not exceed the amount of the expense*. Living expenses include but are not limited to: rent, mortgage, fuel, utilities, food, child care, car payments or car insurance, clothing or toiletries, or transportation. [106 CMR §363.230\(A\)](#).

But, unlike loans you plan to repay, DTA may calculate your deductible expenses at a lower amount if the gift lowers the amount you are responsible to pay for shelter, dependent care, or medical costs.

Contributions made for a portion of other basic living needs – such as transportation or toiletries – also do not count (and do not lower your deductible costs).

Example 1: Jill’s rent is \$1,200 per month. Jill explains that her aunt regularly gives her \$400 per month toward her rent. DTA does not count the \$400 as income, but DTA calculates Jill’s rent at \$800/month in determining her SNAP benefits. This reduces her shelter cost deduction and reduces her SNAP.

Example 2: Jeff’s work hours were cut, and his cousin gives him \$200 per month towards his car payment and insurance, which he needs to get to work. Jeff’s rent is \$900 per month. DTA does not count the \$200 as income, nor does DTA decrease his shelter costs because the contribution is for Jeff’s car costs and not his rent.

Verifying contributions

DTA policy states that households who get a cash gift from non-legally responsible persons must provide proof of the contribution, including information on who the payments are made to, the amounts, what the payments are intended to cover, and how often the payments are made.

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DTA must accept the *best evidence available* if the person making the contribution is unwilling or unable to make a statement about the gift. See **Question 16**.

There are many situations where you may not be able to get this verification. For example:

- You are concerned that asking for proof from the friend or relative will cause the person to stop gifting you money.
- The friend or relative is unwilling to go on record with DTA about the money they give you.

If you cannot get a letter from the person giving you the money – for whatever reason – explain this to DTA in writing. In your statement, you can explain what the payments are for, and how often you get them. If DTA denies or terminates your benefits due to a contribution issue, you can ask to speak to a Supervisor, the DTA Ombuds Office, or file an appeal.

If the money you receive from others is considered a loan, be sure to clarify that you plan to pay back the money with DTA. Loans are non-countable income. [106 C.M.R. §363.230\(E\)](#). DTA may require verification in the form of a statement signed by the lender and the recipient indicating the payment is a loan and must be repaid. If the loan is recurring, DTA may ask for an affidavit from the loan provider regarding repayment details.

DTA Online Guide Section: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

67 What is earned income?

Most earned income is countable income for SNAP purposes. [106 C.M.R. §363.220 \(A\)](#). Earned income includes:

- Gross earnings from wages and salaries, including earnings diverted or garnished by an employer for a specific expense. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(A\)](#). This includes short-term disability payments from your employer if you are still an employee.
- Gross earnings from self-employment after allowable business expenses (business expenses do not include personal income taxes or FICA). See **Question 69**.
- Income from boarders (persons who get a room and meals from you) after subtracting the cost of doing business, as long as the boarder is not part of the SNAP household. [106 C.M.R. §365.200](#). See **Question 42**.
- Income from rental property minus business expenses, provided you or a household member manages the property for at least 20 hours per week. [106 C.M.R. §365.930\(A\)](#). See **Question 71**.

Gross income is your earnings *before* taxes, FICA or other mandatory payroll deductions.

Gross income does not include the value of employee “credits” for employee benefits such as health insurance that cannot be taken as cash by the employee. See **Question 65**. Gross income may also not include legally obligated child support paid by a noncustodial parent. See **Question 78**.

Examples of non-countable earnings

- Earnings of a dependent child under age 18 who attends school is *not countable* income. [106 C.M.R. §363.230 \(H\)](#).
- Work study and college or graduate assistantships are not countable. See **Question 45**.
- Stipends paid to otherwise eligible AmeriCorps, VISTA, Youthbuild, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and others doing service work count. See **Question 65**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

68 How does DTA double-check income and other information?

Like all states, DTA uses different government and private company computer matches to find unreported income and check other information.

If DTA finds out information about your household that they think you did not report, they may contact you for more information. If you were required to report income or other information at a specific time and you failed to do so, you may have an overpayment. It is also possible you could be sanctioned (cut off for a period of time), if a hearing officer decides you *intentionally* failed to report information. See **Question 115**.

Most SNAP households are not required to report any changes (such as a new job) until the Interim Report or Recertification unless the household's gross income exceeds the gross income test for the household size. See **Question 95**.

When DTA gets information directly from certain agencies or programs, DTA may be able to act on the information it gets from these sources without contacting you. In other cases, it cannot act on information it gets until your Interim Report or Recertification. See **Question 99**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

69 How is self-employment income counted?

Self-employment income is calculated by subtracting the cost of doing business from the gross income or “profit” from the business, but before subtracting FICA or income taxes.

You may be self-employed if you have your own business or you provide services as a contractor or sub-contractor (such as childcare, carpentry, IT, plumbing, taxi services, or snow plowing). Most “gig economy” workers – including Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit and Uber Eats -- are also self-employed as “independent contractors.”

Self-employed workers often underreport their costs of doing business. Identifying all your business expenses can make a big difference in both qualifying you for SNAP if your pre-tax net income is below 200% FPL, as well as lowering your countable net income to boost your SNAP benefits.

Examples of self-employment business expenses

- use of your own car, or leasing a car (for example as a driver for Uber or Lyft) and all the costs associated with running that car and giving rides (insurance, excise taxes, gas, repairs, your cell phone, etc.)
- rent and utilities you pay for your business space (including a portion of the costs of your home if you have an at-home business)
- rental, repair and replacement of equipment (such as a taxi, tractor, boat, or beauty salon equipment)
- costs of supplies (such as food, diapers or toys provided in a day care setting, housekeeping equipment, products for a beauty salon, etc.)
- wages you pay to other employees who work for you
- stock or inventory, raw materials used to make a product, including seed, fertilizer, supplies for crafts or furniture building
- mortgage (including the principal and interest), and taxes paid on income-producing property
- legal and accounting fees, licenses (such as a day care license) and permits to operate the business

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- telephone and internet expenses, advertisement costs, computers, postage, paper and other business supplies.

See [106 C.M.R. § 365.940](#). If these expenses are verified, DTA will allow them as part of the costs of doing business in calculating your countable gross income *before* the 20% earned income deduction.

Example: Jason is an Uber driver. He pays \$500/month to lease the car plus insurance, gas and cell phone service to get customers and report rides. These are pre-tax deductible expenses.

Example: Karla sells cosmetics from her home, buying the product directly from the manufacturer. She can deduct from her gross income the cost of the cosmetics as well as costs involved in reaching customers (phone, mailing costs, website, advertising).

Example: Sarah provides day care in her apartment. She pays more for oil and electricity to heat her home than she would otherwise use. Sarah also buys food for snacks and diapers and pays for a day care license. A portion of her heat/utility costs can be claimed as a business expense, as well as the cost of snacks, license and other supplies for her business.

You can also claim business expenses incurred setting up your business *before* you applied for SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §365.030\(B\)](#). However, you cannot claim net losses on your business. And you cannot claim the money you set aside for income tax or retirement funds (these expenses are considered part of the 20% earnings disregard). [106 C.M.R. §365.950](#).

Rental income is treated as unearned income unless you spend least 20 hours a week managing the property. [106 C.M.R. §§363.220\(B\)\(5\)](#), and [365.930\(A\)](#). See **Question 71**.

Averaging self-employment income

Self-employment is usually averaged over a 12-month period *unless* the income is intended for a shorter period (e.g., summer income). Tell your SNAP worker you wish to have it cover a shorter period of time because of anticipated changes. [106 C.M.R. §§364.340\(B\)](#), [365.960](#).

After DTA determines your pre-tax “gross” monthly self-employment income after pre-tax business expenses, DTA deducts 20% of that gross income as an earnings disregard—just like if you had regular wages or employment. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(B\)](#).

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Example: Millie netted \$10,000 last year from her taxi service after her business expenses (insurance, gas, taxi medallion, maintenance, monthly loan repayment on vehicle). She does not expect her pre-tax net income to change this year. DTA should average this \$10,000 over 12 months to get a monthly figure of \$833/month. DTA then subtracts the 20% disregard from the \$833/month, which reduces her countable earned income to \$667 per month.

Verifying self-employment income

DTA may ask for a copy of your “Schedule C” tax record or a statement from an accountant. If you have not made enough to file taxes or done a recent quarterly tax filing, or do not have an accountant, you can verify your income based on the best information available. That may include as a self-declaration of your income. [106 C.M.R. § 363.210\(G\)](#).

For example, DTA should accept a statement explaining profits and losses (business expenses) if you do not have a recent Schedule C or the Schedule C reflects out of date income. You can sign and date this statement and are not required to submit additional proofs unless DTA has questions about the information provided.

DTA Online Guide Sections: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

70 What is unearned income?

Most sources of unearned income are counted in calculating your SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)](#).

Countable unearned income includes:

- Needs-based cash assistance including TAFDC, EAEDC, SSI and Veterans Services (Chapter 115) benefits. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)\(1\)](#). Chapter 115 benefits are noncountable when the benefit is paid directly to a third party (such as landlord) by your Veterans Services Officer.
- Cash benefits based on past earnings or service, including Unemployment Insurance, Workers Compensation, Social Security, federal Veteran's benefits, and other pension benefits. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)\(2\)](#).
- Foster care payments received for a child or disabled adult who is *included* in the SNAP household. These are *not* countable if you choose to exclude the foster child or adult from your SNAP household. [106 C.M.R. §§361.240\(F\), 363.220\(B\)\(2\)](#). See **Questions 43 and 44**.
- Child support and any income from trusts, alimony or other sources paid directly to you. Child support payments made to TAFDC recipients that must be assigned to the Department of Revenue (DOR) are *not* countable, even if erroneously received by the TAFDC household. [106 C.M.R. §§363.220\(B\)\(3\), \(C\)\(6\)](#).
- Interest payments, dividends, royalties paid from your assets, or other direct money payments or regular pension withdrawals. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)\(4\)](#). These monies still count as income, even though the assets themselves do not count. Capital gains from the sale of personal assets are usually excluded as nonrecurring lump sum income.
- TAFDC or EAEDC benefits diverted to a landlord or other third party vendor payments. [106 C.M.R. §§363.220\(C\)\(2\), \(C\)\(3\)](#).
- The portion of a TAFDC, EAEDC or SSI grant that is deducted because an individual was sanctioned or is repaying an overpayment due to an *intentional failure to comply with requirements* of these programs. See **Question 115**.

Verification of unearned income

DTA typically uses government databases to verify Social Security Retirement or Disability Insurance (RSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), MA Unemployment Benefits and child support that is paid to a family through the Department of Revenue (DOR). DTA should use these databases to verify unearned income and not ask you to produce a written statement about the benefit amount unless there is a discrepancy between what you reported and what the databases say. See **Question 99**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

71 How is rental income treated?

The net amount of rental income you receive – *after* the costs of homeownership or lease of a building – is countable unearned income. It is earned income only if you spend more than 20 hours a week managing and maintaining property. [106 C.M.R. §365.930\(A\)](#), [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(B\)\(5\)](#)

Homeownership costs include what you pay on a mortgage (principal and interest), homeowner's insurance, property taxes, water and sewer charges, repairs, trash collection, utilities shared by the entire home, etc. [106 C.M.R. §365.930\(A\)\(1\)](#), [106 C.M.R. §365.940](#).

If you own your home and rent out a room or apartment, you can deduct a *pro rata* (proportional) share of the mortgage and homeownership costs from the rental income. The rest will be counted as unearned income.

Example: Verdina rents out two units in the triple-decker house she bought in the 1970s. Each tenant pays their own utilities. She receives \$1,200 a month for each unit and pays \$3,000 a month to the bank for mortgage, interest and insurance on the building. Verdina also pays \$300 in water/sewer and trash collection for a total of \$3,300 in monthly expenses. She can deduct two-thirds (or \$2,200) of the monthly homeownership expenses from her rental income (for the two units she rents) to determine the countable rental income for SNAP purposes. She has only \$200 in countable rental income and not \$2,400.

Note: In this example, when Verdina applies for SNAP benefits, she has only \$200 in rental income. She can claim one-third of mortgage related costs for her pre-utility shelter expenses (1/3 of \$3,000, or \$1,000), not the full amount of the total homeownership costs. Her portion of the water/sewer and the trash collection are covered by the standard utility allowance, which is added to her third of the mortgage/insurance costs.

If you are the primary tenant of an apartment (vs a homeowner) and you are subletting rooms to others, it's best if each tenant make a payment to the landlord directly. This can avoid errors in SNAP calculations and erroneous counting of income if you are merely passing through rental income to the landowner.

DTA Online Guide Sections: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

72 How does DTA calculate my income for each month?

Your SNAP monthly benefit amount is based on how much income you and the worker are “reasonably certain” you will receive for the period you are on benefits (your certification period). [106 C.M.R. §364.310](#).

If you have earned income, DTA will ask for proof of earnings for the 4-week period prior to the date you applied for SNAP. If you cannot get wage information from your employer and need DTA to help, see **Question 16**.

The 4.333 rule

DTA calculates your monthly income by multiplying the most recent average weekly income by 4.333 to get a monthly amount (by 2.167 for bi-weekly amounts). [106 C.M.R. §364.340](#).

Example: Judy received the following gross pay the past 4 weeks: \$200, \$224, \$150, and \$250. The *average* of these weeks is \$206 per week. DTA then multiplies this average amount of \$206 by 4.333 to get a monthly gross income of \$893.

Terminated income

If you are no longer working at your old job, the income from the last job should *not be counted* in calculating your SNAP benefits. The same is true if other earned or unearned income stops. DTA should calculate your financial eligibility *prospectively* (see below). [106 C.M.R. §364.310](#).

It is possible DTA will count some income from your terminated job for the first month of your SNAP, if you got a final paycheck within the cyclical month of your SNAP application. [106 C.M.R. §365.840](#), [106 CMR §364.110](#). Once that first month passes it should no longer count as part of the SNAP calculation for your household. See **Question 57** for an example. **Currently, DTA is not counting any terminated income due to COVID policies.**

Anticipated income

Income from a *new* job, from Unemployment Benefits, or other income source should also not be counted *until* you and DTA are certain when you will get paid and how much. [106 C.M.R. §§364.310, 364.320](#). If you do not anticipate receipt of the income in the first 30 days of your certification period, it should *not* count until the next Interim Report or Recertification is due (unless you are otherwise required to report it. See **Question 94**).

Income of school employees

If you are a school employee who is not paid year-round, DTA will average out your income over 12 months if you meet all of the following:

- You work under a renewable annual contract,
- You have written reasonable assurance of employment for the upcoming academic year, and
- You are salaried (not paid on an hourly basis).

Otherwise, if you would like DTA to average your income out over 12 months, you can ask DTA to do that. However, it is often advantageous not to average your income out over a year and instead adjust your SNAP in the months you are not paid (e.g. summer vacation). Contact an advocate if you need advice.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

73 Does DTA count money that is withheld or garnished from my cash benefits?

DTA sometimes count money you do not get as income, including:

- Money taken from your *TAFDC* or *EAEDC* benefit because of an *intentional failure* on your part to comply with the rules of that program is counted as if it were still paid in calculating your SNAP benefits. This includes when your cash benefits are reduced if DTA decides you failed to comply with the TAFDC work rules, teen parent school attendance rule, Learnfare rule, child support requirements, etc.

Example: Randy receives \$486/month in TAFDC for her child. She was getting \$648 but DTA reduced the benefits by 25% because DTA determined that Randy failed to cooperate with the child support rules without good cause. DTA will calculate the SNAP benefits as if Randy receives the full TAFDC grant of \$648.

- Money taken out of your *TAFDC*, *EAEDC*, *Supplemental Security Income* (SSI) cash benefits or the Massachusetts *Veterans Services* program due to an intentional program violation (fraud) is counted in calculating your SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(C\)\(4\)](#).

If the money is being taken out to repay a non-fraud overpayment, it is not countable income. [106 C.M.R. §363.220\(C\)\(4\)](#). And DTA cannot count needs-based benefits you don't receive unless there is a finding that you intentionally failed to comply with program requirements resulting in the benefit reduction. [7 C.F.R. §273.11\(j\)](#).

- Money legally owed to you but you do not receive directly because it is paid to a third party does count as income to you. For example, if you ask your boss to pay your rent directly from your paycheck, the money would still count. But if your boss pays you your regular salary and also pays your rent as a gift, the rent payment does not count as income. [106 C.M.R. § 363.220\(C\)\(3\)](#).

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- Part of your TAFDC or EAEDC grant that is sent to your landlord or utility company as a “vendor payments” is countable income for SNAP. [106 C.M.R. § 363.220 \(C\)\(2\), \(C\)\(3\)](#).
- Money garnished from (taken out of) your Social Security benefits (RSDI) may count for SNAP, depending on the reason for the garnishment. See the chart below.

Social Security Benefits (RSDI): Garnishment	
Reason money is taken out	What does this mean for SNAP?
Owed child support	Does not count as income. See Question 78 .
Medicare Part B or D, or private insurance	Counts as income. Should count as a medical expense deduction. See Question 76 . DTA automatically gets proof of Medicare Part B.
RSDI overpayment	Does not count as income.
Unintentional SSI overpayment	Does not count as income.
Intentional SSI overpayment	Counts as income.
Unpaid taxes, alimony, or student loans.	Counts as income.

Trouble shooting tips:

- Money that is taken out of your EAEDC, TAFDC, SSI or other *needs-based benefit* to pay back an overpayment can only be counted as income if you were found guilty of an IPV/fraud by a court of law or hearing officer. [106 C.M.R. § 363.220\(C\)\(4\)](#). DTA is required to contact the agency that administers the benefits (e.g. SSA) to confirm a formal finding of fraud as the basis of the overpayment, not the SNAP recipient.
- Monies recovered from federal Veterans Administration (VA) benefits also is not countable because the VA benefits are not a “public or general assistance program.”

- Money paid to a third party that is *not legally owed* to you does not count. For example, if a family member, friend or an organization, pays your landlord part of your rent, the payment is not countable. [106 C.M.R. § 363.230\(B\)](#).
- Money that is paid to others on your behalf – but you do not have legal control over – does not count. [106 C.M.R. § 363.230\(B\)\(4\)\(b\)](#). For example, if the court orders an absent parent to pay \$600 per month you for child support and pay \$500 per month to a bank for the mortgage on jointly held property, the \$500/month does not count as income.
- If your Social Security benefits are being garnished to repay a debt you owe, contact Legal Services. There may be options to reduce or eliminate the monthly garnishment.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

74 How does DTA count the income of someone not eligible in my SNAP household?

If you share living quarters with friends or relatives – and you purchase and prepare the majority of your meals separately – the income of these individuals does not count. [106 C.M.R. §363.230\(L\)](#).

However, if you live with someone who is *required* to be part of your SNAP household but is ineligible, there are rules about how their income is handled.

The treatment of their income depends on the reason the person is not eligible:

- An intentional program violation (IPV) or fraud, see **Question 115**.
- A disqualifying criminal record (fleeing felon), see **Question 46**.
- A voluntary quit from work or a strike, see **Question 57 and 59**.

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- Undetermined immigration status, see **Question 54**. To determine how SNAP treats the income of ineligible immigrant household members, see **Question 54**.
- A household member who fails or refuses to give his or her SSN for reasons other than non-citizen status should have a pro-rated share of their income applied to the rest of the household. As of the writing of this Guide, DTA fails to do this.
- Any income of an ineligible college student is not counted. See **Question 45**.
- Income of individuals in adult foster care can be excluded. See **Question 44**.
- Income of foster care children can be excluded. See **Question 43**.

See [106 C.M.R. §361.230\(D\)](#) and [7 CFR 273.11\(c\)](#).

If someone is sanctioned due to an IPV, the rules require DTA to count the disqualified person's income and apply the *lower* (130% FPL) gross income eligibility test, along with impose an asset test. See **Question 63**.

In addition, the rules require DTA *to exclude* the disqualified person in the household size. [106 C.M.R. §365.520\(A\)\(4\)](#).

Example: Mark, Sarah and their two children reapplied for SNAP recently. Mark was disqualified in September for 12 months after a hearing officer ruled that he had committed an intentional program violation (IPV). Mark is now working 20 hours a week and the family reapplied for SNAP. Mark is not eligible until his 12-month disqualification period ends at the end of August. As a household with a disqualified member, the household's income (including Mark's) must fall under the lower 130% FPL gross income limit for *three* people (his wife and 2 children). Further, the family's SNAP benefit amount is calculated for a household of 3 (not 4). Mark is excluded in the SNAP household size until the 12-month sanction period expires, but his income counts in the SNAP math.

Note: As soon as the IPV sanction period ends, DTA should use the 200% FPL gross income test (versus 130% FPL) and increase the SNAP benefit to include the formerly disqualified household member in the household size. Be sure to check the accuracy and duration of any sanction.

75 What deductions are allowed against my income?

The following deductions are allowed for all households depending on living situation and expenses:

- *20 percent of gross earned income.* [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(B\)](#).

Legally obligated child support paid to children outside the home does not count as income – but if it’s paid out of earnings, is included in the calculation of the 20% earned income deduction. See **Question 78**.

- *Self-employment business expenses.* [106 C.M.R. §365.940](#). See **Question 69**.
- *A standard deduction based on household size:* [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(A\)](#).

Standard Deduction	
\$193	Household of 1-4 persons
\$225	Household of 5 persons
\$258	Household of 6 or more persons

- *A childcare or disabled adult care deduction* if you are working, looking for work, or in school or training. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(D\)](#). See **Question 79** describing the range of allowable expenses.
- *A shelter deduction capped at \$624/month* for households that *do not* include an elderly or disabled member. For households with an elderly or disabled member, the shelter deduction is *un-capped*. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(G\)](#). See **Question 81**.
- *A homeless shelter deduction* of \$167/month if homeless with no shelter costs. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(F\)](#). See **Question 82**.

The result is your *monthly net income*. Your benefits are based on this amount. An additional *medical expense deduction* is available to elder and disabled households. See **Question 76**.

76 What medical expenses can I claim if I am elderly or disabled?

Any member of your household who is elder (age 60+) or disabled is allowed to claim un-reimbursed medical and health-related expenses as an income deduction. This applies to disabled children as well as adults. And as of June 2022 under a special USDA approved waiver, *medical expenses to qualify for the standard medical expenses can be self-declared!*

The more expenses you claim, the lower your *net countable income*. The lower your countable income, the higher the SNAP benefits your household will receive – up to the maximum SNAP amount for your household.

There are *two ways* SNAP handles un-reimbursed medical expenses. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(C\)](#).

- ✦ **Standard medical deduction of \$155:** If your out-of-pocket medical expenses are at least \$35 a month, you will receive a standard deduction of \$155 off of your monthly income. You can *self-declare* your health care expenses that exceed \$35/month and get the standard \$155 deduction.
- ✦ *Actual medical expenses:* If you incur and verify *more than* \$190 per month in medical expenses (the \$35 threshold plus the \$155 standard deduction), you can claim the *actual expenses* (minus the \$35 threshold) to boost your SNAP benefits.

Example: Esther is 78 years old. She has MassHealth coverage, but the combination of small pharmacy co-pays plus her over-the-counter pain relief and skin treatments adds up to over \$35 per month. Esther can *self-declare* these expenses. Her SNAP benefits will be calculated using a \$155 medical expense deduction. If Esther has more than \$190/month in out-of-pocket expenses, and if verifying them would boost her monthly SNAP, she should claim and verify her actual expenses.

If you have *a one-time medical expense* during your certification period, you have the option of claiming the expense as a one-time deduction *or* having it averaged over a number of months. [106 C.M.R. §364.440\(C\)](#). DTA should look for the most advantageous option for averaging the one-time bill.

Example 1: Esther is 70 and applies for SNAP. She receives Social Security for a total of \$1,300/month unearned income and is certified for SNAP for 12 months. She also pays \$500/month in rent, plus the cost of heat and utilities. She is approved for \$191 in SNAP. A month later, she reports a one-time unpaid dental bill of \$500. DTA should average her bill out over the next 11 months (the rest of her certification period). Averaging the \$500 by 11 months (\$45/mo), Esther gets the standard medical expense deduction. Her SNAP increases to \$261.

Example 2: Esther's one-time unpaid dental bill is actually \$350. \$350 over 11 months does not exceed \$35 (is only \$31). The DTA worker should average her bill out over 10 months in order to give her the \$155 standard medical expense deduction, which maximizes her SNAP. (The DTA worker should also ask Esther if she has any other out of pocket medical expenses that she could self-declare to boost her SNAP.)

Scope of allowable health care expenses

- co-pays or premiums for Medicare, Medicare Part D, Medex or other health insurance, and your deductible for Medicare Part D;
- any medical services from doctors, clinics, hospitals, laboratories or other facilities that are *not* reimbursed by a third party;
- any custodial or attendant care services you need (even if the caregiver is a relative), as well as housekeeping services you pay for;
- costs for childcare even if not working, if you need to pay for care because of your age or disability;
- dental care, dentures, dental adhesives;
- health treatments by a licensed practitioner, including chiropractic, acupuncture, physical or other therapy;
- prescription drugs, including postage costs and any transportation costs to pick them up;
- over-the-counter vitamins and over-the-counter drugs recommended by a licensed health care provider such as aspirin, laxatives, insulin, herbal and homeopathic remedies (no prescription required);

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- eyeglasses, contact lenses/contact saline, hearing aids, batteries, communication equipment for the hearing or visually impaired;
- health-related supplies recommended by a health provider including incontinence supplies, creams and ointments, commodes and walkers;
- cost of a gym membership such as YMCA or health club membership;
- private transportation costs at the current federal mileage rate (as of January of 2023 it is 65.5 cents/mile).
- out-of-pocket parking and tolls, or the monthly cost of taxis, vans, or public transportation needed to get to medical appointments;
- long distance phone calls related to obtaining medical services, or internet if needed for a medical device to function properly;
- veterinary bills, dog food, and other needs for all animals recommended by a medical provider (including trained service animals and therapy and emotional support animals); *and*
- any other un-reimbursed medical expenses prescribed or recommended by your health care providers. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(C\)](#).

Self-declaration of health care expenses

If you are claiming less than \$190/month in medical expenses, *you can self-declare these expenses* under a special waiver that USDA approved for DTA. You will get the standard medical expense of \$155/month.

Verification of higher health care expenses

If you are claiming more than \$190/month in medical expenses, you are required to provide proof for your expenses, but only the *amount* of your medical expenses. If you do not verify expenses above \$190, you will still get the \$155 standard deduction for any expenses you self-declare.

You are not required to have paid the bill, or show you paid the bill (just that the cost wasn't reimbursed). [106 C.M.R. § 364.450\(A\)](#). Note, DTA automatically gets proof of any Medicare Part B premiums taken out of your Social Security benefits. You also do not need to give DTA multiple months of receipts or bills for recurring medical expenses, as long as you have at least one month worth of bills. You can tell DTA in writing or verbally how often you incur the expense.

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Example: In addition to her Medicare Part B deductibles of \$170.10 per month, Martha pays roughly \$40/month for vitamins and buys hearing aid batteries for \$15 every 3 months. She gives DTA one pharmacy receipt for her vitamins, and another for her hearing aid batteries. She writes in a note to DTA that she buys vitamins monthly and hearing aid batteries every 3 months. DTA should accept Martha's self-declaration unless questionable.

If you need to verify your medical expenses to claim more than \$190/month in out-of-pocket expenses, the following are examples of proofs you can submit for medical expenses, but you can also submit other items:

- Billing invoices canceled checks or other proof of your health care bills or insurance premiums (that you paid or you owe).
- An Explanation of Benefits (EOB) health insurance statement showing how much you owe for co-pays or deductibles.
- A Medicare Claim Summary to show the dates of visits to your doctor and laboratory visits, which you can use to claim your transportation costs (You can also verbally self-declare mileage by calling DTA).
- A print-out from your pharmacy showing your co-pays and out-of-pocket payments for drugs. This is also useful to show all your visits to the pharmacy for claiming transportation. DTA does not need to know which medications you take. You can white out the medication names and dosages from the pharmacy print-out.
- Copies of receipts for things you bought at a pharmacy or health supply store such as pain relief, recommended vitamins, skin ointments, hearing aid batteries, incontinence supplies. You *do not need a prescription* from your MD to claim these items.
- *A written or oral statement* from you with the dates and mileage if you used your car to go to your doctor, physical therapy, pharmacy or other providers. DTA can take verbal confirmation of your health care travel over the phone. DTA will help figure out the mileage. If you have a T-pass that you use for medical trips, show DTA the T-pass and receipt when you bought it.

Sometimes claiming medical expenses does not make a difference in the SNAP math unless you are already receiving the maximum SNAP grant, or your income is high but your shelter costs are very low. See MLRI's chart

for when claiming medical expenses can make a difference, along with other FAQs and screening forms: [Masslegalservices.org/snap-medical](https://masslegalservices.org/snap-medical)
If your monthly medical expenses have not changed when you do your Interim Report or Recertification, you do *not* need to re-verify these expenses.

DTA should make “a reasonable prediction” of the amount you “expect to be billed” for medical expenses during the certification period. You do not have to prove you paid your bills, only that you are responsible for the bill. However, you cannot claim a bill that an insurance company or other third party is going to pay or reimburse you for. [106 C.M.R. §§ 364.410\(B\)\(3\), 364.420, 364.430](#).

If DTA says they cannot count a one-time unpaid medical bills for services that happened more than a year ago (and these expenses were not claimed for SNAP before), contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

77 **Can I claim the medical expenses I used for my public or subsidized housing rent?**

Yes! DTA will accept the “rent calculation worksheet” that your local housing authority or housing agency used to determine your SNAP medical expenses. That’s because you already verified these expenses for housing, and the rules for counting medical expenses to lower your rent are similar to SNAP.

You have a right to ask your local housing agency for a copy of your “rent calculation worksheet” or other statement that confirms the amount of medical expenses you verified for your public or subsidized housing rent. For more information on how to claim medical expenses to lower your rent, and use the same information to boost your SNAP, see the following: [How to Lower Your Rent and Boost Your SNAP Benefits: An Advocacy Tool Kit for Mass Tenants](#) (MLRI, October 2018)

78 What is the child support exclusion?

Legally-obligated child support you pay to a child not living in your household does *not count as income* for SNAP. [106 C.M.R. §363.230\(O\)](#). (Special rules apply when calculating the 20% earnings disregard, see below.)

Child support payments are non-countable only if you have proof of both the amount you pay and your legal obligation to pay it – such as a court order, administrative order, or legally enforceable separation. [106 C.M.R. §§361.610\(J\), 364.400\(E\)](#). If the child support is paid out of your Social Security benefits or MA Unemployment benefits, DTA may be able to verify both your payments and your legal obligation to pay.

Unfortunately, you *cannot* claim payments you voluntarily make without a court order or legal agreement. And you cannot claim any alimony payments even if court-ordered or in divorce agreement.

You can claim the child support you pay directly to the custodial parent, to a court, or the Department of Revenue (DOR). You can claim child support paid directly from your Unemployment Insurance, Social Security, Workers Comp, or other income sources.

You can also claim legally-required payments for health insurance, required for past child support (arrearages), as well as any third party payments. This includes payments to a landlord, utility company, or tuition payments to a school for the needs of the child. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(E\)](#).

When DTA calculates your SNAP benefits, they exclude the child support from both your gross and net earned income. But, if the child support is paid out of earnings, *DTA includes the value of the child support in the 20% earnings disregard – giving you a larger disregard!*

Example: Jane earns \$2,600/month gross income and pays \$500/month court-ordered child support. DTA does not count the \$500/month – it is excluded from income. This means her gross countable income is \$2,100 – below the 200% gross income test of \$2,430 for 1 person. In calculating Jane’s SNAP, DTA does not count the \$500 in child support – but DTA *does* calculate the 20% earnings deduction based on her full gross income of \$2,600. This means she gets a \$520/month earned income deduction.

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Proof of child support payments

There are two factors you need to verify for DTA to exclude child support from your income – the amount you pay and your legal obligation to make child support payments.

In three situations, DTA should accept one verification to prove both the amount of child support you pay and your legal obligation to support:

1. A DOR “lockbox bill” or other verification from DOR.
2. If your Social Security benefits (RSDI) are garnished for child support, a letter from the Social Security Administration (SSA) stating the garnishment is for child support payments.
3. If your Unemployment Insurance benefits are garnished for child support, DTA should be able to verify this information through the data they access directly from the Department of Unemployment Assistance.

If you pay child support through your wages or through other means, you must verify both the amount and your legal obligation. The amount you pay can be verified with cancelled checks, pay stubs, a statement from the custodial parent proving you make payments, or proof from the Department of Revenue (DOR) if they are garnishing your wages.

Your *legal obligation* to pay the child support can be verified through a court or administrative order, divorce decree, separation order or other legal document that shows your legal obligation. [106 C.M.R. §§361.610\(J\), 364.400\(E\)](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

79 What is the childcare/dependent care deduction?

Families can claim the cost of care for either minor children or a disabled adult member while the household member is working, attending education or training programs, or looking for work. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(D\)](#).

Dependent care includes the cost for supervision of teenage children (under age 18), as well as care of a child or disabled adult not part of your SNAP household (for example, a foster child or non-citizen child).

Dependent care costs include:

- private day care arrangements with caregivers not part of your SNAP household (e.g. older children);
- co-payments or fees for subsidized child care;
- payments for “attendant care,” PCAs and/or co-payments for adult day care provided for elder or disabled adults;
- fees for after-school, before-school and vacation care including adult supervised before and after-school activities for teenagers, YMCA and YWCA camps, Boys and Girls Clubs, summer camp fees; *and*
- transportation to and from the program sites at the federal mileage rate (65.5 cents as of January 2023) or the cost of public transportation.
- Representative payee administrative fees for SSI/RSDI recipients living in group homes (if the Rep payee is seeing SNAP).

You can *self-declare* your dependent care costs. See **Question 13**.

Dependent care for disabled/elder adults

If you need to pay for care for a disabled adult – such as an elderly parent or disabled adult child – so that you can go to work or training or look for work, you can claim this as a dependent care cost. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(D\)](#).

If a disabled member of your household pays for adult care for his or her own reasons (unrelated to you going to work), DTA will treat these costs as

medical expenses of the disabled individual, not dependent care expenses. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(C\)\(12\)](#). See **Question 76**. Either way, adult dependent care of a person with disabilities is a deductible expense.

You do not need to wait until your next Interim Report or Recertification to claim new or increased dependent care expenses. If you incur any dependent care costs you did not previously report to DTA, notify DTA immediately.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

80 What is the Standard Utility Allowance and what is Heat and Eat?

The standard utility allowance (SUA) is a fixed dollar amount for a household's heating and utility expenses used in the calculation of shelter expenses for SNAP benefits. [106 C.M.R. §§364.400\(G\)\(2\), 364.945](#). The dollar value of the SUA applies statewide and is not tied to what you actually pay in monthly oil, gas, electricity or other utilities. It is an annualized amount to help simplify the calculations.

There are *three* different SUA amounts and the amounts are periodically adjusted by DTA with USDA approval:

☞ **Heating (or air conditioning) SUA – currently \$860.** This is used for households that incur heating or air conditioning costs separately from their rent. This includes public or subsidized housing tenants if your housing authority charges you for heat, or for use of an air conditioner (either excess electricity or a usage or maintenance fee).

You also get this SUA if you receive or have received Fuel Assistance (also called Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act or LIHEAP payments) in the last 12 months -even if your heat is included with your rent. Often LIHEAP will provide a partial rent subsidy if rent exceeds 30% of net income.

☞ **Non-heating SUA – currently \$525.** This is used for households that incur utility expenses but not heating or air conditioning costs.

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Utility expenses can include electricity (non-heating), cooking gas, garbage collection, and water and sewer fees passed onto tenants.

- ☞ **Telephone-only SUA – currently \$60.** This is used for households that incur only telephone costs (cell phone or landline, but not phone cards) and do not pay any of the other utilities listed above.

It is important that you tell DTA if you incur heating costs, AC costs during the summer (even if your heat is included), or you get regular Fuel Assistance benefits for either utilities or toward part of high rent costs. The application and recertification paperwork have questions about utility expenses. Make sure to fill out this information accurately.

You also get the full SUA even if you live with another household and pay part of the utilities. [106 C.M.R. §364.410\(B\)\(2\)](#). You should also get the SUA in the SNAP math, even if you pay \$0 in rent but are responsible for utility costs where you live (e.g. off-season caretaker of a home).

The “Heat and Eat” Fuel Assistance Program

DTA and the Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) have a special “Heat and Eat” Fuel Assistance program, or H-EAT.

The H-EAT program was created because many seniors and persons with disabilities often underreport their AC/cooling costs, or do not realize they can claim utility costs when sharing utilities with other households.

DTA identifies SNAP households not getting the full “heating/cooling standard utility allowance” (SUA) and then exchanges a data file with DHCD to confirm if any of these SNAP households received regular Fuel Assistance in the past 12 months. If not, DTA provides the SNAP household with a \$21 H-EAT Fuel Assistance payment.

This H-EAT payment is put on your EBT card once every 12 months. You can use this money to buy supplies such as light bulbs, flashlights, or blankets. If the H-EAT payment increases your SNAP you will get a notice from DTA. DTA should automatically issue another \$21 H-EAT payment annually if you are eligible for this special payment.

SNAP households who do not receive the H-EAT payment are:

- Bay State CAP (SSI) households,
- homeless households (who get a special homeless income deduction), *and*

- households that have separate heating/cooling costs or getting maximum SNAP benefits.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

81 What is the shelter deduction and is it calculated?

The SNAP rules allow you to deduct shelter expenses that exceed *half* of your net income, but not a dollar-for-dollar deduction of shelter costs. This is called the “shelter deduction.” [106 C.M.R. § 364.400\(G\)](#).

Example: Rita’s total shelter expenses are \$1,560/month: \$700 rent and the \$860 heating/cooling standard utility allowance. She pays for oil, heat, electricity, phone, and internet. Her gross earnings are \$1,500/month and her net income (after pre-shelter allowable deductions) is \$1,007 per month. DTA will calculate Rita’s SNAP *using the \$624 capped shelter deduction*, even though her shelter expenses above half of her net income are higher than that.

The SNAP shelter deduction is complicated but important. After Section 8 and public housing, it is the biggest source of federal assistance to low-income households based on their housing needs.

Remember, shelter costs may be *self-declared* by the household unless questionable. See **Question 13**.

Two shelter deductions:

- The shelter deduction is *capped at \$624 per month* for households that *do not* include an elder, disabled adult or disabled child, regardless of how high the shelter costs are.
- If the household includes at least one person who is *elderly (age 60+)* *or is disabled*, there is no *limit or cap* on the shelter costs that exceed 50% of net income.

Shelter costs that can be claimed

- monthly rent paid that you pay or you owe, including the amount you are responsible for if you sublet or share an apartment. If you have a rent subsidy, only the amount of rent you pay should be reported;
- mortgage fees, including payments on the principal, interest, legal fees, home improvement loans (even if you are behind in payments) and condo fees. If you pay mortgage quarterly or semi-annually, list your monthly average;
- property taxes and homeowner insurance (even if you have no mortgage);
- trailer payments and parking fees;
- repair costs on your home or condo needed as a result of a fire, flood, severe storms or other natural disaster and not reimbursed by insurance (e.g. a new boiler, new roof, replacement of windows, etc.);
- shelter expenses for a home not occupied by you if you are planning to return to it, not renting it and had to leave because of employment and training away from home, illness or a natural disaster; *and*
- the appropriate standard utility allowance (SUA) for your household. See **Question 80**. Actual utility costs and heating costs are not allowed as they are covered under the SUA.

SNAP rules on shelter costs: [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(G\)\(1\)](#)

How shelter costs are calculated

Step 1: Calculate your *preliminary net income* – gross monthly income after subtracting the earned income deduction (including any child support paid out, see **Question 78**), standard deduction, any dependent care, and allowable medical costs.

Step 2: Calculate the shelter deduction by adding your non-utility shelter costs (rent, mortgage) to your standard utility allowance (SUA).

Step 3: Divide your preliminary net income in half.

Step 4: Subtract the result in Step 3 from the result in Step 2. The result is your excess shelter cost. If the answer is zero or less, you do not get shelter deduction. *If the answer is more than \$624, you can deduct only \$624 unless the household includes an elderly or disabled person.*

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Example: Carl works part time and earns \$1,500 per month. He lives with his wife Cindy and their child. The family pays \$800 per month in rent, and pays for heat and utilities. Here's how DTA calculates Carl's shelter costs to determine his net income.

\$1,500	Carl's Gross earned income
- 300	20% earnings deduction from gross
- 193	Standard deduction for household of 3
\$ 1,007	Preliminary <i>net</i> income
<i>Shelter deduction calculation</i>	
\$ 800	Rent
+ 860	SUA
\$1,660	Shelter expenses
- 504	One-half prelim net income (1/2 of \$1,007)
\$ 1,156	Shelter expense > half net income
- 624	Maximum shelter deduction (capped)
\$ 532	NET INCOME for Carl's family (preliminary net income minus max shelter deduction)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

82 What is the homeless deduction?

If you stay in a homeless shelter, temporarily in the home of another (“couch surfing”), or live on the street, your SNAP benefits should be calculated with the **standard homeless deduction** (currently \$167 per month).

This standard deduction recognizes the basic living of doing laundry, phone calls, locker fees, and other items. [106 C.M.R. §364.400\(F\)](#). You do not need to verify these expenses. If you get the homeless deduction, you do not get any other shelter deductions off your income.

It is important that the DTA worker code your SNAP case as “homeless” so you get this deduction. DTA considers you “homeless” if you lack a regular nighttime residence, including if you are staying in a shelter or have other accommodations that are temporary (e.g. less than 90 days). See [106 C.M.R. §360.030](#) for the definition of homeless.

Example: Paul is a homeless veteran who receives \$500 per month in Veterans’ benefits. Sometimes he stays at Pine Street Inn, a shelter for adult individuals, and sometimes he sleeps on the street. Paul gets the \$193 standard deduction and the \$167 homeless deduction. His *net* monthly income for SNAP is \$140, of which 30% is deducted from the maximum SNAP allotment of \$281.

If you are homeless but temporarily staying in a house or apartment where you contribute to shelter costs while you stay there, you should get the shelter deduction (which is typically higher than the homeless deduction).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

Part 4

Getting and Using SNAP Benefits

83 How much will I get in SNAP benefits each month?

These are the maximum regular SNAP benefits by household size, as of October 1, 2022. (The next increase in SNAP will be October 1, 2023). The special COVID-related extra SNAP benefits ended in February of 2023.

Household Size	Max SNAP Benefit
1	\$281
2	\$516
3	\$740
4	\$939
5	\$1,116
6	\$1,480
7	\$1,691

[106 C.M.R. §§364.600, 364.980](#). See also [Appendix B, Chart 4](#).

If you have countable net income, multiply your net monthly income by 0.3 (30 percent). Round *up* this amount to the nearest dollar. Take this amount and subtract it from the maximum benefit level for a household of your size. The result is the amount of your monthly benefits.

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Example: Sam and his family have \$1,000 in net income after allowable income and shelter deductions. To determine the family's SNAP benefits, take 30% of the "net income" (30% of \$1,000) and subtract the \$300 from a SNAP allotment of \$740 for 3. Sam's household will receive \$440/month in SNAP. Note, If Sam's household had very little or no net income, they would receive not only \$740/month SNAP, but also the \$95 emergency allotment.

First month of benefits

When you first apply, your initial benefit amount is based on the number of days from when you applied and the days left in your "SNAP month." DTA "pro-rates" your first month of benefits. [106 C.M.R. §364.650](#). For example, if you apply halfway through your SNAP month, you will get 50 percent of the monthly benefit.

If you do not get all the mandatory documents to DTA within 30 days from applying and DTA decides the delay was your fault, DTA will *pro-rate* your SNAP. Your benefit amount will start from the day they got everything they needed. You can challenge this, especially if you think DTA caused the delay. See **Question 21**.

"\$0 Benefit" Households

Some SNAP households get very confusing DTA notices when they are under the gross income limits but qualify for \$0 in SNAP benefits. The DTA notices say:

"Because your countable income is over the limit for your household size, you are not eligible for SNAP benefits at this time. We will keep your case open until DATE in case there is a change in your household's circumstances that qualifies you for benefits."

This happens to households of 3 or more persons with income below 200% poverty level, where 30% of the household's net income is greater than the maximum benefit amount. [106 C.M.R. §§364.600\(A\), 365.180\(G\)\(3\)](#). If you report any changes during your certification period that make you eligible, you do not need to file a new SNAP application and have an interview. You only have to verify the change (e.g. the drop in income, increased expense, a new baby or other household member) that makes you now SNAP eligible.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

84 When will I get my SNAP benefits?

Your SNAP benefits are put in your EBT account on the same day each month, based on the last digit of your Social Security Number.

Last Digit of SSN	Benefit Deposit Date
-0	1
-1	2
-2	3
-3	5
-4	7
-5	8
-6	10
-7	11
-8	13
-9	14

The last digit of your SSN is also how DTA determines your “SNAP month” (also called your cyclical month) for issuing your first amount of benefits. Your “SNAP month” runs from the day your benefits are deposited to the day before the next month’s benefits will be issued to you.

Example: If your SSN ends in 5, your benefits are deposited on the 8th of the month, and your SNAP month is from March 8th through April 7th.

85 Why do some households get only \$23 in SNAP each month?

Federal and state SNAP law allows all 1 and 2 person households under the gross income test to get a “minimum benefit.” This rule does not apply to households of 3 persons or more. [106 C.M.R. §364.600\(A\)](#).

If you only get \$23/month – it is a good idea to get a “SNAP math check-up” to be sure you are getting all the deductions you qualify for. Many 1 and 2 person households with members 60 or older or getting a disability benefit often do not claim all their out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Example: Tom and Emily Smith are an elderly couple who receive Social Security for a total of \$2,600/month unearned income. The Smith’s pay shelter cost of \$1,000 per month plus heat and utilities. The couple has not claimed any medical expenses and will receive just \$23 /month in SNAP as a “minimum” benefit. If the Smiths verified medical expenses of at least \$36/month, their SNAP would increase to \$61/month. If they verified over \$190/month, their SNAP would increase even more.

86 What is an EBT card, how do I use SNAP benefits, and where can I shop?

SNAP benefits are kept in an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) account for you to use at any grocery or convenience store that is a USDA-approved EBT vendor. [106 C.M.R. §§364.900, 364.910](#).

Getting an EBT card and PIN

Unless you apply in person, the EBT card is usually mailed to you. There are no benefits on your EBT card until your case is approved.

DTA should make sure you have an EBT card in hand by the day your case is approved – either by 7 days from the date of your application, if you are eligible for expedited SNAP, or by 30 days from the date of your application.

If you need a card, you can request one on DTA Connect, by calling the DTA Assistance Line, or by going to pick one up in person at any DTA office. If you urgently need a card and going in person to pick up a card is not a good option for you, ask a DTA supervisor or the DTA Ombuds office about options for overnight mail or other solutions.

Important EBT card tips:

- You will get two envelopes – one with the EBT card and another with the PIN. DTA will automatically assign you a PIN. You can change your PIN any time by calling the Massachusetts EBT Customer Service number: 1-800-997-2555.
- Choose a PIN that is easy for you to remember but hard for other people to guess. Never share or write your PIN on your card.
- Look for the *Quest* mark on the door or window of the store, or a sign that says the store accepts EBT.



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- Before you shop, check how much SNAP benefits are in your account through DTA Connect, or call Massachusetts EBT Customer Service at **800-997-2555** for your balance.
- At check-out, swipe your card and enter your secret PIN on the number pad and then press enter. The cashier should NOT look at your name or any photo on the card. The PIN is your signature. See **Question 33** regarding Photo EBT.
- Tell the clerk how much SNAP you want to use to pay for your food, or enter the amount yourself. If there is not enough EBT on your card, the clerk should tell you how much additional cash you need to pay.
- Always *check your receipt* to be sure that the amount on the EBT receipt is the same as the grocery receipt.
- Your EBT card does *not expire*, even if your SNAP case closes because you are no longer eligible. You can still use any SNAP benefits left on your card after your case closes, and use the same card if you reapply in the future. See **Question 89**.
- If you reapply and don't have your card any more or your card is defective (for example, the magnetic strip does not work), DTA should issue you a new EBT card. DTA should not charge you a card replacement fee if you have been off of SNAP benefits for over a year or you meet other fee exception rules. See **Question 91**.

Where to get help with your EBT card:

Call Massachusetts EBT customer service at 1-800-997-2555 when:

- you have questions or problems using your card or secret PIN,
- your EBT card is lost or stolen or does not work (report this right away and DTA will replace the card),
- you want to find out your SNAP account balance, or
- who want to find out where you can use your card.

There is no limit on the number of times per month you can use your EBT card to buy food as long as you have benefits on the card. There is no charge or fee when you use your EBT card to buy food. If you lose your EBT card, see **Question 91**.

Where to use your SNAP on your EBT card:

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You can use your SNAP to buy food at all stores that accept EBT including large and small grocery stores, convenience stores. See **Question 87** about the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) at farmers markets, CSAs and other locations. You do not need to have a stove or other cooking facilities to get SNAP benefits. You can also buy seeds and vegetable or fruit plants to grow your own food.

You *cannot buy* the following items with SNAP:

- Hot prepared foods to be eaten on the store premises or immediately (such as rotisserie chickens) or restaurant food,
- Non-food items such as pet food or vitamins, and
- Paper goods, cleaning supplies, and similar items.

SNAP rules on food purchase restrictions: [106 C.M.R. §360.100](#).

Even though you cannot use SNAP for vitamins or medications, you may be able to boost your SNAP by claiming these costs as a medical expense if you are age 60+ or a person with disabilities. See **Question 76**.

Prepared meals

You are allowed to donate some of your SNAP benefit for prepared hot meals at certain locations including domestic violence and homeless shelters, congregate meal sites for elders or home-delivered meals for seniors. However, the agencies can only accept *voluntary EBT donations* and should not accept a donation of more than \$2/meal. It also depends on whether the agency serving the meals is an approved EBT vendor (with equipment to accept SNAP). [106 C.M.R. §360.120](#).

Overcharges/mistakes by EBT grocers

Sometimes the store will make a mistake by overcharging your EBT account, even though you did not get all of your groceries. If this happens, the store must file a “merchant mis-dispense claim” with DTA. It may take several days your SNAP benefits to get credited back to your account.

You may be able to get your benefits back sooner if you can get the store to contact DTA directly to verify the mistake. Call the EBT Customer Service line for immediate help: **800-997-2555**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section. And see [DTA’s information about EBT cards: Mass.gov/guides/using-your-ebt-card](#).

87 What is the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) at farmers markets?

Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program or "HIP" into help SNAP recipients buy fresh local fruits and vegetables from participating Massachusetts farmers. HIP is a state-funded nutrition benefit and is available year-round- depending on the amount of state appropriations.

HIP matches SNAP recipients' purchases of local fruits and vegetables at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets and CSA (community sustained agriculture) farm share programs. HIP helps thousands of families afford fresh, healthy, local food.

How HIP works

If you make purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables with participating farmers (HIP retailers), you get \$1 for \$1 of SNAP benefits right back on your EBT card, up to the amount listed below:

- \$40/month for households of 1-2 people;
- \$60/month for households of 3-5 people;
- and \$80/month for households of 6 or more



Even if you receive only \$23 in the minimum monthly SNAP benefits as a 1- or 2-person household, you can still get \$40/month in HIP benefits.

Example: You spend \$10 on vegetables, you immediately get \$10 back in SNAP. If then spend \$20 with an eligible farmer, you get another \$20. You can spend SNAP with HIP retailers as often as you want until you've earned the full amount of monthly HIP.

Note: HIP benefits do not accumulate month to month. For example, you can access the HIP amount from June 1 through 30th, but it does not roll over to the next month.

For more information about HIP and a list of participating markets:

- Call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at [1-800-645-8333](tel:1-800-645-8333).
- Visit Mass.gov/hip and the MassGrown map of HIP retailers.

88 Can I use my EBT benefits out of state?

YES! You have a right to use your SNAP in all 50 states. SNAP is a federal program that is “interoperable” between states. [7 C.F.R. §274.8\(b\)\(10\)](#). Many SNAP recipients live near and shop in border states – such as New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York. Often some of the large grocery stores are closer and/or cheaper.

If you are temporarily in another state or states, you can also use your SNAP benefits while out of state. DTA should not assume you have abandoned your MA residency or threaten to close your SNAP case solely because you are shopping out of state.

Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if you lost SNAP because DTA asked you to re-prove your residency when you were temporarily out of state.

89 If I forget to use my EBT card, does my case close or will I lose benefits?

You do not need to use your SNAP benefits every month to qualify. Your SNAP benefits do not expire at the end of each month. If your SNAP case is closed for some reason, you still have the right to use any remaining benefits in your EBT account before the case closed.

DTA may contact you if your SNAP balance seems too high or you have not used your EBT card for a long time. DTA does track SNAP cases where the EBT benefits have not been used for a number of months. Some households, especially those who get the \$23 minimum benefit, often save up SNAP for a big shop. That’s okay! Sometimes the SNAP EBT balances are high if DTA made an error and issued you a retroactive payment or you won an appeal. You are not required to spend retroactive payments right away!

However, DTA will remove EBT benefits (“expunge”) from your account if you have not used your benefits at all for 274 consecutive days (that’s 9 months). [106 C.M.R. §364.900\(E\)](#). DTA must send you a letter 30 days

before they take any action to remove benefits. Once expunged, you cannot get those benefits back.

Getting help to use your EBT card

If the reason you have not used your EBT card is because you lost your EBT card or forgot your PIN, you can get a new card or PIN. See **Question 91**. A high EBT balance or idle EBT account is not a sign of fraud!

If you have problems with accessing your SNAP benefits—for example, if the store’s machine tells you the wrong amount of benefits available—call EBT Customer Service at **1-800-997-2555**. Contact an advocate if your problems are not fixed.

If you need a ride to the grocery store, your local Councils on Aging may be able to arrange a ride. If you need someone to help food shop for you, you can appoint a trusted neighbor, family member or friend to become an “authorized representative” to get a second EBT card. See **Question 7**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

90 What if I was getting SNAP in another state or DTA says I am part of another SNAP household?

You *cannot* get SNAP in two states at the same time. This is called “duplicate participation,” which is a serious offense if you do it intentionally. [7 C.F.R. §273.3\(a\)](#). But you can ask DTA to help you close your SNAP case in another state or remove you from someone else’s SNAP household if you have moved, out.

SNAP in a different state

If you were getting SNAP in a different state and you move to Massachusetts, you need to ask the SNAP state agency in the state you left to close your SNAP case. If you have proof your SNAP was closed in the other state (such as a case closure notice), give that to DTA. If you are unable to get proof that the former state closed your SNAP case, DTA

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should offer to do a “collateral contact” (contact the sister state) state to verify that your benefits are closed and date they were closed. DTA should approve your SNAP for a date that does not overlap with when you last got SNAP in the other state.

Example: Maria moves to Massachusetts from Maine in August. She asks Maine to close her SNAP. Maine closes her SNAP effective September 1. She applies for SNAP in Massachusetts on August 15. DTA calls Maine to confirm that her case was closed and approves her SNAP going back to September 1. DTA cannot approve her case going back to August 15 because of the duplicate issuance rules.

Your SNAP in Massachusetts should not be delayed because you cannot get proof from the other state and the other state is not responsive to DTA. DTA should make the request to the other state and then approve your case.

If DTA does not help you and/or your SNAP in Massachusetts is delayed because of issues with your SNAP case in another state, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

If you move out of a SNAP household

If you were living in a SNAP household and you move out, it is important that the SNAP head of household tell DTA that you have left so that DTA can remove you from that case. If that is not an option (for example, because you left a dangerous situation or are not on good terms with the family you left), you can still apply for SNAP and tell DTA you have moved. DTA may attempt to do a collateral contact, but they should also accept your word you have left. DTA should remove you from the SNAP household you are no longer a part of, and approve your own SNAP benefits.

If you moved because of a domestic violence situation, DTA should never ask you to get proof from the state or household you fled. Contact a DTA Domestic Violence specialist for help. See **Question 32**.

Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if DTA refuses to give you SNAP or delays your SNAP because of a “duplicate issuance” issue.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

91 What if my EBT card or benefits are lost or stolen?

To report a lost or stolen EBT card, call the Massachusetts EBT Customer Service at **1-800-997-2555**. DTA will replace your card, but DTA will not replace any SNAP benefits that are stolen from your account. [106 C.M.R. §364.900 \(D\)](#). Someone who steals your card can only use your SNAP if they know the PIN. Do not write your PIN on the card and keep it a secret! Once you report a lost or stolen card you can get a new PIN.

You can also call the DTA Assistance Line at 1-877-382-2363 and follow the prompts to ask for a replacement EBT card.

If you ask for a new card by phone, it can take 7-10 days to show up in the mail. You can also go directly to your local DTA office to pick up a new card that day. Any DTA office can issue you a replacement EBT card. Your old card will become deactivated and the value of your SNAP benefits will be transferred to the new EBT card.

DTA surcharge on EBT replacement cards

If you get cash or SNAP benefits and you lose your EBT card, DTA may charge \$5.00 for replacement of the EBT card depending on the situation. DTA will deduct the \$5.00 from your cash or SNAP benefits in your EBT account (you do not pay DTA directly).

However, DTA should *not charge the \$5 fee* for a replacement EBT card if:

- the EBT card was lost in the mail and you never used the EBT card that was sent to you,
- the EBT card did not work correctly (e.g. the magnetic strip failed),
- you are a victim of domestic violence,
- your SNAP/cash case was closed for more than 30 days, you reapplied and asked for a new EBT card because you tossed your old card,
- you need a disability accommodation,
- your name or SSN changed,

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- you become exempt from the photo EBT rule and you want an EBT card without a photo (see **Question 33**),
- you ask for a new EBT card after your SNAP was stolen through skimming (you do not have to get a new card – just change your PIN - but if you ask for one), or
- you meet other good cause exceptions.

Meeting with DTA to get EBT replacement card

Under DTA procedures, SNAP and cash (TAFDC or EAEDC) recipients that have received more than *four* replacement EBT cards within twelve months are now required to speak with a DTA worker to talk about the reasons for multiple requests and how the EBT card works.

Some clients who request more than four replacement cards within 12 months will be told they have to have an in-person appointment with a case manager or a fraud investigator. If this happens and it is a hardship for you, contact a Supervisor, the DTA Ombuds, or an advocate.

DTA cannot deny a request for a replacement EBT card if the person is SNAP eligible. Some EBT recipients may be confused about the card and how it works due to a disability, or an abusive partner or third party is taking the EBT card. If you are in this situation, contact Legal Services.

Skimming or “Theft” of your EBT Benefits

Unfortunately, thieves can try to copy card and PIN information when you use your card at a grocer. Then they can create a new EBT card to use your SNAP benefits. This is called "skimming." You may not know a thief has copied your card and PIN information until after your SNAP benefits are stolen. Since June 2022, thieves have stolen SNAP from thousands of households in Massachusetts.

To best protect your SNAP, change your PIN after every purchase you make with your SNAP. Since that is very difficult for most EBT card users, DTA advises that you change your PIN before each SNAP issuance. Call 1-800-997-2555 to change your PIN. Learn more at Mass.gov/ProtectYourEBT

Report stolen SNAP to DTA right away by calling 1-800-Fraud-99. As of February 2023 DTA does not have a process stood up to replace stolen SNAP. However, federal law changes require states to replace up to a certain amount of SNAP that has been stolen by skimming. If your SNAP has been stolen, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

92 What if I lose food due to a power outage, a fire or a natural disaster?

Disaster SNAP Benefits

When the President of the United States or the Food and Nutrition Service declares a major disaster, families and individuals who live in the disaster area may be eligible for SNAP benefits as long as they meet special (higher) income limits. See **Appendix B, Chart 5.** [106 C.M.R. §§366.600-366.620](#). These emergency SNAP benefits are called *Disaster SNAP*, or *D-SNAP*. The special benefits are provided to families who are not SNAP recipients at the time.

To receive D-SNAP, the only proof required is proof of your identity (who you are). Other proofs may be requested, but are not mandatory. You do not need to be eligible for or receiving SNAP already to qualify.

If you are already getting benefits and you lose food due to a federally declared disaster, you may also be eligible to receive additional SNAP benefits. Normally the federal government will provide second SNAP payment of benefits because of the disaster. [106 C.M.R. §366.620](#).

Replacement SNAP Benefits due to Misfortune

DTA can also give help you replace food you purchased with your SNAP benefits that you lost or had to toss due to a “household misfortune” event. This includes a fire, flood, power outage, equipment failure or utility shut off. If your food was destroyed or became unsafe to eat because of lack of refrigeration, you can ask for replacement SNAP benefits. If the loss is due to a power outage, the outage must have lasted for 4 hours or more. You may get *up to the amount of one month's SNAP benefits*. [106 C.M.R. §364.900\(C\)](#).

You need to report the loss of food to DTA *within 10 days* of when the food was destroyed or you threw it out. Within the following 10 days, (if you did not already provide DTA with this information), you need to tell DTA the date of the misfortune event, the date you lost or tossed your food and the dollar value of the food lost that you purchased with SNAP.

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You can make the report and tell DTA this information by:

- Calling DTA and verbally report it to a worker,
- Sending DTA a handwritten note (fax, mail or upload it to your DTA Connect Account), or
- Filling out DTA’s “Request for Replacement SNAP Benefits Due to Household Disaster or Misfortune” form, [available here](#).

In situations of widespread power outages, DTA may get information on the outage through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), local media, the Red Cross or by contacting the area utility companies or municipalities to verify the power loss or disaster. DTA is responsible for helping to verify your report.

More information

- DTA webpage on [SNAP Household Misfortune](#)
- MLRI’s “Know Your Rights” flier on SNAP & Household Misfortune: [Masslegalservices.org/SNAP-Replacement-Benefits-Household-Misfortune](https://masslegalservices.org/SNAP-Replacement-Benefits-Household-Misfortune)
- The Food Research Action Center (FRAC) has [An Advocate’s Guide to the Disaster Food Stamp Program](#) (2018) that has helpful background on D-SNAP.
- USDA [D-SNAP Resources for State Agencies and Partners](#) (current as of 9/2/2022)

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

93 What if DTA makes a mistake and owes me money?

If DTA gives you less SNAP benefits than you are supposed to get, the mistake is called an underpayment or “under-issuance.” You might get underpaid because DTA fails to act on information you gave them, such as:

- You report a drop in your income, the addition of a new member to your household, or higher shelter costs that reduce your countable income, *or*
- You are entitled to higher deductions because you report a disability or turn age 60, *or*
- The Social Security Administration took your SNAP application and made an error in the information it gave DTA.

DTA must correct any under-issuance that happened during the 12 months before DTA first discovered or was told about the mistake. [106 C.M.R. § 366.520](#). You can get back SNAP benefits even if you are not on benefits anymore. [106 C.M.R. §§366.500, 366.570](#). For example, if you or an advocate discover a mistake after your benefits have ended, you can still ask DTA for the underpaid benefits.

Example: Martha Jones reported her change of address in July including paying higher rent. DTA never acted on the information. Martha’s case closed in December but she would have received \$75 more per month in SNAP benefits from August through December. DTA owes her \$375 in retroactive SNAP.

If you are owed back SNAP benefits, you can take the following steps:

- Send a letter to DTA requesting an underpayment correction (keep a copy of this letter).
- Call the DTA Assistance Line at **(877) 382-2363** and ask a DTA worker about your request for an underpayment.

If DTA approves your request for an underpayment, they will issue you the underpayment as a “related benefit.” The SNAP regulations require DTA to tell you the amount of the underpayment they will be giving you, how they calculated the amount (including any amounts DTA keeps to offset benefits

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you may owe), and your right to an appeal. [106 C.M.R. § 366.530](#). DTA notices issuing an underpayment are called a “Related Benefit Notice” and do not include this level of information. You should call the DTA Assistance Line to ask for this information.

If DTA denies your request for an underpayment, they must send you a written notice. If they do not send you a written notice, you can ask for one.

You have a right to appeal any denial of a correction of an underpayment as well as appeal the amount DTA pays you. You have 90 days from the date of the underpayment denial notice from DTA to appeal. [106 C.M.R. §366.530](#), [106 C.M.R. §367.100](#). See **Question 103**.

DTA can offset any overpayments on your case with the amount of an underpayment. DTA cannot offset an overpayment with a related benefit that is applied to your case as a result of a change you report (for example, a supplemental payment for the current month). They can only offset an overpayment with SNAP that is issued to correct a past under issuance. If DTA takes a related SNAP benefit and applies it towards an overpayment, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

Part 5

Proving Continuing Eligibility

94 What changes do I need to report to DTA?

When you are approved for SNAP, you are “certified” for a set amount of time. This is called your *certification period*. You will need to complete reevaluations (Interim Reports and/or Recertifications) in order to maintain eligibility for SNAP.

After SNAP is approved, you should get a notice telling you what your reporting rules are, how long your certification period is, and what kind of certification type you have. There are 3 types of certification types with different reporting and reevaluation requirements. See the chart below.

Your SNAP reporting requirements should be on your most recent SNAP approval notice. However, sometimes DTA notices are incorrect or not clear about reporting requirements. You can also call DTA to ask what your reporting rules are.

Bay State Cap reporting rules are not covered in this section. See **Question 4** for more information about Bay State Cap.

Part 5 ✦ Proving Continuing Eligibility

Here's a summary of the key SNAP certification types:

Certification Type	Which households?	What do I have to report and when?
<p>EDSAP:</p> <p>36 Month Certification Period</p> <p><i>See Question 97</i></p>	Households where all adults are either age 60+ <u>or</u> disabled and have no earned income (can include with children under 18)	<p>Recertification at 36 months. No Interim Reports.</p> <p>Also required to report if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone joins or leaves the households • anyone in the household starts a job (has earnings)
<p>Simplified Reporting:</p> <p>12 Month Certification Period</p> <p><i>See Question 95.</i></p>	All other households including families with children, non-elder/disabled members, working members, ABAWDs, students, etc	<p>Interim Report at 6 months and Recertification at 12 months.</p> <p>Also required to report if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross income exceeds 200% FPL for the household size, unless household includes senior or person with disability (no reporting requirements for households with senior or person with a disability). • If an ABAWD, must also report if meeting the rules through work and work hours drop below 20 per week. (The ABAWD rules are currently suspended.)
<p>Change Reporting:</p> <p>12 Month Cert. Period</p> <p><i>See Question 98</i></p>	Public Assistance cases – all members receive TAFDC, EAEDC, or SSI cash benefits.	<p>Recertification at 12 months.</p> <p>Also required to report a number of changes to household circumstances.</p>

95 What is Simplified Reporting and when must I report changes to DTA?

The majority of SNAP households are on “Simplified Reporting”. This means you do *not* have to report to DTA any changes most of the time except for when you have to do paperwork (an Interim Report or Recertification) to keep your SNAP benefits.

There are also times when you DO need to tell DTA about a change in between your reporting periods. The rules vary for different types of households.

Households without members age 60+ or disabled:

You only need to tell DTA when your household’s *gross income goes over the monthly gross income limit* for your household size. [106 C.M.R. § 366.110\(C\)\(3\)](#). This includes if someone moves into your household with income that puts your household’s income goes over the limit.

Be sure to tell DTA *by the 10th day* of the month following the month your income went over the gross income limit. The gross income limit for your household is 200% of the Federal Poverty Level for your household size and should be listed on your approval notice. See Gross Income Chart in **Appendix B**.

Example: Selina is a single mom with one child on simplified reporting. Her SNAP was approved in January, so her Interim Report is due in June. Selina starts a second part time job in March earning \$200/week. Her total monthly gross income from both jobs is below 200% FPL for her household. She does not need to report the second job until her Interim Report. However, in April Selina works more shifts and her gross income goes above 200% FPL. She needs to tell DTA by May 10th about this increase in income.

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Households with members age 60+ and/or disabled

You only need to report changes when you fill out your Interim Report and Recertification form. You *do not* need to tell DTA about any changes in between these forms.

Reporting rules are different for some households where all members are seniors or persons with disabilities. See **Question 97** about “EDSAP.”

When to report other changes to DTA

You are not required to report other changes, but you may want to report some changes if it will help boost your SNAP. For example, you may choose to report to DTA when:

- Your income goes down,
- Someone without income moves into your home or you have a baby,
- Your shelter, childcare or medical costs go up, or you start paying child support.

DTA is required to act on the information you report and increase your SNAP benefits if you are eligible for more. [106 C.M.R. § 366.110\(C\)\(5\)\(a\)\(2\)](#).

Example: Suzyn and her 3 kids are on Simplified Reporting. Her employer reduces her hours. If Suzyn chooses to report and verify the drop in earnings, DTA will recalculate and increase her SNAP benefits. Unless her income goes over the Gross Income level for her household, she is not required to report anything else until her Interim Report.

If the change you report results in your SNAP increasing to the maximum benefit amount, DTA should issue you a supplement for the month of the reported change. See **Question 102**.

If you send DTA pay stubs or other information that shows your income has gone up or your housing costs or other costs have gone down – even though you are not required to send it -- DTA may treat that information as verified and reduce your SNAP. See **Question 99**. See also [106 C.M.R. § 366.110\(C\)\(5\)\(a\)\(1\)](#). If you move, see **Question 19**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

96 What is the Interim Report and when do I need to do one?

As this Guide is updated, currently only a small group of households have to complete an *Interim Report* after 6 months. The only households who have to do an Interim Report are households on Simplified Reporting and who get SNAP with some people who also receive DTA TAFDC cash assistance.

The “Interim Report” is one of the ways DTA ensures you are still eligible for SNAP and helps DTA keep up with any changes that affect your benefits. Most households do not need to do an Interim Report. But, if you are sent an Interim Report, you need to complete it to keep your SNAP.

Example: Alexa is certified for 12 months, from January through December and gets her benefits the 1st day of each month. DTA will review her benefits within 6 months of the first month of her certification period. Alexa should receive her Interim Report by May 15th, 45 days before July 1st. She needs to finish the Interim Reporting process before July 1 to keep her SNAP without interruption.

The information you are required to tell DTA on the Interim Report includes if:

- your income (earned or unearned) changed up or down by *more than \$125 per month*,
- you started or stopped a job,
- you move and what your new shelter costs are,
- your household members have changed (eg. someone moved in or out or you had a baby),
- your child support payments changed. See **Question 78**.

If there has been a change, report the change on the IR form and follow the directions about what proofs to send DTA. That can make the process faster. You do *not need an interview* when you file the IR form. If DTA reviews your paperwork and determines they need additional proofs they will send you a Verification Checklist.

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How to complete your Interim Report

You have a number of options to complete your Interim Report including:

- Online on **DTAConnect.com** or the **DTAConnect mobile app**. See **Question 23**.
- Calling DTA at 877-382-2363 to do it over the phone.
- Faxing or mailing the report to DTA. See **Question 15**.
- Bringing it to a local DTA office.

If you send back your IR form on or before the due date with any required proofs, DTA should continue your SNAP without interruption.

If you are late in submitting the report or proofs

If you are late in returning required proofs or the Interim Report form, your SNAP will be delayed. If you get the proofs or form in within 30 days of when your case closed, DTA should reopen your SNAP back to the date DTA received your proofs. The benefits may be prorated as of the date they received the report if the delay was your fault.

If you do not send the proofs or IR form back at all, your SNAP benefits will stop. DTA must send you a notice if they are closing your SNAP case because you did not send back the IR form.

If less than 30 days have passed from when DTA tells you your case is closing, you can send DTA your Interim Report instead of doing a new application. If it's been more than 30 days, file a new SNAP application.

If you did everything DTA asked your SNAP still closed, contact a DTA Office Supervisor, the Ombuds or file an appeal. See **Question 107**.

Note: Under federal rules DTA is required to send you a notice if they are stopping your SNAP at the point of Interim Report. [7 C.F.R. §273.12\(a\)\(5\)\(iii\)\(D\) and \(E\)](#). You have a right to appeal if you think DTA should not have denied you (for example because you sent in verifications that were requested). You also have a right to get aid pending if you appeal within 10 days of the date of the notice. See **Question 103**.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

97 What are the reporting rules for older adults and persons with disabilities without earned income (EDSAP)?

The Elder/Disabled Simplified Application Project (EDSAP) is intended to help eligible older adults and persons with disabilities more readily keep their SNAP benefits. There is less paperwork for you to fill out and less work for DTA to process your case. For example, your SNAP benefits are certified for 3 years (36 months) at a time, you do not need a Recertification interview or fill out any Interim Reports – just certain changes listed below.

You are eligible for EDSAP even if you have children in the household under age 18 as long as *every adult* in your household is:

- Age 60 or older or
- Receives a disability-based benefit, and
- Does not have earned income.

Under EDSAP, you only need to tell DTA about **two changes**:

- When someone joins or leaves your household, or
- If you or anyone in the household starts to work.

You need to tell DTA about these changes by the 10th day of the month following the month of change. If these changes apply to you, DTA will move your case from EDSAP to Simplified Reporting. See **Question 95**.

Example: Edward, age 65, starts a new job in November and receives his first paycheck on November 28. He needs to report the earnings to DTA by December 10th. Edward's SNAP case will be moved out of EDSAP and onto Simplified Reporting. He is still certified for SNAP for the remainder of his 3-year certification period.

If you are on EDSAP, you are **NOT required** to tell DTA about any other changes. However, it is best to report increases in expenses if you are not getting the maximum SNAP benefit, such as an increase in rent or medical costs.

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If you are eligible for EDSAP, DTA will send you a notice when your 3 year certification period ends, and your reporting requirements. You can also call DTA (including the Senior Assistance Office) to ask if your SNAP case is an EDSAP case.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

98 What is Change Reporting for cash assistance households?

Reporting requirements are different for households that only get cash assistance from DTA (TAFDC or EAEDC). [106 C.M.R. § 366.110\(A\)](#). If *everyone* in your household receives TAFDC or EAEDC (or SSI and TAFDC), you are on “Change Reporting” and have to report more changes than households who are on Simplified Reporting.

If just *some of the people* in your SNAP household receive cash assistance (TAFDC, EAEDC, or SSI), you need to follow the Simplified Reporting rules. See **Question 95**. For example: If you are a grandparent living with your teenage child and grandchild, and your child and grandchild get TAFDC together - the SNAP household is on Simplified Reporting. Call your DTA case manager to ask what reporting rules you need to follow.

If you get cash assistance from DTA, you must report the following within 10 days of the change:

- Your income (earned or unearned) goes up or down by more than \$125 per month. This is the rule for SNAP regardless of how your income is treated for TAFDC (even if DTA is disregarding 100% of your income for TAFDC).
- You start or stop a job.
- You move and what your new rent, mortgage or utilities are.
- Who lives with you changed (for example, someone moved in or out, or a baby was born).
- You are legally obligated to pay child support and your obligation changed. See **Question 78**.

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If your SNAP benefits will go down or end because of a change, DTA must give send you a notice at least 10 days in advance of the date your SNAP will change. Your benefits will not be decreased or stopped until after this ten day period. [106 C.M.R. § 366.200](#).

Example: Mary usually receives her SNAP benefit on the 2nd of the month. On 11/15, she reports an increase in income. By November 25, DTA must send her a written notice that her SNAP will go down. DTA cannot reduce her benefits until 12/5, 10 days after that notice. Since Mary will already have received her next SNAP on 12/2, her benefits will not decrease until January.

DTA does not have to give you a 10 day notice of a change when DTA has confirmed information that a household member has died, when there is a mass change (such as a Social Security cost of living adjustment) or in certain other situations. [106 C.M.R. §§366.210](#), [106 C.M.R. §366.215](#). In some situations, your benefits can be reduced or ended right away. [106 C.M.R. §366.120\(C\)](#). You still have the right to appeal. See [Part 6](#).

DTA Online Guide: See [Appendix G](#) for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

99 What happens when DTA receives information about me after my SNAP application is approved?

Like all states, DTA uses different government and private company computer matches to find unreported income and check other information. When DTA receives information from you, or from data matches or information from other sources, they must follow specific rules about how and when they can follow up on the information.

Usually, DTA waits to ask you about the information at your Interim Report or Recertification. In limited situations they are allowed to ask you to verify the information and terminate your SNAP if you don't reply. Sometimes they can act on the information they receive from third parties without asking you to verify it.

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This question explains how and when DTA should respond to new information they get during your certification period (outside of your Interim Report or Recertification). These rules depend on where the information came from, what changes you are required to report (see **Question 94**, and how recent the information is.

Information that DTA will automatically act on

When DTA receives information directly from certain third parties, DTA can automatically act on the information right away without contacting you first. It can only do this when the information it receives is “*verified upon receipt*” – meaning the information is already verified by the source. Usually this is because the information came directly from the source that provides the benefit or took the action.

For example, DTA can automatically act on information it receives from:

- The Social Security Administration (SSA) about the amount of your Social Security benefits
- The Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) about your Unemployment benefits
- The Department of Children and Families when DCF removes a child from your home.

Example: SSA increased Tom’s Social Security benefits in January with a 10% cost-of-living increase. DTA received the benefit information from SSA and reduces Tom’s SNAP benefits without talking to Tom in advance. DTA will send Tom a letter that his SNAP benefits have gone down based on the increase in Social Security.

DTA can also act on verification *you send to them* during your certification period if they can tell without asking you for more proofs what the verification means for your benefit amount and eligibility. For example, if you send DTA your most recent 4 pay stubs, DTA will change your benefit amount based on those pay stubs without asking you for more verification.

Information DTA cannot automatically act on

DTA also receives information from other agencies or sources that is not “verified upon receipt.” Because this information is not already verified by the source, DTA cannot use the information to make changes to your eligibility or your benefit amount. For example, DTA often gets

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information from “The Work Number,” (a service owned by a company called Equifax that helps large businesses with employee payroll information). DTA cannot automatically act on information from The Work Number because the Work Number is not the employer who hired and is paying wages to the household (unlike the example above of the SSA paying Social Security benefits).

When DTA receives “unclear information,” they can only require you to provide proof about the information outside of your Interim Report or Recertification in two situations:

- the information DTA received is recent information (less than 60 days old) and, if the information is accurate, you would have been required to report it (for example, if you have earnings and you are an EDSAP household). See **Question 94**, or
- the information conflicts with the information DTA got when you applied for SNAP or did your Recertification (for example, when you applied you told DTA you had no income, but DTA gets a data match that you had income from a job you had at the time you applied).

Example: Jane was approved for SNAP in January and her case is on Simplified Reporting. DTA learns through The Work Number that Jane started working at McDonald’s part-time in March. DTA cannot reduce Jane’s SNAP even if they learn of the wages through The Work Number because The Work Number data is “unclear information” and Jane was not required to report the change in income until May, when her Interim Report is due. She was not required to report it because her gross monthly income stayed below the gross income test (see **Question 94**). DTA can ask Jane for more information about her McDonald’s job at her next Interim Report or Recertification.

If you think DTA stopped or denied your SNAP because of information they received from another source or because of a data match, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA’s BEACON Online Guide for this section.

100 When do I need to recertify my SNAP and what do I do?

When your certification period ends, *your SNAP will stop unless you timely reapply or “recertify” for benefits.* [106 C.M.R. §364.700](#). SNAP is certified for 12 or 36 months. See **Question 94**. Within 45 days before the end of your certification period, DTA will send you a Recertification form to fill out. [106 C.M.R. § 366.310](#).

As this guide gets updated, most SNAP households are currently still sent a “COVID-19 Recertification form.” If you are sent a COVID-19 Recertification form, you do not need to have an interview with a DTA worker.

When completing the form, you *need* to tell DTA about:

- Changes to your address or phone number,
- If someone joined or left your household,
- Any changes to noncitizen status,
- If anyone is a student, and
- Income for all household members.

You also have the *option* of telling DTA about:

- Dependent care costs,
- Housing and utility costs,
- Medical costs,
- Child support payments you make.

You can return your signed Recertification form to DTA one of four ways:

1. Complete the Recertification online on **DTAConnect.com**. See **Question 23**. This is the fastest way to do the paperwork!
2. Call DTA to complete it by phone at 877-282-2363.
3. Send it to DTA by fax or mail **OR**
4. Bring it to a local DTA office.

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Recertification interview:

Most households are interviewed by phone. [106 C.M.R. §§ 366.320\(B\), 366.330\(A\)](#). This is similar to the application interview. See **Question 10**.

If you are an elder (60+) or disabled household, there is *no recertification interview* if you have no earned income and you sent your Recertification and any verifications DTA needed on time. DTA will still schedule a recertification interview for you if you ask for one, the information you provided is questionable, or your SNAP case is going to close.

Keeping Your SNAP without Interruption:

DTA should give you enough time to complete and return the recertification paperwork to continue your SNAP benefits *without interruption* – as long as you get the form back on time and are still eligible. [106 C.M.R. § 366.320\(A\) and \(B\)](#). DTA should send you a notice if you return the form and for some reason your SNAP will be delayed.

If you get the form back after the DTA deadline, you may have an interruption in benefits. *If you do not return the form*, your benefits will stop. You will not get any additional notice from DTA.

If you sent DTA your recertification and any necessary proofs on time but didn't get your SNAP benefits on time, check your case status on DTA Connect or call the DTA Assistance Line to speak with a worker.

Getting a closed case reopened:

DTA should reopen your case if you sent in the recertification form before the deadline, **and** you get your missing proofs in within 30 days of the date your case closed. You do not have to start a new application. [106 C.M.R. § 366.340](#). [106 C.M.R. § 361.700\(B\)\(2\)](#). Your benefits may be pro-rated if the delay was your fault.

If your SNAP closed at the point of Recertification and *less than 30 days* have passed, you can send DTA your Recertification instead of doing a new application. If more *than 30 days* since your case closed, file a new SNAP application.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

101 If my TAFDC case closes, do my SNAP benefits continue?

If your family was receiving TAFDC and your benefits end you may *automatically get five months of SNAP benefits*. This special benefit is called the Transitional Benefits Alternative or “TBA.” TBA does not apply if your TAFDC closes due to a TAFDC program sanction.

The amount of SNAP you get will be calculated using *only* the income you had in the month your TAFDC benefits stopped. DTA will not count the amount of your TAFDC that stopped. DTA will also *not count new income* you receive that caused your TAFDC to close, such as new earnings or child support. [106 C.M.R. § 365.190](#).

Example: Mary gets TAFDC for herself and her baby. She has no other income. After a couple of months the baby’s father gets a new job and she begins to get \$800 per month in child support. When her TAFDC closes, her TBA SNAP is calculated based on \$0 of income (the TAFDC she was getting and the new child support – which caused the TAFDC to close – do not count). This helps Mary transition off TAFDC.

During the five-month TBA period, you are *not* required to report any changes in your household. You do have the option to report changes and if you report a change that could *increase* your benefits (such as loss of income or the addition of a household member), DTA is required to act on that change and recertify your benefits to the higher amount. See [106 C.M.R. § 366.110\(B\)](#).

About 45 days before the end of the 5-month TBA period, DTA should send you a recertification form that you will need to complete in order to continue your SNAP.

Note: If you get TAFDC and start a job, 100% of your earnings are disregarded (not counted) for up to 6 months, as long as your TAFDC household’s gross income stays below 200% FPL. With this 100% earnings disregard it is usually better for you to keep TAFDC instead of closing TAFDC and getting the TBA benefit. However, each family is different. Your DTA cash assistance worker should be able to explain how this works, or contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

102 How quickly will DTA increase my SNAP if my income decreases or my expenses increase?

DTA has to take action on certain changes that you report to them. After you report the change, DTA may ask for proof of the change. You may be eligible for *supplemental SNAP benefits* for the month you report the change in addition to DTA increasing your SNAP in the future.

If your net countable income drops to \$0 dollars – meaning your SNAP increases to the maximum SNAP benefit for your household size --, DTA should issue you a supplemental payment of SNAP for the month you report the change. [106 C.M.R. § 366.120\(A\)\(1\)](#).

Example: Kristina and her 2 kids get \$50 on the 2nd of each month in SNAP because she is working. Kristina's company lays her off and on June 15th she reports to DTA that she has lost her income. DTA should increase Kristina's SNAP to \$740 on July 2nd, and should also issue a supplemental SNAP payment of \$690 for June.

If you report a new household member or a change in income of \$50 or more, DTA must adjust your SNAP benefits effective with the first payment you are due ten days after you reported the change. If you report the change after the 20th of the month and it is too late in that month to increase the next month's payment, DTA should give you a supplemental SNAP payment so that you get the increase by the 10th day of the following month or on your normal issuance date, whichever is later. [106 C.M.R. § 366.120\(A\)\(2\)](#).

Example: Marian and her husband have earnings from his job and get SNAP on the 5th of each month. She is pregnant and has a baby. Marian calls DTA on May 29th and reports the baby was born. DTA should increase Marian's SNAP beginning in July because there is less than 10 days from May 29th to June 5th - but should also issue a supplement so that her SNAP amount is higher on June 5.

If you have an overpayment, DTA should not intercept supplemental SNAP payments to offset an overpayment..

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For all other changes, DTA must make the change effective no later than the first SNAP allotment issued 10 days or more after the change was reported to DTA. [106 C.M.R. § 366.120\(B\)](#).

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

Part 6

Appeal Rights

103 What are my rights if DTA denies, cuts or stops my SNAP?

If DTA denies your SNAP benefits or stops or lowers your benefits, you can ask for a *fair hearing*. A fair hearing, or an “appeal”, is a formal meeting in person at the local DTA office or by phone. A hearing officer runs the hearing and decides who is right. [106 C.M.R. §§ 367.375, 343.110](#). To ask for a hearing you file something called an “appeal” with DTA. You can ask for a hearing to challenge any DTA decision or action you disagree with. [106 C.M.R. §§ 367.125, 343.230](#).

Most DTA notices have an appeal form on the back which you can use to request a hearing. See **Question 107** for more on how to file an appeal and [Appendix C](#) for a copy of the DTA “Request for an Appeal” form.

You can appeal most actions DTA takes. For example, you can appeal if:

- DTA denies your application or recertification
- DTA lowers your SNAP and you think it is wrong
- DTA denies or ignores a request to correct a SNAP underpayment (under-issuance)
- DTA does not increase your SNAP (for example, when your income goes down or someone has moved into your household).
- DTA denies or ignores your request to accommodate a disability. See **Question 28**.
- DTA says you have been denied but never sends you written notice.
- DTA says you were overpaid SNAP benefits

See [106 C.M.R. § 343.230](#).

Cuts or Terminations

In most situations, DTA must give you at least 10 days advance notice before your benefits are stopped or reduced. The 10 days start from the date that the notice is mailed. Save any notices you get from DTA *and* the envelopes the notices come in. You may need the postmark on the envelope to show when the notice was sent. Often the date on the notice itself is a day before the date the notice is actually mailed. This may not be legal if DTA is reducing or terminating your SNAP. Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if your SNAP is reduced or terminated and your envelope has a postmark that is less than 10 days from when your benefits were impacted.

You can ask for a hearing if your benefits are stopped or reduced. See **Question 106** on whether you can keep your benefits while you are waiting for a hearing decision. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.230, 367.300](#). You can also reapply for SNAP while you are waiting for a hearing.

Worker Bad Conduct

You can ask for a hearing if a DTA worker threatens you, makes unreasonable demands that do not follow the rules, violates your privacy, or does not treat you with dignity and respect. [106 C.M.R. § 343.235](#). You have 120 days to file an appeal from the date of the incident where you allege worker misconduct. [106 C.M.R. § 343.140](#).

104 If I have the proofs DTA wanted, should I still ask for a hearing?

You always have the right to ask for a hearing, including if you now have the proof DTA wanted. But, you might be able to get the problem fixed without having to wait for the hearing.

If you are missing proofs and your case was recently closed or denied you can still give them to DTA.

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- If you give DTA the missing proofs within 60 days of the date you applied for SNAP, OR within 30 days of the date your certification period ended or your case closed, then as long as the proof you sent is acceptable DTA should approve or reinstate your benefits. [106 C.M.R. § 361.700\(B\)](#).
- If the documents DTA is asking for are ones you already sent them and DTA did not look at them timely, or if DTA made a mistake in failing to accept your proofs, DTA should give you benefits going back to the date they received the proof from you. You can ask to speak to a Supervisor, call the Ombuds Office or contact an advocate to help you.

Bringing documents to the hearing

You have a right to bring any documents to the hearing that you think will help your case. This includes documents you were late in giving DTA. If your SNAP benefits were denied, stopped or reduced because of a missing proof, and you bring this proof to the hearing, the hearing officer should consider it and make the necessary adjustments to your benefits.

If the missing proofs were needed *for your SNAP application or Interim Report*, the hearing Officer must look at the documents under the “de novo” (look anew) rule. This means that if the proofs you submit are sufficient the Hearing Officer should give you SNAP back to the date of your application or back to the start of your new Interim Reporting period. The SNAP eligibility date should be the date all eligibility conditions were met regardless of when the evidence was submitted.

Example: Mary applies for SNAP on June 1. She is confused about the application timeline and does not give DTA proof of her employment pension before 60 days passed. DTA denied her June 1 application because it didn’t get her proofs in time. Mary files an appeal on August 4 and brings proof of her pension to the hearing. The Hearing Officer accepts her pension proof and approves her SNAP back to June 1. The reason for the delay does not matter because Mary filed an appeal on an application.

If the missing proofs were needed as *part of your Recertification or a reported change during the certification period* the hearing officer will only approve your benefits as of the date the documents were submitted. However, if DTA was at fault, the hearing officer should approve SNAP

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benefits back to the date all eligibility conditions were met regardless of when the evidence was submitted. Examples of when DTA is at fault include:

- You timely sent DTA documents that they did not look at,
- DTA asked you for documents that are not required,
- DTA failed to send you a notice requesting the missing proofs, failed to give you enough time or failed to offer assistance when you asked for help.

Example: Mary does her SNAP recertification in May. She tells DTA in her recertification paperwork that she needs help getting proof of her pension because the company was bought out and she does not know who to contact. Her SNAP is closed on June 1 because DTA did not try to help and did not get proof of her pension. Mary files an appeal. At a hearing on June 20, Mary tells the Hearing Officer that she needed help and had to spend time finding the new company and reaching someone in HR. She brings proof of her pension at the hearing. The Hearing Officer should approve her SNAP going back to June 1 because the delay in getting DTA the proof was not her fault (because DTA ignored her request for help). The reason for the delay matters because the appeal was filed on a denied Recertification.

[106 C.M.R. § 343.500\(A\)](#). Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if you believe you were wrongly denied benefits because a Hearing Officer did not accept proofs you brought to the hearing.

105 Can I fix problems without going to a hearing?

Yes. You can try to fix problems by talking with a DTA worker, Supervisor, Office Director, or calling the DTA Ombuds Office.

Start by trying to figure out what happened in your case, when your benefits started or stopped, and what notices you were sent. See **Question 23** for information about DTA Connect.

Second, call the DTA Assistance Line and ask the DTA worker to explain to you the reason for DTA’s action on your benefits.

- When the issue is missing verification and the verification was in the case record but not processed, DTA should reopen the case immediately and issue you retroactive benefits. See **Question 20**.
- When the issue is verification you sent in but you sent it in late, DTA should reopen your SNAP and make a determination of whose “fault” it is. See **Question 21**.
- When the issue involves DTA failing to increase your benefits when you reported a decrease in income or increase in expenses, DTA should fix the case and issue you retroactive SNAP (this is an “underpayment”). See **Question 93 and 102**. DTA should not tell you to file an appeal to get the correction made.

If you do not get a satisfactory answer, ask for a Supervisor or the Assistant Director in the office you are calling. You can also file a complaint with the Department by speaking with a manager or the DTA Ombuds Office at **617-348-5354**. See **Question 31**.

Even if you are trying to fix the problem, you can **ask for a hearing at the same time**. You can always withdraw the hearing request if DTA agrees to fix the problem and correct your benefits. [106 C.M.R. § 343.350](#).

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Discrimination complaints

If you believe you have been discriminated against based on your race, gender, national origin, disability, age, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs, you have a right to file a complaint with:

Director, Office of Adjudication
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

Director of Equal Opportunity
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington St, Boston, MA 02111

[106 C.M.R. §§ 360.200-360.220](#). You need to include your name, address, and phone number as well as information on what happened (date, office, name of person you interacted with, whatever you know). You need to file this complaint within 180 days of the incident.

For legal help, call the nearest Legal Services office. See **Appendix E** for a list of Legal Services offices.

106 How much time do I have to ask for a fair hearing and will my benefits continue?

You can file an appeal 90 days from the date on your notice to get your appeal request to the Division of Hearings. [106 C.M.R. § 343.140\(B\)\(1\)](#).

You can file an appeal 120 days from:

- The date of your application when DTA failed to act on the application
- The date DTA received a request from you and they failed to act (e.g. you asked DTA to increase your benefits because your expenses changed and DTA takes no action).
- The date of the action DTA took when they failed to send you a notice about the action.

[106 C.M.R. § 343.140\(B\)\(2\)](#).

You can appeal a denial of correction of an underpayment within 90 days of the date of the denial. DTA should deny your request in writing. See **Question 93**. You can appeal this denial even though the underpayment itself may have happened more than 90 days ago. 106 C.M.R. § 367.100.

You can ask for a hearing any time during your certification period to challenge the amount of your benefits or whenever you discover an error. [106 C.M.R. § 367.100](#). See **Question 93**.

Continuing benefits pending the hearing

If your benefits are being cut off or reduced, you can keep your benefits while you are waiting for a hearing decision by making sure that the Division of Hearings timely receives your fair hearing (appeal) request. Getting benefits while you are waiting for the hearing decision is called “aid pending appeal.”

If you get the Division of Hearings your appeal request either before the effective date of the action OR within 10 days of the date the notice is mailed (whichever is later) then you “appealed timely.” If you appeal timely, your SNAP benefits will continue *until the hearing officer makes a*

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decision or until your certification period ends, whichever is first. [106 C.M.R. § 343.250](#), [106 C.M.R. §§ 366.220, 367.275](#). DTA can recover benefits you got while you were waiting for a hearing *if* you lose. [106 C.M.R. § 343.250\(C\)](#). See **Part 7** for information about overpayments.

Note, you are not eligible for SNAP benefits pending appeal if you are terminated at the end of your certification period. [106 C.M.R. § 366.200](#). You can still appeal, but your benefits will stop. If you do not appeal timely or your certification period ends, you can always re-apply for SNAP while waiting for your hearing.

Example: Judy's SNAP is put on her EBT card on the 11th of each month. She is certified for one year. She gets a notice from DTA dated January 25 that says her SNAP benefits will be terminated on February 10 (the day before her next benefits are due). Judy disagrees with this decision and decides to appeal. The Division of Hearings must receive her appeal request by February 9, the day before the termination is to take place, for Judy to continue to get SNAP while waiting for the hearing to happen and for the hearing officer to make a decision.

She can still request a hearing after February 9 (until April 24) but her benefits will not continue while she is waiting for the hearing decision. If her certification period ends while she is waiting for a decision her SNAP will stop. In either situation, she can reapply for SNAP while waiting for the appeal to be resolved!

107 How do I file an appeal to get a fair hearing?

You can ask for a hearing by either:

- Calling the Division of Hearings at **(617) 348-5321** and speaking with a Division of Hearings worker or leaving a voicemail with information about what you are appealing. *or*
- Writing to DTA, P.O. Box 4017, Taunton MA 02780-0314. You can also use the DTA “Request for an Appeal” that is on the back of the notice DTA sent you, sample DTA form [available here](#). You should write or verbally explain the reason why you want a fair hearing, and what action DTA is taking that you are appealing

If you fax your appeal, sending a fax to the Division of Hearings, FAX 617-348-5311. Fax is better because it is faster and you have a fax receipt showing when you sent the request to the Division of Hearings. You do not have to use the DTA form. [106 C.M.R. § 343.240](#).

To see if DTA received your hearing request, call **617-348-5321** or **800-882-2017**. You can also call this number if your SNAP stopped but you think DTA should have continued it while you are waiting for the hearing.

If you need an interpreter or you are homebound, you can ask for accommodations including:

- Request that the hearing to be held in your home if you are disabled and homebound. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.310](#).
- Request for an interpreter if you need one including American sign language or foreign language. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.450](#), *and*
- Request an “expedited” (quickly scheduled) appeal, if your SNAP application for expedited benefits was denied. [106 C.M.R. § 367.225](#)

Be sure to send your hearing request to the Division of Hearings, *not* your local DTA office.

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Next steps after filing an appeal

The Division of Hearings (DOH) should send you a notice within a few weeks of your appeal that tells you the date and time of your hearing. DTA must send you written notice of your hearing date at least one week prior to the hearing. [106 C.M.R. § 367.325](#).

Currently hearings are held by phone or through a virtual Zoom meeting. If this is a challenge for you and you would prefer an in-person hearing, or if the Division of Hearings says they cannot accommodate a Zoom hearing, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org.

The DOH notice will have other information about what a hearing is like and what your rights are.

Rescheduling a hearing

If you are appealing a SNAP issue and you cannot make the hearing date the Division of Hearings scheduled, you are entitled to postpone (reschedule) the hearing. [106 C.M.R. §367.200](#). Call the Division of Hearings *before the date it is scheduled for* and ask for a new date. You do not need to have a good cause reason, as long as you call before the hearing date to postpone. [106 C.M.R. 343.320\(A\)\(2\)](#). If you need to postpone more than once, you may need to show good cause.

If you miss the hearing *without calling in advance*, you will have to give a good cause reason to the Division of Hearings to get the hearing rescheduled. You will also be asked to explain to the hearing officer at the rescheduled hearings why you missed the first hearing. Good cause includes an unexpected emergency. [106 C.M.R. § 343.320\(D\)](#). Otherwise the Division of hearings will dismiss your appeal. [106 C.M.R. 343.320\(B\)\(1\)](#).

Cancelling a hearing if DTA fixes your case

If DTA approves or re-opens your case while you are waiting for the hearing, you can withdraw (cancel) your appeal request so you do not have to go to the hearing. Make sure you got all of the benefits you are entitled to before you withdraw your appeal request.

- You can do this in writing. Mail or fax your withdrawal to the Division of Hearings. See **Question 107**.

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- You can also cancel a hearing by calling the Division of Hearings at 617-348-5321.
- You will get a letter from DTA confirming that your appeal request was withdrawn. [106 C.M.R. 343.240](#) and [106 C.M.R. 367.150](#).

Do not confuse withdrawing an appeal with asking for a hearing date to be rescheduled. If you cannot attend the hearing on the date scheduled by the Division of Hearings, call and ask for a new date. You may have to explain a good reason why you need a new date.

You should not be pressured into withdrawing your appeal.

108 How should I present my case at the hearing?

The hearing is your last chance to make sure DTA has the facts supporting your position, including any documents.

- Try to get a legal advocate to represent you at the hearing or give you advice about representing yourself. [106 C.M.R. § 343.150](#). See **Appendix E** for a list of legal services offices. You can also bring a friend or relative for support. [106 C.M.R. § 367.350](#).
- Bring any proof you have. This can include proof you did not have before or never sent to DTA. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.410, 343.500\(A\), 367.400\(F\)](#). You or your advocate can ask DTA to send you papers and information from your file before the hearing. [106 C.M.R. § 343.340](#). If your hearing is being conducted by telephone or video, you should insist on an opportunity to fax any follow up documents to the hearing officer.
- You can bring witnesses. You can also get a paper ordering a witness to come to your hearing; this paper is called a “subpoena.” [106 C.M.R. § 343.360](#). Talk with a legal advocate about how to do this.

Face-to face hearings and most telephone hearings take place at your local DTA office in a separate room. Only the people who need to be there are allowed in—the DTA representative, you, your representative (if any), any

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witnesses, and the hearing officer. Everyone must testify under “oath or affirmation.” The hearing is tape-recorded. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.450, 343.500, 343.550](#).

If you believe that DTA is using evidence that is unfair or unreliable—for example, an accusation from an unidentified person—tell the hearing officer that you “object.” Objecting may make the hearing officer think twice about relying on this information. Also, if you lose the hearing and appeal to court, the court can consider whether the hearing officer made a mistake by admitting the evidence you objected to.

You have a right to see any information in your DTA case record. The DTA case record includes copies of applications and recertifications, DTA notices, verifications DTA got from you, case narratives (notes from workers) and actions related to the fair hearing process. 106 CMR § 360.300.

If DTA schedules you for a telephone and you want a face-to-face hearing, call the Division of Hearings right away (**617-348-5321** or **800-882-2017**) and say you want a face-to-face hearing. If DTA won’t give you a face-to-face hearing, be sure to say on the record at the hearing that you want a face-to-face hearing.

The hearing officer must take evidence and decide certain issues “de novo” (anew) based on what is presented at the hearing. See **Question 104**.

109 When will I get a decision and what should I do if I lose?

The hearing officer must decide your case within 60 days of receiving your appeal request. [106 C.M.R. § 367.450](#).

If you win, you should get any benefits DTA owes you within 30 days of the decision. If your SNAP is supposed to go up because of the hearing decision, DTA must include the increase either within 10 days or in your next regular payment (depending on the date you asked for a hearing). [106 C.M.R. § 367.450\(A\)](#). DTA must also give you any SNAP benefits you missed while you were waiting for your hearing decision because your SNAP case was denied or your SNAP amount was too low. [106 C.M.R. § 366.500](#).

If you lose your fair hearing, don't give up! First, you can reapply for benefits. Second, you have 14 days from the date of the decision to ask for a remand and 30 days after receipt of the decision to file in court to challenge the hearing officer's decision. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.710, 343.720, 367.475](#). You may be able to get help from your local Legal Services office. See **Appendix E**. [106 C.M.R. §§ 343.710, 343.720](#).

Be sure to allow time to get the remand or court papers ready. You can fax your remand request to the DTA Commissioner: Fax to **617-348-8575**

If you lose the fair hearing, DTA may ask you to repay SNAP benefits you got while you were waiting for a hearing decision. See **Question 104**. If you are no longer receiving benefits, DTA cannot recover SNAP benefits by reducing your cash assistance benefits, but DTA may be able to pay itself back by intercepting certain income. See **Question 125**.

Part 7

Overpayments and Fraud

110 What if I was overpaid SNAP benefits?

If you get more SNAP benefits than you are eligible for, DTA can recover the overpayment. [106 C.M.R. § 367.490](#). An overpayment can happen in four ways:

- DTA made a mistake and gave you too much in SNAP. This is called an Agency Error.
- You made an unintentional mistake that caused your SNAP to be higher than you should have received. This is called an Unintentional Program Violation (UPV).
- You received SNAP benefits while you were waiting for a hearing *and* you then lost the hearing.
- You are found by a court or a DTA administrative hearings officer to have committed fraud or an “Intentional Program Violation” (IPV).

See [106 C.M.R. § 367.495](#). [106 C.M.R. § 367.275](#).

DTA will not pursue an Agency Error overpayment if the amount is for less than \$600. For example, if DTA paid you an extra \$500 in SNAP by mistake, DTA will not ask you to pay it back.

DTA will not pursue a UPV or IPV overpayment if the amount is less than \$125 - unless DTA discovered the overpayment during a Quality Control case review. [106 C.M.R. § 364.870](#).

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This chart summarizes when DTA will and will not pursue an overpayment:

Will DTA pursue an overpayment?			
	Overpayment Occurred 12+ Months Before DTA Discovery	Overpayment Less Than \$600	Overpayment Less Than \$125
Agency Error	No	No	Not applicable
Client Error-UPV	No	Yes	No
Client Fraud-IPV	Yes (up to 6 years)	Yes	No

111 How do I know if I have an overpayment?

DTA will send you a Notice of Overpayment. The Notice will include a Repayment Agreement. You do not have to sign the Repayment Agreement. Talk with an advocate before you agree to sign this. You also have a right to appeal the Notice of Overpayment within 90 days. See **Question 102**.

If you think DTA made a mistake in charging you with an overpayment or the amount, you can file an appeal. See **Question 107**. Contact Legal Services if DTA said you were overpaid SNAP. See **Appendix F**.

112 How does DTA calculate the amount of the SNAP overpayment?

An overpayment is the difference between the SNAP you received and the SNAP benefits you were eligible to receive based on the correct information about your case.

- DTA should include all applicable deductions, just like when it normally calculates your SNAP. See **Question 74**. However, if the overpayment is due to unreported income, DTA will not include the 20% earnings disregard if the overpayment was your fault (a UPV) or if you were found to have committed fraud (an IPV). [106 C.M.R. § 367.495\(D\)](#).

Example: Jill accidentally didn't report earnings of \$1,000 per month. When calculating her overpayment, DTA will count the full \$1,000/month (instead of \$800). If it turns out that Jill had sent in her pay stubs and DTA failed to act on the proofs she had submitted, DTA should only count \$800 when calculating the overpayment – because the 20% earnings disregard does apply for Agency Error overpayments.

- For all overpayments, the first month of an overpayment is the *month the change would have been effective* if it had been reported by you timely, or acted on by DTA timely. [106 C.M.R. §§ 367.495\(D\), 367.500\(A\)](#). See **Question 95-98** for reporting timelines.
- Federal regulations also require DTA to calculate the amount of an overpayment by doing a *month to month* calculation – not by averaging out an amount of income over the period of the overpayment. [7 C.F.R. 273.18\(c\)\(ii\)\(A\)](#).

Example: Jane started a job in mid-June. She gets both SNAP and TAFDC. Because she is getting TAFDC, she is on change reporting (not simplified reporting). Jane was confused about the reporting rules and did not report her new job until her reevaluation for TAFDC and SNAP in October (four months late). DTA decided Jane had an

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Unintentional Program Violation overpayment. DTA must calculate the SNAP and cash overpayment by looking at Jane's actual income month by month, and not average her total income over the four months.

- DTA should *reduce* the amount of an overpayment by any amount of SNAP they “expunged” (took away if you didn't use your EBT card for a year). [7 C.F.R. 273.18\(c\)\(ii\)\(C\)](#). See **Question 89**.
- DTA should reduce the overpayment by any underpayment of SNAP that DTA owes you. [106 C.M.R. §§ 366.550, 366.560](#).
- DTA should not include any overpayment amounts that occurred more than 12 months before the date a UPV or Agency Error overpayment was “discovered” by DTA. For IPVs, DTA can calculate the overpayment going back 6 years. DTA tracks and should include in the packet of evidence about the overpayment the date the overpayment was discovered.

Troubleshooting tips:

Overpayments and reporting changes: There is no overpayment if you did not report a change that you were not required to report or would not matter.

For example, if you were on Simplified Reporting and you did not report an increase in income in between your Interim Report and your Recertification, there is NO overpayment unless the increase put your household over the gross income limit, and you were required to report when your household went over the gross income limit. **Question 95**.

Calculating the overpayment: The first month of an overpayment is the month the change would have been effective if it had been reported timely. In May 2017 federal rules were changed regarding timely reporting of income in simplified reporting cases. Effective May 8, 2017, households are not required to report if their income exceeds the gross income test until the 10th day of the month following the month in which the income exceeded the gross income test (the old rule was within 10 days of the receipt of income). [7 CFR 273.12\(a\)\(2\)](#). See **Question 95**. Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if DTA

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pursues an overpayment against your household because your income exceeded the limit for your household size.

Households with ineligible non-citizens: If your household includes an ineligible non-citizen with income and DTA says you are overpaid, check to make sure DTA followed the special income counting rules when calculating the overpayment. See **Question 54**.

Supplemental payments: DTA should not take any supplemental payments that are issued in connection to your current SNAP and a change you report.

Advocacy help: Contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org if you have questions about an overpayment, how it was calculated, or for a copy of DTA's most recent SNAP Claims Policy.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

113 How can I get more information from DTA about my overpayment?

You have the right at any time to call DTA and ask for more information about your overpayment. Call the Overpayment and Recoveries Unit at: **1-800-462-2607**.

This is especially important if you are filing an appeal and do not agree with the overpayment or the overpayment amount. You can ask for the packet of information related to your overpayment. DTA should give you information including:

- The overpayment referral (when was the overpayment discovered, what type of overpayment DTA is pursuing, etc),
- Notes about the SNAP overpayment in the case (“case narratives”) and relevant DTA notices,
- Any evidence or proof they got from other parties or agencies,
- Proof that the overpaid SNAP benefits were used, and

- How they calculated the SNAP overpayment - including a monthly breakdown.

114 When do I have to repay an overpayment?

Under the federal and state SNAP rules, you are required to repay overpayments even if the overpayment was DTA's mistake – unless the overpayment meets certain exceptions. See [106 C.M.R. § 367.495\(E\)](#).

DTA is not currently collecting on overpayments due to the pandemic. When the collection suspension ends, if you are *getting SNAP*, DTA will take some of your SNAP to repay the overpayment.

DTA will collect from you and also any others who were adults and in your SNAP household at the time of the overpayment. [106 C.M.R. §367.490](#).

Collecting overpayments from current recipients

DTA has the authority to reduce the amount of a claim. This is called “compromising the claim.” [106 C.M.R. §367.495\(F\)](#). DTA only has a policy to compromise “Agency Error” overpayments for households actively getting SNAP:

If all SNAP household members in your household are age 67 or older, DTA will waive the entire (100%) Agency Error overpayment amount. DTA started this policy in May 2018.

- If any SNAP household members in your household are below age 67, DTA will waive half (50%) of the Agency Error amount. For example, if a household has a \$900 Agency Error overpayment, DTA will reduce the amount owed to \$450. DTA started this policy in November 2018.

Collecting overpayments from non-recipients

Even if DTA caused the overpayment and it is an “agency error”, the federal and state SNAP rules allow them to pursue and collection on the overpayment.

You have the option to ask DTA to compromise your claim if you cannot

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pay it without hardship. Contact MLRI at infor@masslegalservices.org if you need help trying to reduce or eliminate a SNAP overpayment.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

115 What if DTA says I committed fraud or an Intentional Program Violation (“IPV”)?

An IPV is an “intentional program violation.” That is when a court or an administrative hearing officer determines that you gave DTA false or misleading information on purpose. DTA must prove that you intentionally and willfully hid information in order to get benefits you are not eligible for, or intentionally and willfully did not report a change that you were required to report and would have reduced your benefits. [106 C.M.R. § 367.525](#). Purposely giving false or misleading information or willfully hiding information in order to get benefits is fraud.

Example: Stacy wrote that she has \$0 of income on her SNAP application. She was working when she wrote \$0 income on the application and knew she was lying. She did it intentionally to get the maximum SNAP grant.

If DTA thinks you committed fraud, they are required to send you a notice about an *Administrative Disqualification Hearing*. This notice sets a time and a date for a hearing with a DTA Hearing Officer. At this hearing the hearing officer will hear from DTA about why DTA thinks you intentionally broke SNAP rules to get more SNAP. You will also have an opportunity to explain why you did not intentionally break the SNAP rules.

If you do not attend the hearing, DTA will make a decision anyway. During the pandemic DTA has been doing the hearings by phone without an in-person option. If you get a notice about an Administrative Disqualification Hearing, contact Legal Services as soon as possible.

This notice also includes a page called an “Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver.” **Try to consult with a Legal Services advocate before you sign this waiver.** Signing this waiver means that DTA will find that you have an IPV and sanction you off SNAP – without a hearing or any further evaluation of the situation.

If you get a notice about an Administrative Disqualification Hearing, call Legal Services as soon as possible.

116 What is DTA required to do to show I committed fraud?

DTA must give you written notice of the SNAP intentional program violation (IPV) penalties each time you apply. The notice must be in English, Spanish or other languages spoken by 100 or more households in the area served by the DTA office. [106 C.M.R. § 367.550](#).

To establish an IPV, DTA has to prove that you knew the SNAP rules and your responsibilities and that you purposely violated the rules. DTA must prove with “clear and convincing evidence” that you “willfully, knowingly and with deceitful intent committed an IPV.” [106 C.M.R. § 367.750](#). Simple unintentional mistakes or misunderstandings between you and DTA that result in an overpayment should not be IPV's.

In calculating the amount of the overpayment, DTA must give you all the deductions (shelter, child care) you would otherwise receive, with the exception of the 20% earned income deduction. [106 C.M.R. § 367.500\(A\)](#).

There are many situations where DTA may not meet its burden to prove the SNAP household willfully and intentionally committed fraud, including:

- DTA failed to give written notice about reporting requirements in the household's own language as required under DTA's obligations to serve limited English proficient households.
- You reported a change to the DTA office, but the DTA office failed to correctly record the change or process the documents.
- DTA relied on information from a data match that was not accurate.
- You, or the head of household, were not capable of willfully and knowingly defrauding DTA because you have a mental health or cognitive impairment. A statement from a health provider, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist, may help show that you did *not act* knowingly or willfully.

If you get a notice about an Administrative Disqualification Hearing or IPV, call Legal Services as soon as possible.

117 Can DTA suspend or stop my SNAP benefits if I committed an IPV or fraud?

If you are found guilty of an IPV by a court of law or by a DTA hearing officer – or you waived your right to an IPV hearing or signed a consent agreement in court – you will not be eligible for SNAP benefits *for yourself* for

- one year for the first violation,
- two years for the second violation, *and*
- permanently for the third violation. [106 C.M.R. § 367.800\(A\)](#).

DTA can only stop SNAP benefits for the person who committed the intentional program violation. The IPV disqualification does not affect children or other people who are in the same household with the person who committed the IPV. [106 C.M.R. § 367.800\(F\)](#). However, any income of the disqualified member will count against the rest of the household. The household also has a lower gross income test than other SNAP households. See **Question 74**.

DTA has to follow special notice and hearing rules if it has charged you with an IPV. [106 C.M.R. §§ 367.600-367.750](#).

When the disqualification period starts

The disqualification period must start the month following the date that you received written notification of a hearing decision where the hearing officer made an IPV determination. [106 C.M.R. § 367.625](#). If DTA misses that date, or starts the disqualification late, you should not be disqualified for additional months that DTA missed.

Even if you are no longer getting SNAP at the point of the notification or during the disqualification, the SNAP disqualification period still starts the month following the month of the hearing decision. DTA cannot initiate a disqualification at some later date or suspend the disqualification until you reapply. Contact Legal Services if this is an issue.

Example: On July 15, 2016, a hearing officer found that Rachel committed an IPV and disqualified her for 12 months. DTA then sent

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her a notice of the disqualification on July 17th. Rachel was not getting SNAP at the time of the IPV disqualification. Her 12 months start August 2016. She can reapply in September of 2017. If Rachel has another family member, such as a child, she can still get SNAP for that child during the disqualification period, even though she is ineligible.

The disqualification penalties are more severe for people found guilty, in court, of trading SNAP benefits for drugs or firearms, trading more than \$500 in benefits, or getting multiple benefits with a fake identity or address. [106 C.M.R. § 367.800\(B\), \(C\)](#).

DTA should contact SNAP households when the sanction period is ending to evaluate whether the sanctioned individual can be added back onto the SNAP case.

Trouble Shooting Tips:

If you are found to have made an IPV only for cash (EAEDC or TAFDC) and, when sanctioning you from cash for a period of time DTA also sanctions you from SNAP, contact MLRI at info@masslegalservices.org. This may not be legal.

Example: Janine was disqualified from EAEDC in October for 6 months due to a EAEDC IPV. DTA sends Janine a notice terminating their EAEDC and SNAP, and barring Janine from getting SNAP for 12 months. This may not be legal. Contact MLRI.

If you received SNAP *in another state* and you were found to have committed an IPV in that state, DTA can continue that disqualification in Massachusetts. The length of the disqualification period starts with the date you were notified of the original IPV.

Example: Philip was disqualified from SNAP in Montana on January 2022 for 1 year. His SNAP disqualification ends January 2023, even if he moved to Massachusetts in March of 2022.

DTA Online Guide: See **Appendix G** for links to the DTA's BEACON Online Guide for this section.

118 What should I do if contacted by the Bureau of Special Investigations?

If DTA thinks you were overpaid because of your mistake or because you committed fraud, it may refer your case to the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI). [106 C.M.R. § 706.240](#). DTA may also refer applications to BSI if the worker thinks you are lying about something.

BSI may tell you to come in for an interview. You do not have to go to the interview. Your benefits won't stop just because you do not go to the interview. But if you don't go, BSI can decide to send the case back to DTA to collect the overpayment or BSI may decide to refer the case for a criminal prosecution of SNAP fraud.

If you do go to a BSI interview, *you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can be used against you.* It may be best to remain silent even if you have not done anything wrong. You do not have to give BSI names of people to talk to. Call Legal Services before you meet with BSI or say anything. See **Appendix E**.

Do not sign anything unless BSI has shown you how it figured the overpayment, you are sure that all the calculations are correct, and you agree with everything in the statement you are signing. Do not agree to a repayment schedule that you will not be able to keep or that will cause your family hardship. If BSI contacts you about an interview, consult with Legal Services before going or signing any documents.

119 Can I go to jail? Will I have a criminal record?

If BSI decides that you committed SNAP fraud and that the overpayment was not just a mistake, you can be prosecuted. [106 C.M.R. § 367.850](#). If you get notice of a criminal complaint, you should plead “not guilty” and ask the court to appoint a lawyer for you. Legal services programs do not represent people in criminal matters but they may help you and your lawyer figure out whether BSI has correctly computed what you owe.

If you plead guilty or you are found guilty, you will probably not have to go to jail, but the criminal record may make it harder for you to get a job, get credit, or get housing. A criminal record may also cause immigration problems. You may have to pay back the money the court decides you owe. Sometimes the court will delay a final decision as long as you pay back the money according to the schedule set by the court. This is called “continued without a finding.” Be careful not to agree to a repayment schedule you will not be able to keep.

The federal SNAP rules permit you to ask the court to let you pay back the money through public service. [7 C.F.R. § 273.18\(g\)\(7\)](#). If you pay the money back or pay the claim through public service, you may be able to get the case dismissed so you don’t have a criminal record.

If the court finds that you committed an IPV, your benefits can be stopped under the SNAP IPV sanction rules. See **Question 117**. [106 C.M.R. §§ 367.900, 367.925](#).

Appendix A

SNAP Worksheet

MASSACHUSETTS SNAP BENEFITS WORKSHEET

Effective October 1, 2022

→ COVID Emergency Allotments bring all eligible households to at least maximum SNAP. See [MassLegalServices.org/DTA-COVID-19](https://www.masslegal.org/DTA-COVID-19)

1. GROSS Earned Income _____
(exclude any legally obligated child support paid out)
2. ADD Gross Unearned Income + _____
3. TOTAL GROSS Monthly income = _____
Compare with Gross Income Test

INCOME DEDUCTIONS

4. SUBTRACT 20% of Line 1 Earned Income - _____
(if legally obligated child support paid out from earnings, first add back in for 20% calc)
5. SUBTRACT Standard Deduction - _____
Household Size: 1-4 = \$193;
5 = \$225; 6+ = \$258
6. SUBTRACT Excess Medical Deduction (See Box A) - _____
7. SUBTRACT Dependent Care Costs - _____
8. SUBTRACT Homeless Deduction (\$167) - _____
(only if homeless household not claiming regular Shelter Deduction)

PRELIMINARY ADJUSTED

NET INCOME (PANI)

9. SUBTRACT Excess Shelter (see Box B) - _____
Amount capped at \$624 **unless** 60+/disabled person in household!

MONTHLY NET INCOME

To estimate APPROXIMATE SNAP benefit:

1. Take 30% of Monthly Net Income X _____ .3
= _____
 2. Maximum SNAP benefit for Household size (see chart to right) _____
 3. SUBTRACT Line 1 (30% of Net) - _____
- APPROX. MONTHLY SNAP**** = _____

** This is an *approximate* figure. We encourage all households with income below 200% FPL to apply for SNAP. All 1 and 2 person households under 200% FPL qualify for \$23 minimum SNAP.

GROSS INCOME TEST AND MAXIMUM SNAP

Household Size	Gross Income Test-200% FPL	Maximum SNAP benefit
1	\$2,265	\$281
2	\$3,052	\$516
3	\$3,838	\$740
4	\$4,625	\$939
5	\$5,412	\$1,116
6	\$6,198	\$1,339
7	\$6,985	\$1,480
8	\$7,772	\$1,691
Each add'l member	+\$787	+ \$211

Box A - Medical Deduction

Medical Expenses _____
Threshold - \$35 - 35
Medical Deduction = _____

⌘ If medical deduction > \$35, enter \$155 standard deduction on Item #6. If actual medical expense > \$190/month, then use actual less \$35.

Box B - Shelter Deduction

Rent or home ownership costs _____
Add SUA amount* + _____
TOTAL shelter expenses = _____
Shelter Standard (Divide PANI by 2) - _____
Excess Shelter Deduction = _____

NOTE: Enter maximum \$624 shelter on Line #10 **unless** 60+/disabled person in household, then use actual amount.

*SUA = Standard Utility Allowance:

\$860/mo – heating or AC costs or fuel assistance
\$525/mo - non-heating/cooling utilities
\$ 60/mo - phone only

NOTE: Households with a member sanctioned due to IPV must meet 130% FPL gross income test, SNAP asset test and 100% FPL net income test. 60+/disabled households over 200% FPL must meet the asset test and net income test. See [MLRI SNAP Advocacy Guide](#) for more information.

Appendix B

Income and Benefits Standards

Massachusetts SNAP: Income and Benefits Standards

Effective February 1, 2023

Chart 1: Monthly GROSS Income Test - 200% FPL*

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum gross monthly income
1	\$2,430
2	\$3,287
3	\$4,143
4	\$5,000
5	\$5,857
6	\$6,713
7	\$7,570
8	\$8,472
Each additional member	Add approximately \$857

*Amounts effective as of February 1, 2023.

Note: Households with a member 60+ or disabled over 200% FPL may still be eligible, but must meet the \$4,250 asset test.

Chart 2: Monthly GROSS Income Test -130% FPL*
For SNAP households with a member sanctioned due to an IPV

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum gross monthly income
1	\$1,473
2	\$1,984
3	\$2,495
4	\$3,007
5	\$3,518
6	\$4,029
7	\$4,541
8	\$5,052
Each additional member	Add \$512

*Effective October 1, 2022.

Chart 3: Monthly NET Income Test -100% FPL*

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum gross monthly income
1	\$1,133
2	\$1,526
3	\$1,920
4	\$2,313
5	\$2,706
6	\$3,100
7	\$3,493
8	\$3,886
Each additional member	Add \$394

*Effective October 1, 2022.

Chart 4: Maximum SNAP Benefit Amount*

Minimum benefit level for one and two person households is \$23

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum Benefit Level
1	\$281
2	\$516
3	\$740
4	\$939
5	\$1,116
6	\$1,339
7	\$1,480
8	\$1,691
Each additional member	Add \$211

*Effective October 1, 2022.

Income Deductions and Allowances

Chart 6: Standard Deduction*

All households

Assistance Unit Size	Standard Deduction
1	\$193
2	\$193
3	\$193
4	\$193
5	\$225
6 or more	\$258

*Effective October 1, 2022

Chart 7: Shelter Deduction*

For all SNAP households except for households with member(s) 60+ or disabled - then the shelter deduction is ***uncapped***.

Maximum Shelter Deduction	\$624
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*Effective October 1, 2022

Chart 8: Homeless Deduction*

Homeless Shelter Deduction	\$167
----------------------------	-------

*Effective October 1, 2022

Chart 9: Standard Utility Allowances (SUAs)*

Heating/Cooling	\$860
Non-Heating	\$525
Phone Only	\$60
Bay State CAP	\$860

*Effective October 1, 2022

Appendix C

DTA Forms

- Request to Choose Someone to be my Authorized Representative
- Request for an Appeal (Fair Hearing)
- DTA Medical Expense Self-Declaration Statement

MLRI Information and Sample Forms

- SNAP Mandatory Verifications Chart
- Links to SNAP Know Your Rights fliers and additional SNAP resources
- Sample Client Consent Allowing DTA to Release Information to Helping Agency
- Sample Client Declaration of Shelter and Dependent Care Costs

MLRI's SNAP Math At a Glance Charts

- At-a-Glance Chart on SNAP for Working Households
- At-a-Glance Chart for Unemployment Comp Households
- At-a-Glance Chart for 1 and 2 Person Elder/Disabled Households
- SNAP Benchmarks Chart for Claiming Medical Expenses



Request to Choose Someone to Be My Authorized Representative

Give this form to DTA

- By Mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780-0420
- By Fax: (617) 887-8765
- Upload to the DTA Connect App
- In person at your local DTA office

Client Name _____ Last 4 Digits of SSN or Agency ID _____

Client's Residential Address _____



Important Points to Remember

- The same person may be named for multiple roles.
- You can cancel or change this request at any time.
- EBT cards still work if a case reopens after being closed. If you don't want the person you choose to get and use your benefits, be sure to tell DTA to cancel their card.
 - For SNAP only clients, please call the DTA Assistance line at (877) 382-2363.
 - For TAFDC/EAEDC clients, please call your cash worker directly.

Section A – Designating a SNAP Authorized Representative for Certification and/or EBT Transactions

- I choose _____ to be my **SNAP Authorized Representative for Certification**. His/her phone number is _____. This person can sign my SNAP paperwork or any other forms, report changes and talk about my case with DTA. If I get too many benefits because s/he gave DTA the wrong information, I may have to pay DTA back.
- I choose _____ to be my **SNAP Authorized Representative for EBT Transactions**. This person will receive an EBT card if s/he gives DTA proof of identity. S/he can buy food for me using my SNAP benefits. I will also get my own EBT card.

Section B – Designating a TAFDC/EAEDC Authorized Representative and/or Authorized Payee

- I choose _____ to be my **TAFDC/EAEDC Authorized Representative**. This person can report changes and talk about my case with DTA. If I get too many benefits because s/he gave DTA the wrong information, I may have to pay DTA back.
- I choose _____ to be my **TAFDC/EAEDC Authorized Payee**. This person will receive an EBT card if s/he gives DTA proof of identity. S/he can get money from my TAFDC or EAEDC account for me. I will also get my own EBT card.

 Client or Legal Guardian Name (Print) Client or Legal Guardian Signature Date

- **Note for SNAP Cases:** Court appointed guardians signing on behalf of a client must attach a copy of the Guardianship Decree with this form.
- Helping agencies that are not acting as an authorized representative should provide the Voluntary Consent to Release Information (VARI-OI) or similar form.

Request for an Appeal

If you have trouble reading or understanding this notice, call DTA at 1-877-382-2363 for help.

What is an appeal? If you disagree with a Department (DTA) action, you have the right to appeal. If you appeal, you will have a hearing. Hearings are usually held in your local DTA office. If you cannot come to the office, you can have a phone hearing. An independent hearing officer will make the decision. At least ten days before the hearing, you will get a notice of the time and place of the hearing. At the hearing, a DTA employee will explain the reason for the DTA action. You or someone helping you can explain why you disagree with the action. After the hearing, the hearing officer will mail you a decision.

Can I bring someone to help me? Yes. You can bring anyone you want to support or represent you. You can also bring witnesses to testify. You may be able to get free legal help. Call the Legal Advocacy and Resource Center (LARC) at **1-800-342-5297** or go to www.masslegalhelp.org for information about free legal services.

How do I appeal? Fill in the spaces below.

Date _____

I wish to appeal the following decision by DTA: _____

Your Name (Print) _____ Agency ID or last 4 of SSN _____ Date _____

Address _____ Telephone () _____

City/ZIP _____

If you have someone to help you with this appeal, please fill in their information:

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____ Telephone () _____

City/ZIP _____

If you need special help due to a disability, please contact the Division of Hearings at the numbers listed below.

Mail this request to: DTA, P.O. Box 4017, Taunton MA 02780-0314 or fax (both sides) to (617) 348-5311.

If you are currently getting cash benefits – If we get this request before the date your benefits are to be stopped or lowered, your benefits will continue until the appeal is decided. *If you lose your appeal, you will have to pay back these benefits.* If you get TAFDC time limited benefits during your appeal and you lose, the months of benefits you received may count toward your time limit.

If you are currently getting SNAP benefits -- If we get this request before your benefits are lowered or stopped, your benefits will continue until the appeal is decided, **or** your SNAP certification period ends, *whichever comes first.* *If you lose your SNAP appeal, you will have to pay back the benefits you received during your appeal.*

If you do not want to get benefits during your appeal - Check this box . If you choose not to get benefits during the appeal period, and win your appeal, DTA will pay you any benefits owed.

What are the deadlines for appealing? We must get your appeal request no later than 90 days from the date the Department sent you written notice of the action you are appealing.

But there are exceptions:

- There is no deadline if you appeal the amount of your SNAP benefits during your certification period.
- You have 120 days if DTA fails to act on your request for benefits or services.
- You generally have 120 days if the appeal is about coercive or improper conduct by a DTA employee.
- You only have 30 days if you are appealing because your state tax refund has been held to repay an overpayment of DTA benefits.

Do you need an interpreter? – You have the right to a free interpreter if you need one. The interpreter will keep all of the information about your case confidential. You also have the right to bring your own interpreter. If you need an interpreter, please call us at any of the phone or MassRelay numbers listed in the section below or check this box and tell us your primary language or dialect: _____ and we will provide an interpreter for you.

What if I cannot come on the date of the hearing? If you need to reschedule, please call at **(617) 348-5321** or **(800) 882-2017** at least one day before the hearing. (If you are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, you can call **MassRelay** at **711** or **(800) 439-2370**).

If you do not reschedule and miss the hearing, we will send you a letter about your rights. If you had a good reason for missing the hearing, we may be able to give you a new hearing.

Request for an Appeal

Reason for Appeal (✓ the boxes that apply to you)

The reason for my appeal is:	
<input type="checkbox"/> My application was denied for:	
<input type="checkbox"/> TAFDC	
<input type="checkbox"/> EAEDC	
<input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care	
<input type="checkbox"/> SSP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> I was not allowed to apply for assistance.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I was receiving:	
<input type="checkbox"/> TAFDC	
<input type="checkbox"/> EAEDC	
<input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care	
<input type="checkbox"/> SSP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
and my benefits were	<input type="checkbox"/> lowered
	<input type="checkbox"/> stopped
<input type="checkbox"/> A DTA employee's conduct was coercive or improper in my case:	
Name of Employee:	Date: _____
Describe the conduct:	

<i>Attach additional information if necessary to explain.</i>	
Send your appeal to:	DTA Hearings, P.O. Box 4017, Taunton MA 02780-0314
	Telephone: (617) 348-5321 (Toll Free: 1-800-882-2017) Fax: (617) 348-5311

SNAP Know Your Rights fliers and additional SNAP resources

- **ABAWD** fliers and information: [MassLegalServices.org/ABAWD](https://www.masslegalservices.org/ABAWD)
- **SNAP Medical Expense Deduction**, including Know Your Rights flier (English and Spanish) and rent calculation worksheet toolkit: [MassLegalServices.org/SNAP-medical](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAP-medical)
- **College Students** and SNAP, including Know Your Rights fliers: [Masslegalservices.org/food4students](https://www.masslegalservices.org/food4students)
- **Veterans Outreach Fliers**: [Masslegalservices.org/SNAP4veterans](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAP4veterans)
- **SNAP Know Your Rights Fliers**:
 - Household Misfortune/Replacement SNAP: [MassLegalServices.org/SNAP-Misfortune](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAP-Misfortune)
 - SNAP and Strikers (English and Spanish): [Masslegalservices.org/SNAPandstrikers](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAPandstrikers)
 - SNAP and Dependent Care Expenses: [Masslegalservices.org/SNAP-dependentcare](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAP-dependentcare)
 - Adult Foster Care: [Masslegalservices.org/content/adult-foster-care-and-snap](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/adult-foster-care-and-snap)
 - Foster Care (children): [Masslegalservices.org/content/foster-care-families-and-snap](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/foster-care-families-and-snap)
- **Authorized Representatives vs. Helping Agencies**: [Masslegalservices.org/content/helping-agency-vs-authorized-representative](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/helping-agency-vs-authorized-representative)
- **EDSAP Overview**: [Masslegalservices.org/EDSAP](https://www.masslegalservices.org/EDSAP)
- **SNAP and the National School Lunch Program** – Household Composition and Income Flier: [Masslegalservices.org/NSLPvsSNAPincome](https://www.masslegalservices.org/NSLPvsSNAPincome)
- **Added Benefits of SNAP flier** (in 5 languages): [Masslegalservices.org/addedbenefitsofSNAP](https://www.masslegalservices.org/addedbenefitsofSNAP)
- **Public Charge Information**: [MassLegalServices.org/PublicCharge](https://www.masslegalservices.org/PublicCharge)
- **SNAP calculators**: [Masslegalservices.org/content/food-stamps-snap-calculators](https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/food-stamps-snap-calculators)

Statement of Dependent Care Costs for SNAP

You can use this statement if you did not already tell DTA about **your dependent care expenses** on your DTA application, interim report, recertification or verbally during your SNAP interview or any time you talk with a DTA worker.. If you already gave DTA this information, you do not need to give DTA more proof unless DTA decides the information you gave them is questionable.

Name: _____ DTA Agency ID or last 4 of SSN: _____

Your Address: _____

I am responsible for \$ _____ per week for care of the following children/disabled adults living in my household:

(list names)

These costs are for:

- day care
 private child care costs
 after school program
 before school program
 other. Explain: -

Weekly travel costs to and from care: _____ Bus/Train _____ Taxi
_____ Mileage (# of miles)

► I swear that the above information about my monthly dependent care costs is true to the best of my knowledge and belief:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Statement of Shelter Costs for SNAP

You can use this statement if you did not tell DTA about **your shelter expenses** on your DTA application, interim report, recertification for OR verbally during your SNAP interview or any other time you spoke to a DTA worker. If you already gave DTA this information, you do not need to give DTA more proof unless DTA decides the information you gave them is questionable.

Name: _____ DTA Agency ID or last 4 of SSN: _____

Your Address: _____

If you pay rent: I am supposed to pay \$_____per month.

My utilities are (check what you pay for):

- I pay for heat separate from rent
- Heat is included in rent, but I pay for air conditioning (electricity or service fees)
- Heat and AC costs are included in rent, but I pay for other utilities
- I get Fuel Assistance for part of my rent or heat
- I pay no heat or utilities, I only pay for phone

If you share housing costs with others or live in a “doubled up” situation:

My housing costs total: \$_____per month

Does the rent/mortgage holder use a portion of your payment towards utility bills? YES NO

If yes: Monthly rent obligation: \$_____ Monthly utility obligation: \$_____ (for heat/AC, electricity, gas, water, etc)

If your payment goes towards utilities:

- Part of my total payment goes to heat and air conditioning
- Part of my total payment goes to other utilities (not heat or air conditioning)
- OTHER _____

If you own a home or condo:

- Monthly mortgage payment: \$_____ (include the principal and interest payments)
- Real estate taxes/month: \$_____ (divide annual or biannual to get monthly amount)
- Fire/home insurance/month: \$_____ (divide annual or biannual to get monthly amount)
- Condo ownership/month: \$_____ (mortgage, condo fees, etc)

Are you responsible for your heat and/or air conditioning costs? YES NO

► I swear that the above information about my monthly shelter costs is true to the best of my knowledge and belief:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE
Consent to Access DTA Case Information

REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO CLIENT RECORD OF : _____
(Print Client's First and Last Name)

1. Client Information:

Date of Birth ___ / ___ / ___ Address: _____

Last 4 digits of SS#: _____ or DTA "Agency ID" number: _____

2. I give permission to the _____ (name of organization) to have access to my DTA case information (SNAP or cash benefits) and to discuss my application or benefits with a DTA case manager, supervisor, and any other DTA employee. This consent statement is valid for 12 months from the date signed unless I have stated otherwise on this form or in other communications.

3. By signing below, I certify that I am the person named above.

_____ (Client's Signature)
Date _____

Sample SNAP Benefit Amounts: Part and Full-Time Working Families

Effective February 1, 2023

Hourly Wage ▼	Sample Monthly SNAP Benefits (\$)				
	Hours worked per week ►	Max shelter deduction of \$624/month		Max shelter & sample childcare* deductions	
		20 hrs/week	40 hrs /week	20 hrs/week & \$300/mo childcare	40 hrs/week & \$600/mo childcare
\$15.00 (MA minimum wage as of 1/1/23)	Household Size ▼	Monthly SNAP Benefit Amount			
	2	449	137	516	227
	3	673	361	740	451
	4	872	569	939	227
\$16.00	2	428	96	516	276
	3	652	320	740	500
	4	851	519	939	699
\$18.00	2	387	23*	477	192
	3	611	236	701	416
	4	810	435	900	615
\$20.00	2	345	#	435	#
	3	569	153	659	333
	4	768	352	858	532
\$22.00	2	304	#	394	#
	3	528	70	618	250
	4	727	269	817	449

KEY:

are Ineligible households because their gross earned income is at or above 200% federal poverty level (FPL) for the household's size.

*1 & 2 person households with income below 200% FPL get at least a minimum \$23 benefit.

*These are sample childcare costs for the SNAP math examples. Households can self-declare actual weekly or monthly childcare costs.

Assumptions:

The SNAP figures above assume: (1) all household members meet the SNAP eligibility rules; (2) all household income is *earned* income; and (3) no one is age 60+ or disabled (which would otherwise allow both medical costs and uncapped shelter costs).

Learn more about the SNAP benefit calculation and estimate household benefits at Masslegalservices.org/SNAPcalculator

Sample SNAP Benefits: Households Getting Unemployment Benefits

Effective February 1, 2023

This chart includes sample SNAP benefits for households where:

- All members meet the US citizen/immigrant and other SNAP eligibility rules.
- The household's only income is Unemployment Insurance benefits *and*
- The household's only deductible expenses are shelter costs (eg. no child care costs).
 - o Unemployed workers in school/training or looking for work can boost SNAP by telling DTA about child/disabled adult care costs.

Weekly Unemployment Insurance ▼	Sample Monthly SNAP Benefits					
	Household size ►	1	2	3	4	5
	Shelter deduction ▼	Monthly SNAP Benefits ▼				
\$200/week	None	79	314	538	737	924
	Max amt	266	501	725	924	1,111
\$300/week	None	23*	184	408	607	794
	Max amt	136	371	595	794	981
\$400/week	None	23*	54	278	477	664
	Max amt	23*	241	465	664	851
\$500/week	None	23*	23*	148	347	534
	Max amt	23*	111	335	534	721
\$600/week	None	+	23*	18	217	404
	Max amt	+	23*	205	404	591
\$700/week	None	+	23*	0	87	274
	Max amt	+	23*	75	274	461

+ Ineligible because gross income is above 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for the household's size.

*1 & 2 person households with income below 200% FPL get at least a minimum \$23 benefit.

0 = a household of 3 or more with income below 200% FPL. These households are approved for \$0 and can adjust SNAP if income goes down/expenses go up without having to re-apply.

**Sample SNAP Benefits:
One and Two Person 60+/Disabled Households
Effective February 1, 2023**

This chart includes sample SNAP benefits for households where:

- One or both household members are 60+ or meet the SNAP definition of disabled (eg. receives SSDI, SSI, etc).
- All members meet the US citizen/immigrant and other SNAP eligibility rules.
- Household has no income from work, only unearned income (eg. Social Security, SSI, Veterans Benefits, etc).
- Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance of \$860/month is used (household incurs heating/cooling costs or gets fuel assistance or an annual \$21 H-EAT benefit).
- Standard \$155 medical expense deduction is used (monthly medical costs are between \$35 and \$190/mo).

Monthly Income ▼	Sample Monthly SNAP Benefit for 1 Person		
	Sample rent or home ownership costs	SNAP Benefit	SNAP Benefit with \$155 Medical Expense Deduction
\$800	\$400	\$281	\$281
\$1,000	\$500	\$281	\$281
\$1,200	\$600	\$266	\$281
\$1,400	\$700	\$206	\$276
\$1,600	\$800	\$146	\$216
\$1,800	\$900	\$86	\$156

Monthly Income ▼	Sample Monthly SNAP Benefit for 2 People		
	Sample rent or home ownership costs	SNAP Benefit	SNAP Benefit with \$155 Medical Expense Deduction
\$1,000	\$500	\$516	\$516
\$1,200	\$600	\$501	\$516
\$1,400	\$700	\$441	\$511
\$1,600	\$800	\$381	\$451
\$1,800	\$900	\$321	\$391
\$2,000	\$1,000	\$261	\$331

*Households of 1 or 2 with income below 200% FPL get a minimum benefit of \$23.

SNAP Medical Expense Deduction:

Benchmarks for households with person 60+ or disabled
with low rent

Remember: The medical expense deduction is highly under-utilized in MA so make sure to do the math and screen clients who may be eligible for higher SNAP. SNAP calculation worksheets can be found here: [Masslegalservices.org/SNAPCalculator](https://www.masslegalservices.org/SNAPCalculator).

Note: You can now self-declare medical costs below \$190/month. Visit [Mass.gov/guides/get-the-most-out-of-your-snap#-medical-costs](https://www.mass.gov/guides/get-the-most-out-of-your-snap#-medical-costs) to learn more.

Rent = 30% of income (household of 1)

Monthly unearned income	Rent at 30% Income (plus heating/cooling SUA)	SNAP w/o Standard Medical Deduction	SNAP with Standard Medical Deduction	Notes
\$600	180	281	281	SNAP is maxed out at \$281 without medical expenses
\$700	210	281	281	
\$800	240	281	281	
\$900	270	281	281	
\$1,000	300	266	281	SNAP is maxed out at \$281 if the household claims at least \$35 in medical expenses
\$1,100	330	230	281	If the client pays actuals (medical expenses above \$190) every additional \$3 will boost SNAP by an additional \$1 - up to max \$281 benefit.
\$1,200	360	194	264	
\$1,300	390	158	228	
\$1,400	420	122	192	
\$1,500	450	86	156	
\$1,600	480	50	120	If a client's medical expenses are roughly the same amount they pay for rent per month, then SNAP will increase above \$23.
\$1,700	510	} 23	84	
\$1,800	540		48	
\$1,900	570		23	

Benchmarks for 1 person SNAP Households who pay 30% of income on rent:

- **Lowest income:** Households with income below about \$900 max out on SNAP without claiming medical costs. Households under \$1,100 can get maximum SNAP if they self-declare at least \$35 in medical costs.
- **Middle Income: This is the “sweet spot.”** Households with income over \$1,200 get the benefit of the \$155 Standard Medical Expense Deduction when costs over \$35 are claimed.
- **Higher income:** Households with income above \$1,600 tend to see NO increase in SNAP unless out-of-pocket medical costs are roughly the same amount as their rent. Households under 200% FPL (\$2,430) are guaranteed the minimum SNAP benefit of \$23.

Rent = 30% of income (household of 2)

Monthly unearned income	Rent at 30% Income (plus heating/cooling SUA)	SNAP w/o Standard Medical Deduction	SNAP with Standard Medical Deduction	Notes
\$700	210	516	516	SNAP is maxed out at \$516 without medical expenses.
\$800	240	516	516	
\$900	\$270	516	516	
\$1000	300	501	516	SNAP is maxed out at \$516 if the household claims at least \$35 in medical expenses.
\$1,100	330	465	516	
\$1,200	360	429	499	If the client pays actuals (medical expenses above \$190) every additional \$3 will boost SNAP by an additional \$1 - up to max \$516 benefit.
\$1,300	390	393	463	
\$1,400	420	357	427	
\$1,500	450	321	391	
\$1,600	480	285	355	
\$1,700	510	249	319	
\$1,800	540	213	283	
\$1,900	570	177	247	
\$2,000	600	141	211	
\$2,100	630	105	175	
\$2,200	660	69	139	
\$2,300	690	33	103	
\$2,400	720	23	67	If a client's medical expenses are roughly the same amount they pay for rent per month, then SNAP will increase above \$23.
\$2,500	750		31	
\$2,600	780		23	
\$2,700	810			
\$2,800	840			

Benchmarks for **2 person SNAP Households** who pay 30% of income on rent:

- **Lowest income:** Households with income below about \$900 max out on SNAP without claiming medical costs. Households under \$1,100 can get maximum SNAP if they self-declare at least \$35 in medical costs.
- **Middle Income: This is the “sweet spot.”** Households between about \$1,200 and \$2,000 get the benefit of the \$155 Standard Medical Expense Deduction when costs over \$35 are claimed.
- **Higher income:** Households above about \$2,400 tend to see NO increase in SNAP unless out-of-pocket medical costs are roughly the same amount as their rent. Households under 200% FPL (\$3,287) are guaranteed the minimum SNAP benefit of \$23.

Note: You can now self-declare medical costs below \$190/month. Visit [Mass.gov/guides/get-the-most-out-of-your-snap#-medical-costs](https://www.mass.gov/guides/get-the-most-out-of-your-snap#-medical-costs) to learn more.

Appendix D

Cash and SNAP Benefits for Immigrants

**DTA Cash and SNAP Eligibility Chart
By Immigration Status for Massachusetts Residents**

October 2022 MLRI & GBLS

Immigrant Status	SNAP	EAEDC Cash Assistance	TAFDC Cash Assistance
U.S. citizens (born in the United States or naturalized) and Native Americans	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Refugee, asylee, Cuban/ Haitian entrant*, person granted withholding of deportation or removal, Amerasian immigrant, and Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders, certain Afghans and Ukrainians granted humanitarian parole. This list is referred to elsewhere in this chart as the “Refugee Group”)	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Victim of Trafficking (in persons)	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Lawful permanent resident (LPR)s.	Eligible if LPR is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under age 18; • adjusted from refugee group status; • lived in U.S. as a qualified immigrant** for five years; • receives a cash or medical disability-based benefit; • “lawfully resided” in the U.S. and was 65 on 8/22/96; <u>or</u> • LPR credited with 40 Qs of work. 	Eligible	Eligible if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjusted from refugee group status; • physically entered the U.S. before 8/22/96; • lived in U.S. as qualified immigrant* for five years; or • Is a battered noncitizen (see below)

Immigrant Status	SNAP	EAEDC Cash Assistance	TAFDC Cash Assistance
<p>Battered noncitizens, and their children/parents including Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners, family petitioners, and lawful permanent residents who have been abused.</p>	<p>Eligible if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lived in the U.S as qualified immigrant** for 5 years; • under age 18; • receives a disability-based benefit; • “lawfully resided” in U.S. and was 65 on 8/22/96; or • LPR with 40 Qs of work 	<p>Eligible</p>	<p>Eligible</p>
<p>Humanitarian Parole</p> <p>If granted parole for 365 days</p> <p><i>Afghan evacuees</i> paroled into the US between July 31, 2021 and September 30, 2022 (+ some family members paroled after Sept. 30, 2022), who are considered refugees and do not have a waiting period.</p> <p><i>Ukrainians paroled</i> into the US between February 24, 2022 and Sept. 30, 2023, who are considered refugees, do not have to have been granted at least one year of parole, and do not have a waiting period.</p> <p><i>Haitian or Cuban nationals paroled any time to U.S.</i> (See Cuban/Haitian entrant status*.)</p>	<p>Same as LPRs above including 5 year wait for some.</p> <p>Eligible</p> <p>Eligible</p> <p>Eligible</p>	<p>All eligible, regardless of length of parole or country of origin</p>	<p>Same as LPRs above</p> <p>Eligible</p> <p>Eligible</p> <p>Eligible</p>

Immigrant Status	SNAP	EAEDC Cash Assistance	TAFDC Cash Assistance
Lawfully residing Veteran , active-duty service member, spouse, & dependent children	Eligible if a qualified immigrant**	Eligible	Eligible
Immigrant permanently residing in U.S. under color of law (PRUCOL)^	In general, No. Exceptions if also falls into another category, including a battered noncitizen, Cuban/Haitian entrant, or humanitarian parole.	Eligible	In general, No. Exceptions if also falls into another category, including a battered noncitizen, Cuban/Haitian entrant, or veteran in lawful status.
Non-immigrant (tourist, student)	No	No	No
Undocumented/out of status	No	No	No

Under federal law, all non-citizens regardless of immigration status are eligible for the following:

- Federally funded National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and other child nutrition programs, Head Start programs.
- Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program for pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and children under age 5.
- Meals on Wheels and other elder nutrition programs
- Other non-means-tested food provided at the community level, such as TEFAP and MEFAP funding for food pantries, food provided at homeless shelters, child protection services, and domestic violence, mental health, and substance abuse treatment programs

***Cuban/Haitian entrants** include any Cuban or Haitian national who: (1) was paroled into the U.S., (2) has filed a application for asylum, or (3) is in removal proceedings but does not have a final, enforceable order of removal, including those with an Order of Supervision. Children born to Haitian parents outside Haiti are Haitian nationals who may qualify as Cuban/Haitian entrants.

**** Qualified immigrant** above means (1) lawful permanent resident, (2) parolee for at least one year (unless exempt from the 12 months as noted), (3) in the “refugee group”, or (4) a battered noncitizen.

^ PRUCOL: Refers to immigrants who are considered “permanently residing in the United States under color of law.” Immigrants are often considered PRUCOL under certain programs if they are known to the USCIS and the USCIS does not presently contemplate enforcing their departure. PRUCOL is not an immigration status and will not appear as a term on any immigration documents. PRUCOL immigrants often have employment authorization (EAD) or some other proof of granted immigration status or a pending status. Examples of immigrants who are considered PRUCOL include - but are not limited to - persons granted or with an application pending for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Action status, under Order of Supervision, with a pending application for Legal Permanent Residency, Asylum applicants, U Visa recipients and applicants (victims of violence) and others.



W E C A N
H E L P

***You have the right to
interpreter services.***

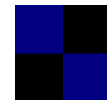
*Be sure to read Your Right
to Interpreter Services
brochure as well as the
other program brochures.
These contain important
information.*

***If you have trouble
understanding them,
your case manager can
help.***

DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSITIONAL
ASSISTANCE

NCIB (Rev. 2/2009)
25-404-0209-05

WHAT NONCITIZENS NEED TO KNOW





W H A T A
N O N C I T I Z E N
N E E D S T O
K N O W

Your children may be eligible for Cash and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits even if you are not.

Don't be afraid to apply for benefits for yourself or your family. Even if you are ineligible for benefits due to immigration status, **we will not report you to immigration authorities unless you provide us with a final order of deportation.**

If you feel you cannot give us information about your immigration status, you will be ineligible for benefits. Your family members may still be able to receive benefits. Once you tell your case manager that you cannot give us this information, your case manager will stop asking you about your status.

BUT, your case manager must ask you other questions about you, including where you live, your income, child support, etc. We need this information to decide benefit eligibility for your family members. Your income and assets may be counted in determining eligibility and the amount of your family's benefits.

Certain legal permanent residents (LPR) applying for SNAP benefits may be asked about their sponsor. If you are in a household with disqualified members,

the sponsor's income and assets may be used in deciding SNAP eligibility and the benefit amount. In addition, certain non-SSI disabled and elder households may continue to be subject to sponsor deeming.

REMEMBER: *If you do not tell us your immigration status, your benefits may be lower than they should be.*

If you have questions about your immigration status or how receipt of benefits affects your ability to adjust your status or any other questions, you can call one of the agencies listed on the Noncitizens Resources brochure.

Appendix E

Massachusetts Legal Services Offices

Massachusetts Legal Services Offices

Intake and Referrals for Clients

Eastern Regional Legal Intake (ERLI)..... 617-603-1700

Regional Legal Services Offices

Community Legal Aid/Central West Justice Center..... 855-252-5342

De Novo Center for Justice and Healing..... 617-661-1010

Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston 617-603-2700

MetroWest Legal Services, Framingham 508 620-1830; 800-696-1501

Northeast Legal Aid978 458-1465; 800-336-2262

Northeast Justice Center781 599-7730; 888-657-2889

South Coastal Counties LS /Justice Center of Southeastern Mass.800-244-9023

Volunteer Lawyers Project, Boston.....617-423-0648

Law School Clinics

Boston College Legal Services LAB.....617-552-0248

Harvard Legal Aid Bureau.....617-495-4408

Legal Services Center617-522-3003

Statewide Legal Services and Support Centers

Center for Law and Education617-451-0855

Center for Public Representation.....617-928-0776

Children's Law Center of Mass781-581-1977

Disability Law Center617 723-8455; 800-872-9992

Health Law Advocates617-338-5241

Mass. Advocates for Children.....617-357-8431

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute617-357-0700

Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee617 338-2345; 800-342-9092

National Consumer Law Center.....617-542-8010

Political Asylum/Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project.....617-742-9296

Prisoners' Legal Services617-482-2773

Veterans Legal Services 857-317-4474

Legal Resource Finder – Online Resource

Please visit www.MassLRF.org (Legal Resource Finder) for a listing of legal services programs in Massachusetts and for referrals to additional sources of legal help.

Appendix G

Crosswalk Chart with Key Sections of DTA Online Guide

Key:	Black text refers to normal policies/rules	Red text refers to regulations specifically in place during the COVID-19 public health emergency
Guide Question #	Path to page on DTA Online Guide	Direct Link
Question 1 - Applications	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing.htm
Question 1 - Web applications	SNAP > Application Processing > Online Snap Application - Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/Web_Application/VG_Web_Applications_Overview.htm
Question 2 - After Applying	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > Issuing An EBT Card	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/Issuing_an_EBT_Card_Updated.htm
Question 3 - Expedited SNAP	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > Expedited Benefits	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/Expedited_Benefits_Updated.htm
Question 4 - Bay CAP for SSI	SNAP > Certification Types > Bay State CAP > Bay State CAP Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Bay_State_CAP_Overview.htm
Question 4 - Bay CAP for SSI	SNAP > Certification Types > Bay State CAP > Bay State CAP Eligibility	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/BSCAP_Eligibility.htm
Question 5 - Voting Registration through SNAP	Cross Programs > Voter Registration > Overview and Administrative Responsibilities > Voter Registration Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Voter_Registration/Voter_Registration_Overview.htm
Question 7 - Authorized Representatives	Cross Programs > Assisting Person > Assisting Person Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Assisting_Person/Assisting_Person_Overview_Clean.htm
Question 8 - Permission for 3rd party to talk with DTA	Cross Programs > Assisting Person > Assisting Person Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Assisting_Person/Assisting_Person_Overview_Clean.htm
Question 9 - Group Homes and other group living	Cross Programs > Assisting Person > Authorized Rep-Agency - Certification (SNAP)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Assisting_Person/Authorized_Rep-Agency_-_Certification_(SNAP)_Clean.htm
Question 9 - Group Homes and other group living	Cross Programs > Assisting Person > Authorized Rep-Agency - EBT Transactions (SNAP)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Assisting_Person/Authorized_Rep-Agency_-_EBT_Transactions_(SNAP)_Clean.htm
Question 9 - Group Homes and other group living	SNAP > Group Homes > Group Homes Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Group_Homes/Group_Homes_Overview.htm

Question 9 - Group Homes and other group living	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Residents of Institutions > Residents of Institutions	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Residents_of_Institutions/Residents_of_Institutions_Online_Guide.htm
Question 10 - SNAP interviews	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > The Application Interview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/The_Application_Interview.htm
Question 10 - SNAP interviews	Business Process (BP) > Procedures > Processing Procedures > (see entire book)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/BP/Procedures/Processing_Procedures/Completing_SNAP_Apps_for_Active_or_Pending_Clients.htm
Question 10 SNAP interviews	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > Expedited Benefits	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/Expedited_Benefits_Updated.htm
Question 10 - SNAP interviews	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
Question 10 - SNAP interviews	COVID-19 > SNAP Application Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/SNAP_Application_Interview_Waiver.htm
Question 10 - SNAP interviews	COVID-19 > Streamlined SNAP Recertification Process and Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/COVID-19_Streamlined_SNAP_Recertification_Process_and_Interview_Waiver.htm
Question 11 - What happens during Interview	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > The Application Interview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/The_Application_Interview.htm
Question 11 - What happens during Interview	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
Question 11 - What happens during Interview	COVID-19 > SNAP Application Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/SNAP_Application_Interview_Waiver.htm
Question 11 - What happens during Interview	COVID-19 > Streamlined SNAP Recertification Process and Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/COVID-19_Streamlined_SNAP_Recertification_Process_and_Interview_Waiver.htm
Question 12 - Proofs DTA needs	Cross Programs > Verifications > What are Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Overview/What_are_Verifications.htm
Question 12 - Proofs DTA needs	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verification Types > Verification Chart	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Types/Verification_Chart.htm

Question 12 - Proofs DTA needs	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verification Checklist (VC-1) > VC-1 Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Checklist(VC-1)/VC-1_Overview.htm
Question 12 - Proofs DTA needs	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verification Types > Mandatory Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Types/Mandatory_Verifications.htm
Chapter 13 - Self-declarations	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verifications Overview > Signatures on Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Overview/Signatures.htm
Chapter 13 - Self-declarations	Cross Programs > Telephonic Signature > Telephonic Signature	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Telephonic_Signature/TS.htm
Chapter 15 - Sending documents to DTA	Business Process (BP) > Procedures > Document Handling > Document Indexing & Dispositioning	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/BP/Procedures/Document_Handling/Document_Dispositioning_and_Indexing.htm
Chapter 16 - Hard time getting proofs	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verifications Overview > Providing Assistance to Clients in Obtaining SNAP Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Overview/Providing_AssistanceinobtainingVerification.htm
Chapter 16 - Hard time getting proofs	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verification Methods > Collateral Contact	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Methods/Collateral_Contact.htm
Chapter 18 - What if DTA questions income or living expenses	Cross Programs > Verifications > What is Questionable & Contradictory Information?	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Questionable_Contradictory_Info/What_is_Questionable_Contradictory_Information.htm
Chapter 18 - What if DTA questions income or living expenses	Cross Programs > SLAM > Addressing SLAM	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/SLAM/Addressing_SLAM.htm
Chapter 19 - If I move, how do I report my new address?	Cross Programs > Request for Assistance (RFA) > Address (RFA)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Request_for_Assistance_RFA/Address.htm
Chapter 19 - If I move, how do I report my new address?	Business Process (BP) > BP - Overview > Returned Mail	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/BP/BP_Overview/Returned_Mail.htm
Chapter 19 - If I move, how do I report my new address?	Business Process (BP) > Procedures > Processing Procedures > Completing Unvalidated Address Change Requests (SNAP)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/BP/Processing_Procedures/Completing_IVR_Change_Requests_With_No_Valid_Addresses.htm
20 - Can I get my SNAP case reopened if I am denied for lack of proofs?	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verifications Overview > What are Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Overview/What_are_Verifications.htm

20 - Can I get my SNAP case reopened if I am denied for lack of proofs?	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > The BEACON-generated Pending Denial Notice	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/The_BEACON-generated_Pending_Denial_Notice.htm
21- What if DTA does not give me SNAP back to the date I applied ("pro-rating")?	SNAP > Proration > Proration Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Proration/Proration_Overview.htm
22 - How do I get information about my SNAP by phone?	Business Process (BP) > BP - Overview > SNAP First Available Worker Model	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/BP/BP_Overview/SNAP_First_Available_Worker_Model.htm
23 - How do I get information about my SNAP case online or with my smartphone?	Self-Service Options > DTA Connect Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/Self-Service_Options/DTA_Connect_Frame.htm
26 - What if I do not speak English?	Cross Programs > Interpreter Services > Interpreter Services Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Interpreter_Services/Overview.htm
26 - What if I do not speak English?	Cross Programs > Interpreter Services > Department Interpreter Services	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Interpreter_Services/Department_Interpreter_Services.htm
26 - What if I do not speak English?	Cross Programs > Interpreter Services > Guidelines for Providing Interpreter Services	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Interpreter_Services/Guidelines_for_Providing_Interpreter_Services.htm
27- What if I am deaf or hard of hearing?	Cross Programs > Harper/ADA > Available Auxiliary Aids	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/ADA-Harper/Available_Auxiliary_Aids.htm
27- What if I am deaf or hard of hearing?	Cross Programs > Harper/ADA > Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing Clients at VRI TAOs	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/ADA-Harper/Serving_Deaf_and_Hard_of_Hearing_Clients_at_VRI_TAOs...htm
28 - What if a disability makes it hard for me to apply or comply with DTA rules?	Cross Programs > Harper/ADA > ADA Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/ADA-Harper/ADA_Overview.htm
32 - What if I have concerns about security or access to my case including domestic violence or identity	Self Service Options > DTA Connect Q and A	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/Self-Service_Options/DTA_Connect_Q_and_A_(BM_revision).htm
32 - What if I have concerns about security or access to my case including domestic violence or identity	Cross Programs > Heightened Level of Security > Heightened Level of Security Impact	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Heightened_Level_of_Security/Heightened_Level_of_Security_Impact.htm
33 - -What is a Photo EBT card and who needs to have one?	Cross Programs > EBT > Photo EBT Requirements	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Electronic_Benefit_Transfer_(EBT)/Photo_EBT_Requirements.htm

PART 2: General Eligibility Rules		
35 - Can I get benefits separately from other people I live with?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Household Composition	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Household_Composition/Household_CompositionS.htm
36 - Who cannot be a separate SNAP household?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Household Composition	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Household_Composition/Household_CompositionS.htm
37 - What if I live with others but I have a disability that makes it difficult to prepare my food?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Elderly/Disabled > Separate Household Status for Elderly Disabled	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Elderly_Disabled/Separate_Household_Status_for_Elderly_Disabled.htm
39 - How do I show DTA I am disabled?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Elderly/Disabled > SNAP Disability Requirements and Verifications	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Elderly_Disabled/SNAP_Disability_Requirements_and_Verifications.htm
39 - How do I show DTA I am disabled?	COVID-19 > EAEDC COVID Procedures for Disability Verification Process	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/EAEDC_COVID_Procedures_for_Disability_Verification_Process.htm
39 - How do I show DTA I am disabled?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Elderly/Disabled > Processing a Claim of Disability to Qualify for the Special Regulations for SNAP Eligibility.	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Elderly_Disabled/Processing_a_Claim_of_Disability_to_Qualify_for_the_Special.htm
40 - What if I am homeless or live in a shelter?	Cross Programs > Verifications > Verification Checklist (VC-1) > Verification Q and A	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Verifications/Verification_Checklist(VC-1)/Verification_Q_and_A_.htm
40 - What if I am homeless or live in a shelter?	Cross Programs > DTA/DHCD Address Changes > Address Changes Reported to DTA by DHCD	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/DTA-DHCD_Address_Changes/Address_Changes_Reported_to_DTA_by_DHCD_(FINAL).htm
40 - What if I am homeless or live in a shelter?	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
43 - What if I am caring for a foster child?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Household Composition > Household Composition	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Household_Composition/Household_CompositionS.htm
44 - What if I am providing adult foster care to an older adult or person with disabilities?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Elderly/Disabled > Adult Foster Care	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Elderly_Disabled/Adult_Foster_Care.htm
45 - What if I am a college student?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Students > Students	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Students/Students.htm

45 - What if I am a college student?	COVID-19 > Student Eligibility and Educational Income > Educational Income - Noncountable for SNAP and EA	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Student_Eligibility_and_Educational_Income/OLG_COVID_Processing_Educational_Income_for_SNAP_and_EA.htm
45- What if I am a college student?	COVID-19 > Student Eligibility and Educational Income > Processing College Student Eligibility and Educational Income for SNAP Households	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Student_Eligibility_and_Educational_Income/Processing_College_Student_Eligibility_for_SNAP_Households.htm
46 - What if I have a criminal record or DTA says I'm a "fleeing felon" or violating my probation?	SNAP > Disqualifications/Sanctions > Intentional Program Violation > SNAP Disqualifications and Sanctions	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Disqualifications_Sanctions/IPV/SNAP_Disqualifications_and_Sanctions.htm
47 - Who is considered a United States citizen?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Citizenship > Citizenship Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Citizenship/Citizenship_OverviewS.htm
47 - Who is considered a United States citizen?	Cross Programs > SAVE > Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/SAVE/SAVE_Snip_It_Images.htm
48 - Am I eligible if I am a legal immigrant?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Noncitizen Introduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Noncitizen/Noncitizen_IntroductionS.htm
48 - Am I eligible if I am a legal immigrant?	> Legal Permanent Residents > Legal Permanent Resident Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Nonimmigrants.htm
48 - Am I eligible if I am a legal immigrant?	Cross Programs > SAVE > SAVE	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/SAVE/SAVE_Snip_It_Images.htm
49 - How does my work history help so I don't wait five years for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Noncitizen Introduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Noncitizen/Noncitizen_IntroductionS.htm
49 - How does my work history help so I don't wait five years for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Legal Permanent Resident Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Legal_Permanent_Resident_OverviewS.htm
49 - How does my work history help so I don't wait five years for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Verifying 40 Quarters	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Verifying_40_Quarters.htm
50 - If I am a disabled immigrant, do I need to wait five years for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Elderly/Disabled > Processing a Claim of Disability to Qualify for the Special Regulations for SNAP	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Elderly_Disabled/Processing_a_Claim_of_Disability_to_Qualify_for_the_Special.htm
50 - If I am a disabled immigrant, do I need to wait five years for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Disabled Noncitizen > Disabled Noncitizen	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Disabled_Noncitizens/Disabled_NoncitizenS.htm

51 - What are the special immigrant rules for battered immigrants?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Battered Noncitizen	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Battered_NoncitizenS.htm
51 - What are the special immigrant rules for battered immigrants?	Domestic Violence > Domestic Violence Specialists	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Domestic_Violence/2_Domestic_Violence_Specialists_Cross_Programs.htm
52 - Can my children get benefits if I am an ineligible immigrant?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Battered Noncitizen	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Battered_NoncitizenS.htm
53 - Will getting SNAP benefits hurt my immigration status?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Noncitizen Introduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Noncitizen/Noncitizen_IntroductionS.htm
55 - Does the income of an immigrant's sponsor count?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Noncitizen > Sponsor Deeming (deeming applies to sanctioned non-citizens)	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Legal_Permanent_Residents/Sponsor_Deeming.htm
56 - Are there work rules for SNAP?	SNAP > Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Requirements.htm
56 - Are there work rules for SNAP?	SNAP > Work Requirements General SNAP Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements Exemptions	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Exemptions.htm
56 - Are there work rules for SNAP?	SNAP > Work Requirements General SNAP Work Requirements > General Work Requirements Good Cause Criteria	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Good_Cause_Criteria.htm
56 - Are there work rules for SNAP?	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
57 - What happens if I recently quit a job?	SNAP > Work Requirements > Voluntary Quit > SNAP Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/SNAP_Voluntary_Quit_files/SNAP_Voluntary_Quit.htm
57 - What happens if I recently quit a job?	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
57 - What happens if I recently quit a job?	COVID-19 > SNAP Application Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/SNAP_Application_Interview_Waiver.htm
57 - What happens if I recently quit a job?	COVID-19 > COVID-19 Streamlined SNAP Recertification Process and Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/COVID-19_Streamlined_SNAP_Recertification_Process_and_Interview_Waiver.htm

58 - What is considered a “good cause” reason if I quit my job?	SNAP > Work Requirements > Voluntary Quit > SNAP Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/SNAP_Voluntary_Quit_files/SNAP_Voluntary_Quit.htm
58 - What is considered a “good cause” reason if I quit my job?	SNAP > Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements Good Cause Criteria	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Good_Cause_Criteria.htm
59 - What are the rules if I am on strike?	SNAP > Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements Good Cause Criteria (Persons exempt from the work requirements are also not	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Good_Cause_Criteria.htm
59 - What are the rules if I am on strike?	Cross Programs > Eligibility of Strikers > Eligibility of Strikers	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Eligibility_of_Strikers/Eligibility_of_Strikers.htm
59 - What are the rules if I am on strike?	SNAP > Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements > General SNAP Work Requirements Exemptions	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/SNAP_E_T_Exemptions.htm
60 - What is the “ABAWD” 3-month time limit for childless adults age 18 to 50?	SNAP > Work Requirements > ABAWD Work Program Requirement Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/ABAWD_Work_Program_Requirement/SNAP_Work_Program_Requirements.htm
60 - What is the “ABAWD” 3-month time limit for childless adults age 18 to 50?	COVID-19 > Temporary COVID-19 Verification Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Temporary_COVID-19_Procedures.htm
61 - Can I enroll in an education or training through DTA’s “SNAP Path to Work” program?	SNAP > SNAP Path to Work Program > SNAP Path to Work Program	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Work_Requirements/Employment_Training_E_T/General_SNAP_Work_Requirements/Voluntary_SNAP_Employment_and_Training_Program_11.16.2015.htm
Part 3: Financial Eligibility		
63 - When do assets count?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Assets > SNAP Asset Guidelines	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Assets/SNAP_Asset_Guidelines.htm
64 - Is there a gross income test for SNAP?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Categorical Eligibility > Categorical Eligibility	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Categorical_Eligibility/Categorical_Eligibility_Final.htm
65 - What income is not counted?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Noncountable Income > Noncountable Income	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Noncountable_Earned_Income/Noncountable_Income.htm
66 - Does DTA count gifts or contributions?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Other Income (Unearned) > Contribution Income	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Other_Income_Unearned/Contribution_Income.htm

67 - What is earned income?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Earned Income > Types of Earned Income	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Earned_Income/Types_of_Earned_Income2.htm
68 - How does DTA double-check income and other information?	SNAP > Certification Types > Change Reporting > Change Reporting Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Change_Reporting_Overview.htm
68 - How does DTA double-check income and other information?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting During Case Maintenance	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_During_Case_Maintenance.htm
68 - How does DTA double-check income and other information?	SNAP > Case Maintenance > Unclear Information	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Case_Maintenance/Unclear_Information.htm
69 - How is self-employment income counted?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Self-Employment > Self-Employment	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Self_Employment/Self-Employment_Introduction.htm
70 - What is unearned income?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Other Income (Unearned) > Unearned Income Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Other_Income_Unearned/SNAP_Unearned_Income_Overview.htm
71 - How is rental income treated?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Self-Employment > Rental Room Boarder Income	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Self_Employment/Rental_Roomer_Boarder_Income2.htm
72- How does DTA calculate my income for each month?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > Earned Income > Types of Earned Income	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/Earned_Income/Types_of_Earned_Income2.htm
72- How does DTA calculate my income for each month?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Income > School Employees > School Employees	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Income/School_Employees/School_Employees.htm
73 - Does DTA count money that is withheld or garnished from my cash benefits?	SNAP > Case Maintenance > SNAP Attributed Amount	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Case_Maintenance/SNAP_Attributed_Amount_Final_for_B3.htm
73 - Does DTA count money that is withheld or garnished from my cash benefits?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Garnishments from SSB	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Garnishments_from_SSB.htm
76 - What medical expenses can I claim if I am elderly or disabled?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Health Insurance/Medical Expenses > Medical Expenses > Overview of Medical Expense Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Health_Insurance_and_Medical_Expenses/Medical_Expense/Overview_of_Medical_Expense_Deduction.htm
76 - What medical expenses can I claim if I am elderly or disabled?	COVID-19 > Standard Medical Deduction Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Standard_Medical_Deduction_Waiver.htm

77 - Can I claim the medical expenses I used for my public or subsidized housing rent?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Health Insurance/Medical Expenses > Overview of Medical Expense Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Health_Insurance_and_Medical_Expenses/Medical_Expense/Overview_of_Medical_Expense_Deduction.htm
78 - What is the child support exclusion?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Child Support Expenses > Child Support Expenses Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Child_Support_Expenses/Child_Support_Expense_Deduction.htm
79 - What is the child care/dependent care deduction?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Dependent Care Expenses > Dependent Care Expense Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Dependent_Care_Expenses/Dependent_Care_Expense_Deduction.htm
80 - What is the Standard Utility Allowance and what is Heat and Eat?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Household Expenses > Shelter Expenses > Shelter Expenses Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Household_Expenses/Shelter_Expenses/Shelter_Expenses_Deduction.htm
80 - What is the Standard Utility Allowance and what is Heat and Eat?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Household Expenses > Heat and Eat (H Eat) > Heat and EAT	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Household_Expenses/Heat_and_Eat/Heat_and_EAT_OLG.htm
81 - What is the shelter deduction and is it calculated?	SNAP > Expenses and Deductions > Household Expenses > Shelter Expenses > Shelter Expenses Deduction	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Household_Expenses/Shelter_Expenses/Shelter_Expenses_Deduction.htm
82 - What is the homeless deduction?	Household Expenses > Homeless Households > Shelter Deduction for Homeless Households	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Expenses_and_Deductions/Household_Expenses/Homeless_Households/Homeless_Households_Deduction.htm
Part 4: Getting and Using SNAP Benefits		
83 - How much will I get in SNAP benefits each month?	Notices/Forms > Cross Program > SNAP Calculation Page Example	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Notices-Forms/SNAP_Calculation_Page_Example.htm
83 - How much will I get in SNAP benefits each month?	COVID-19 > Standardized Procedures for SNAP Emergency Allotments	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Standardized_Procedures_for_SNAP_Emergency_Allotments.htm
85 - Why do some households only get \$23?	COVID-19 > Standardized Procedures for SNAP Emergency Allotments	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/Standardized_Procedures_for_SNAP_Emergency_Allotments.htm
86 - What is an EBT card, how do I use SNAP benefits, and where can I shop?	SNAP > Application Processing > SNAP Application Processing > Issuing An EBT Card	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Application_Processing/SNAP_Application_Processing/Issuing_an_EBT_Card_Updated.htm
86 - What is an EBT card, how do I use SNAP benefits, and where can I shop?	Cross Programs > Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) > RMP Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Restaurant_Meals_Program_(RMP)/RMP_Overview.htm

89 - If I forget to use my EBT card, does my case close or will I lose benefits?	Cross Programs > EBT > Unaccessed EBT Benefits	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Electronic_Benefit_Transfer_(EBT)/Unaccessed_EBT_Benefits.htm
90 - What if I was getting SNAP in another state or DTA says I am part of another SNAP	SNAP > Benefit Eff. Dates from Other States > Benefit Eff Dates from Other States	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Benefit_Eff_Dates_from_other_States/Benefit_Effective_Dates_for_SNAP_Clients_from_Other_States.htm
91 - What if I do not have an EBT card or my card is lost or stolen?	Cross Programs > EBT > EBT Card Fees, Replacements and Notices	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Electronic_Benefit_Transfer_(EBT)/EBT_-_EBT_Card_Fees,_Replacements_and_Notices.htm
92 - What if I lose food due to a power outage, fire or a disaster?	SNAP > Household Misfortune > Household Misfortune Procedures	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Household_Misfortune/General_Household_Misfortune_Procedures_1.14.15_dlr.htm
93 - What if DTA makes a mistake and owes me money?	SNAP > Case Maintenance > Related Benefit	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Case_Maintenance/Related_Benefit.htm
Part 5: Proving continuing Eligibility		
95 - What is Simplified Reporting and when must I report changes to DTA?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_Overview.htm
95 - What is Simplified Reporting and when must I report changes to DTA?	COVID-19 > Streamlined SNAP Recertification Process and Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/COVID-19_Streamlined_SNAP_Recertification_Process_and_Interview_Waiver.htm
96 - What is the Interim Report and when do I need to do one?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting Interim Report	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_Interim_Report.htm
96 - What is the Interim Report and when do I need to do one?	COVID-19 > Streamlined SNAP Recertification Process and Interview Waiver	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/COVID-19/COVID-19_Streamlined_SNAP_Recertification_Process_and_Interview_Waiver.htm
97 - What is the Elder/Disabled Simplified Application Project (EDSAP)?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_Overview.htm
98 - What is Change Reporting for cash assistance households?	SNAP > Certification Types > Change Reporting > Change Reporting Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Change_Reporting_Overview.htm
99 - Can DTA decrease my SNAP during my certification period?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting Case Maintenance	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/ISSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_During_Case_Maintenance.htm

99 - Can DTA decrease my SNAP during my certification period?	Cross Programs > External Agency Matches > Matches - Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/External_Agency_Matches/Matches_-_Overview.htm
99 - Can DTA decrease my SNAP during my certification period?	SNAP > Case Maintenance > Unclear Information	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Case_Maintenance/Unclear_Information.htm
100 - When do I need to recertify my SNAP and what do I do?	SNAP > Certification Types > Simplified Reporting > Simplified Reporting Recertification	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Certification_Types/Simplified_Reporting_Recertification.htm
102 - How quickly will DTA increase my SNAP if my income decreases or my expenses increase?	SNAP > Department Responsibility to Take Timely Action > Department Responsibility to Take Timely Action	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Department_Responsibility_to_Take_Timely_Action/Department_Responsibility_to_Take_Timely_Action.htm
102 - How quickly will DTA increase my SNAP if my income decreases or my expenses increase?	SNAP > Eligibility Requirements > Household Composition > Add a New Person as a SNAP Household Member	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/SNAP/Eligibility_Requirements/Household_Composition/Add_a_New_Person_as_a_SNAP_Household_Member.htm
Part 6: Appeal Rights		
Part 7: Overpayments and Fraud		
112 - How does DTA calculate the amount of the SNAP overpayment?	Cross Programs > Overpayment and Recovery > Overpayment Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Overpayments_and_Recovery/Overpayments_Overview.htm
114 - When do I have to repay an overpayment?	Cross Programs > Overpayment and Recovery > Unintentional Program Violations	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Overpayments_and_Recovery/Unintentional_Program_Violations.htm
117 - Can DTA suspend or stop my SNAP benefits if I committed an IPV or fraud?	SNAP > Disqualifications/Sanctions > Intentional Program Violation > Intentional Program Violation Overview	https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/BEACON5/SSL/!WebHelp/X_Prog/Overpayments_and_Recovery/Intentional_Program_Violations.htm