

Division of Benefit Programs
Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

March 29, 2021

(This information will be updated as additional information becomes available.)

Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program – SNAP FAQs:

- 1. Will Emergency SNAP benefits be issued during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE)?**
Yes. Virginia issued monthly emergency allotments to households beginning on March 25, 2020 and will continue to do so through April 16, 2021. The emergency benefits will allow the household's current monthly allotment to increase to the maximum allotment for a household of that size.
- 2. Will there be an increase in the SNAP benefits during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE)?**
Yes. The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021, signed on December 27, 2020, temporarily increases SNAP benefits by raising the maximum allotments by 15% effective January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.
- 3. Why didn't I get an emergency allotment?**
The emergency allotment was calculated by the maximum allotment issuance for the household size, minus the amount that was issued for the prior month. If you received the maximum benefit you would not be eligible to receive the emergency allotment.
- 4. Why was my emergency allotment so small?**
The emergency allotment was based on the difference between what you received in the prior month and the maximum of what a household your size could receive. If your amount was small, it is because you already received an amount that is close to the maximum amount allowed monthly.
- 5. When will I get my initial emergency allotment? And when will the next emergency allotment be issued?**
The first emergency allotment issuance was March 25, 2020; the next emergency allotment issuance is April 16, 2021. Virginia Department of Social Services has announced the issuance of these allotments on a monthly basis. Stay tuned to hear if future months will be issued.
- 6. Will the regular SNAP issuance for April 2021 be issued?**
Yes. The regular allotment will go out in accordance to the regular schedule.
- 7. Am I eligible to receive SNAP benefits?**
You may complete an online screening at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov. Scroll to the middle of the page and click "Am I Eligible?" Please remember this is a prescreening tool, you must apply for SNAP to get a final decision.
- 8. Has the application process changed for SNAP?**
There are no policy changes to the SNAP application process. Households must file an application for SNAP benefits with the Local Department of Social Services in the locality where the household resides. Households may file applications in person, by mail, by fax, by telephone to the Enterprise Customer Service Center at 1-855- 635-4370 or online at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov.

Most local agencies have a drop-box that customers can utilize while they are closed or if it's outside of the agency's business hours. Please contact your local agency for their email address and fax number; this information is also available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

9. What are the income guidelines for SNAP during the COVID-19 crisis?

The SNAP income guidelines remain the same. We encourage you to complete an online screening at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov. Scroll to the middle of the page and click "Am I Eligible?" Please remember this is a prescreening tool, you must apply for SNAP to receive a final decision.

10. What is the status of my application of case?

Households can check the status of their application by contacting their Local Department of Social Services or online at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov.

11. Is there assistance for college students who no longer have access to meal plans?

You are encouraged to apply which allows eligibility for SNAP to be determined based on your household's individual circumstances. Applications are accepted in person, by mail, by fax, by telephone to the Enterprise Customer Service Center at 1-855-635-4370 or online at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov.

Most local agencies have a drop-box that customers can utilize while they are closed or if it's outside of the agency's business hours. Please contact your local agency for their email address and fax number; this information is also available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

12. Will extra SNAP benefits be issued while children are out of school?

Emergency SNAP allotments were issued to some customers that receive benefits. The first emergency allotment was issued on March 25, 2020, the next emergency allotment will be issued on April 16, 2021. The April 2021 SNAP benefits will issue according to the regular schedule, which is the 1st, 4th, and 7th of each month.

Most of the local school districts are providing meals to the children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Contact the local school division for distribution sites.

13. What is P-SNAP and how can I get it?

P-SNAP is the term for benefits that may be available for households with children who receive free or reduced school lunch. Schools will provide information for all eligible students directly to VDSS. Households do not have to apply for P-EBT. If you believe there are eligible students in your household but you did not receive P-EBT call 804-726-7000. Please continue to view the news and check our website for updates.

14. What should I do, I need to pick up my SNAP EBT card, but my local office is closed?

While a local agency may be closed to the public, they must have procedures in place to provide access to EBT cards to meet certain circumstances. Please contact your Local Department of Social Services. To request an EBT card, you may call your Benefit Programs Specialist or call 1-866-281-2448. Contact information for local agencies is available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

15. Can I go to another local department of Social Services if my agency is closed to pick up an EBT card?

While a local agency may be closed to the public, they must have procedures in place to provide access to EBT cards to meet certain circumstances. Please contact your Local Department of Social Services. To request an EBT card, you may call your Benefit Programs Specialist or call 1-866-281-2448. Contact information for local agencies is available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

16. Can an EBT card be used to purchase groceries online?

Yes. The 2014 Farm Bill mandated a pilot be conducted to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. It was designed for SNAP households to have the accessibility to purchase groceries using their SNAP benefits online. SNAP benefits used online cannot be used to pay for fees of any type, such as delivery, service, or convenience fees.

The use of your EBT card online will still require your unique personal identification number (PIN) to be entered for all online purchases. The online shopping and payment is required to be secure, private, easy to use, and provide similar support to that found for SNAP transactions in a retail store.

Amazon’s Online Shopping – SNAP FAQs:

How do I sign up to use my SNAP EBT card on Amazon.com? To use SNAP benefits on Amazon.com, please visit Amazon.com/SNAP and follow the instructions on the screen. If you are not already an Amazon customer, you will be required to create an Amazon account.

How do I know which items are eligible for purchase when using my SNAP benefits online? SNAP-eligible food items have a special label “SNAP EBT eligible.” This label appears after a SNAP participant adds their SNAP EBT card to their Amazon account. Only items shipped and sold by Amazon.com, including Amazon Pantry and Amazon Fresh are eligible for purchasing with SNAP benefits.

USDA requires all SNAP authorized retailers, including authorized online retailers, to ensure SNAP benefits are used to purchase eligible food items. A list of eligible food items that can be purchased using SNAP benefits is available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items> .

What form of payment is accepted to make purchases online using SNAP benefits? Are EBT cards accepted? You may use your SNAP EBT card to complete purchases of eligible food items. On Amazon.com, you will need to register your EBT card with an existing account or create a new Amazon account. To learn more about using an EBT card and about making SNAP purchases on Amazon by visiting <http://Amazon.com/SNAP> and follow the on-screen instructions.

If an order contains non-SNAP eligible food items, you will be required to pay with another form of payment such as a credit or debit card, an Amazon gift card, or another acceptable form of payment.

Below are the minimum purchase amounts to qualify for free shipping/delivery for Amazon Grocery, Amazon Fresh and Amazon Pantry.

Amazon Grocery	Amazon Fresh	Amazon Pantry
\$25 minimum	\$35 minimum	\$35 minimum
(For non-Prime customers)		

What are the differences between Amazon Fresh, Amazon Pantry and Amazon Grocery? You can use your SNAP benefits on Amazon.com groceries, Amazon Pantry, and Amazon Fresh to purchase authorized food items.

Amazon Fresh: Amazon Fresh is similar to your typical grocery store, delivering perishable, shelf-stable and household products in everyday package sizes. Amazon Fresh is typically available only to Prime members.

However, Amazon is making Amazon Fresh selection available to customers who shop with a SNAP EBT card in eligible regions without Prime membership fees. To receive free delivery on Amazon Fresh orders, purchase \$35 or more – or place a smaller order and pay a \$9.99 shipping fee. Customers can schedule their preferred delivery time within a 1 or 2-hour delivery window, as early as the same day. Please visit About Amazon Fresh Delivery for more information. For more information on Amazon Fresh, visit About Amazon Fresh. The first emergency allotment issuance is March 25, 2020; the next emergency allotment issuance is March 16, 2021. The batch is scheduled to run at 8:00 p.m. for the March 16th issuance and if successful, benefits will be available at midnight.

Amazon Pantry: Amazon Pantry features food items and household products in everyday package sizes. To receive free delivery on Amazon Pantry orders, purchase \$35 or more – or place a smaller order and pay a \$5.99 shipping. Please visit About Amazon Pantry Delivery for more information.

Amazon Grocery: The Grocery and Gourmet Food category on Amazon features shelf-stable food and household items in multi-pack sizes. Prime orders receive free fast Prime shipping on eligible items. Non-Prime orders of \$25 or more of eligible items receive FREE shipping in 5-8 business days—or you can place a smaller order or receive faster shipping by paying a shipping fee.

Do I need an Amazon Prime membership to use my SNAP EBT card on Amazon? No. Shopping with a valid Virginia issued SNAP EBT card allows you to access Amazon Fresh without Amazon Prime. Order minimums still apply to Amazon Fresh and Amazon Pantry to receive free shipping.

Why do similar Amazon Grocery items have different SNAP eligibility? According to USDA requirements, Amazon Grocery food items must be sold by Amazon to be eligible for purchase with SNAP EBT funds. Since Amazon allows third parties to sell items in the Amazon store, a product may have multiple offers by multiple sellers. In that case, only the Amazon Grocery offer that is sold by Amazon will be eligible for purchase with SNAP EBT. These offers indicate that they are “Shipped and Sold by Amazon” on the product detail page.

Can I purchase eligible food online from Whole Foods Market using my SNAP benefits? No. However, many Whole Foods products are available through the Amazon Grocery, Amazon Fresh, and Amazon Pantry delivery programs.

Can I use SNAP EBT funds to pay for shipping or delivery? No. USDA requirements prohibit using your SNAP EBT funds to cover shipping or delivery fees. However, it’s possible to earn free shipping by adding enough qualifying items to your order.

What if I don’t meet the free shipping minimum? Can I still buy my items? Yes. You can still buy your items but you will be charged a shipping fee. You will have to use a credit or debit card to pay for any shipping fees.

How can I tell if my zip code is eligible for delivery on purchases using my SNAP EBT card?

After you visit www.Amazon.com/SNAP, you will see an orange box that says, “Add your SNAP EBT card.” Once you click on that box, it will take you to the sign-in page for Amazon. If you’re not already registered with Amazon, it will allow you to create an account on that page. During the sign up process, you will have an opportunity to input your SNAP EBT card information and zip code. At that time, you will be notified whether or not your zip code is eligible.

Why is my zip code not eligible for delivery using my SNAP EBT card? Amazon is participating in a government pilot program to accept SNAP EBT benefits online. Government requirements determine which zip codes are eligible for delivery.

Can Amazon deliver my online order of groceries to my home? Amazon currently offers three delivery programs for home delivery of groceries including Amazon Fresh, Amazon Pantry and Amazon.com Grocery. As part of the USDA's online SNAP initiative, Amazon offers all SNAP customers the following benefits:

Free non-Prime access to Amazon Fresh (where available) with free shipping on orders over \$35. A \$9.99 delivery fee applies to orders below \$35- similar to Prime members. Amazon Fresh is otherwise only available to Prime members.

Free shipping on Amazon Pantry on orders over \$35. A \$5.99 delivery fee applies to orders below \$35- similar to Prime members. Non-Prime members otherwise pay a flat delivery charge of \$5.99 on all Amazon Pantry orders.

Free shipping on orders over \$25 on regular Amazon.com orders for non-Prime customers. Prime members get free fast shipping on eligible items fulfilled by Amazon with no order minimums.

Can I use coupons on my SNAP EBT purchase? Currently, Amazon does not accept paper coupons. However, Amazon do have their own online coupons that are available for all customers including customers using SNAP. Look for the "Save \$X.XX" flags while you are shopping. Please visit their Coupons page for more information at: <https://amazon.com/coupons>

Walmart's Online Shopping – SNAP FAQs:

How do I use my SNAP EBT card for online shopping with Walmart? To use your SNAP benefits on Walmart.com, you will need to register as a Walmart customer if you are not already an online customer. Once you register, you can add your SNAP EBT card to your account by completing the following steps:

To add your EBT card to your account:

Go to your account in the Walmart app or the website
Select Payment methods

If your local store accepts EBT Online, you'll see an option to add your EBT card to your account.
Add your card information. Then, select Save Card.

To place your order:

Select the EBT card switch on the Select payment method screen.
Enter the EBT food or EBT cash amount you'd like to use.
Select Continue to complete your transaction.

Where can I find additional information about Walmart's online shopping? This information is located in the help section at: http://wmtgrocery.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1848/~how-do-i-place-an-order-using-my-ebt-card%3F

What items can I purchase with my SNAP EBT when purchasing groceries online? With SNAP EBT, you may buy any item that meets USDA SNAP eligibility guidelines. For a list of qualified items, please visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>

How much will it cost me to use Walmart online shopping?

Pickup at a Walmart stores is always free

For Delivery: Delivery option is based upon the following:

- a. Store has grocery or selling grocery
- b. Delivery pricing is between \$7.95 to \$9.95 depending on the time/slots chosen for delivery. Unlimited delivery is also offered for a yearly fee of \$98.00 or \$12.95 per month:
<https://grocery.walmart.com/delivery-unlimited/landing>
- c. Some stores offer delivery and pickup options while some are designated as pick up only.
- d. If a given store offers delivery, the delivery radius is about 9 or 10 miles from the given or chosen store:
 - a. Customers would normally have to select a default store – normally the closest store to their home.
 - b. After a given store is selected and items have been added to their cart, they would have the option to select either delivery or pick up options. This assumes that slots are available (due to COVID-19, slots are filling up quickly. Slots are made available at 12:01 a.m. local time and at certain times during the day).
- e. New Offering to address the social distancing recommendations due to COVID-19: a. Contactless Delivery – customers will have the option of selecting this option and then they don't have to sign for the items and have the items elected to be drop off at their front door. b. Express Delivery – is offered in select locations and guarantees delivery of items in less than two hours. The service will cost \$10 on top of the existing delivery charge. Customers will need to select Express Delivery at check out.

Do I need to set up a credit/debit card to pay for non-SNAP items to include delivery, before shopping or can this be done when I complete my order? When paying for delivery fees, you can either use EBT Cash (if allowed) or a credit/debit card which can be added when you pay for your order.

How do I get a refund online if I paid using my SNAP EBT card? If you paid with an EBT card on the website or mobile app, you will need to contact Customer Care by calling 1-800-925-6278 or online at <https://help.walmart.com/app/grocery>.

Can I use promo codes when paying with my SNAP EBT online? Yes. You can use your SNAP EBT card and a promo code when using Walmart Online Grocery. After selecting EBT card option as your payment method, click +Add a promo code to add your promo code, then click continue.

- 17. **I need to apply for benefits, return information, and/or report a change, but my local agency is closed?** Households can mail, fax, e-mail or drop off information. Most local agencies have a drop-box that customers can utilize while they are closed or if it's outside of the agency's business hours. Please contact your local agency for their email address and fax number; this information is also available at www.dss.virginia.gov. You may also submit an application for benefits, submit Change Report Form and/or report changes online at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov.
- 18. **Am I eligible for SNAP while I'm waiting for a decision from the Virginia Employment Commission about my unemployment claim?** Yes; however, there are other eligibility criteria that will be accessed to determine your eligibility. We encourage you to complete an online screening at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov. Scroll to the middle of the page and click "Am I Eligible?" Please remember this is a prescreening tool. You will need to apply for SNAP to get a final decision.

Medical Assistance – Medicaid FAQs:

1. **How can I get health coverage?**

You can apply for Medicaid at any time at www.commonhelp.virginia.gov. Medicaid covers a variety of services, including testing and treatment for COVID-19.

2. **I am sick, but cannot afford my co-pay to see the doctor. What should I do?**

All Medicaid and FAMIS co-pays are eliminated. You do not need to pay anything to see a doctor.

3. **I am worried my prescriptions will run out. How can I prepare?**

Medicaid is allowing members to fill a 90-day supply of many routine prescriptions. Check with your pharmacist or doctor.

4. **Will my current coverage be canceled if I experience a change in circumstances and/or I was late mailing in my renewal documents?**

No, Virginia Medicaid currently is not cancelling coverage for eligible individuals due to a change in circumstances or paperwork issues. Our priority is to maintain your coverage during this time. If you experience issues, please contact <http://www.dmas.virginia.gov/contactforms/#/general> so that we might assist you.

5. **I had to move out of Virginia temporarily because of the coronavirus, but I am still a resident of Virginia. Can I keep my Medicaid coverage?**

Yes, you will continue to be eligible for Medicaid coverage.

6. **Can I receive behavioral health services through telehealth or by telephone?**

Virginia Medicaid has issued guidance to providers allowing the following Medicaid services to be offered through telehealth and by telephone: care coordination, case management, peer services, needs assessments, and psychiatric services, including medication management and individual, group, and family therapy.

7. **Will Medicaid make changes in the appeals procedures because of COVID-19?**

Yes. DMAS is making the following changes:

- DMAS is seeking federal authority to accept client/member appeals filed during the COVID-19 emergency that miss the normal filing deadlines. If the authority is granted, those appeals will move forward as if the deadlines were met. This policy will apply retroactively for the length of the Governor's emergency declaration, which began on March 12, as soon as approval is received.
- For all appeals filed during the state of emergency, Medicaid members will automatically keep their health coverage and have access to Medicaid-covered medical services without any financial impact while the appeal is proceeding. Medicaid managed health plans will also approve continued coverage while their internal appeal process is underway.
- All DMAS State Fair Hearings will be conducted by telephone.
- DMAS will grant requests to reschedule hearings.
- Appeals may be submitted to DMAS via e-mail at Appeals@DMAS.Virginia.gov

State Fair Hearing decisions may not be issued within the normal timeframe, depending on the length of the emergency.