

SNAP Emergency Allotments FAQs

What are SNAP Emergency Allotments?

The emergency allotments are additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that are issued to each assistance group to bring them up to the maximum allotment amount permitted by their household size. Families who are already at the maximum amount receive an additional \$95. The emergency allotments were established as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and Ohio families have been receiving them monthly since spring 2020. The original legislation authorized states to issue emergency allotments throughout the duration of the federal public health emergency, which is not slated to end until May.

What is the background of SNAP Emergency Allotments?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act allowed states to request emergency allotments (EA) for households participating in SNAP until the end of either the federal public health emergency declaration or that state's declaration. As a result, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has been providing EAs to SNAP households since March 2020.

SNAP EAs ensured all households received the maximum allotment for their household size. For households that were already eligible for the maximum allotment, they received an additional \$95 per month. Households receive their normal allotment (i.e., the amount they are entitled to receive based on SNAP eligibility rules without EAs) on their normal issuance dates from the 1st to the 20th of the month and their EAs at the end of the month. **The final round of emergency allotments will be issued Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023.**

What is happening?

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 ended the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services' authority to continue issuing SNAP emergency allotments, even though the public health emergency is ongoing. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced that February will be the final month SNAP recipients will receive the emergency allotments. This means, in March 2023, recipients will return to receiving only the normal allotment allowed based on their household size.

ODJFS, Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, and county agencies do not have control over this change as it is a federal program. Because it is a federal law change, there are no fair hearing rights or fair hearing benefits on the ending of the SNAP emergency allotments. However, households may still request a hearing on their normal SNAP allotment amount.

How much money will SNAP recipients be losing?

This depends on household size and their normal allotment amount, but there are families that will be missing out on hundreds of dollars each month. Additionally, it is families that are closest to the "benefits cliff" that will be impacted the hardest. Here are a few of examples:

- Seniors or disabled individuals on fixed income who normally receive \$23 per month have been

receiving an additional \$258 in emergency allotments for a total of \$281.

- A working family of 3 normally entitled to \$180 per month has been receiving an additional \$560 in emergency allotments per month for a total of \$740.
- A working family of 4 normally entitled to \$939 per month has been receiving an additional \$95 in emergency allotments for a total of \$1034.

Combined, the over 163,000-plus Franklin County residents on SNAP received \$12.5 million in emergency allotments in December.

What can SNAP recipients do?

Because this is a federal law change affecting a federal program, SNAP recipients do not have hearing rights to appeal the loss of the *emergency allotments*. However, households may still request a hearing on their *normal SNAP allotment*.

Recipients should review their normal SNAP allotment amount and current balance so they can begin budgeting. Recipients can review their normal SNAP allotment amount and current balances through the Ohio Benefits Self Service portal or by calling 1-866-386-3071, the number on the back of their Ohio Direction EBT card.

SNAP recipients will continue to receive their normal SNAP benefit until the end of their certification period, as long as they are eligible. When recipients need to complete an interim report or reapply for a new certification period, they will receive another notice with instructions on how to do so. Residents should make sure their case information, including home address, is up to date and respond to notices quickly. The easiest way to review and update a case is through the Ohio Benefits Self-Service Portal at ssp.benefits.ohio.gov.

How do SNAP recipients check how much benefits are on their EBT card?

To check the balance on Ohio Direction EBT cards, SNAP recipients can call 1-866-386-3071 any time. The number is also listed on the back of their EBT card. **The decrease in their monthly benefit amount due to the loss of emergency allotments will not occur until March 2023.**

Any SNAP benefits recipients have received will remain on their card and will continue to follow the normal expungement process.

SNAP recipients can check their normal benefit amount by visiting benefits.ohio.gov.

What is the state and County doing to inform SNAP recipients?

The state is notifying all impacted households by mail and when possible, by phone and text. Letters have already been mailed to all households. The state is also providing information about the elimination of emergency allotments on the Ohio Benefits Self-Service Portal, their website and the Ohio Benefits hotline (1-844-640-6446). Additionally, the state is posting information on its social media platforms and have shared the information with the state's partners including the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, Ohio Grocers Association and Legal Aid.

Franklin County is taking that a step further. Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS) is reminding recipients on its social media platforms has created a page on its website jfs.franklincountyohio.gov, which serves as a hub for information about EAs. The agency has also developed a toolkit with FAQs and more that will be shared with community partners, faith leaders and more.

FCDJFS is also working with partners including the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to help refer residents to additional options for nutritious foods and help mitigate the loss of these benefits.

We want to make sure residents are not blind-sided when this change goes into effect and the emergency allotments do not load in late March.

What resources are available for residents to mitigate the loss of SNAP Emergency Allotments?

- **Mid-Ohio Food Collective (MOFC)** provides free access to nutritious food through a network of hundreds of agency partners to qualifying customers regardless of county of residence. Visit www.mofc.org/get-help to find food close to you; get information about local pantries; learn about SNAP, WIC, and other nutrition supports; and find links to general social wellness programs in Central Ohio. For more information about MOFC, visit www.mofc.org/get-help.
- **Freshtrak** is a free online search engine of food pantries and community meal sites that lists results by ZIP code. The interface is available in several languages, including English, Spanish, Somali, and Nepali. Visit www.freshtrak.com and enter your ZIP code to find food pickup or meal opportunities near you. For more information about Freshtrak, visit www.freshtrak.com.
- **The Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)** is a supplemental food and nutrition program for income eligible pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, their babies and children under 5 years of age. WIC provides nutritious foods (e.g., milk, eggs, fruits, vegetables, infant foods and formula), nutrition education and breastfeeding education and supports. Participants receive about \$35 per month or \$420 per year. Current SNAP recipients who meet the other eligibility criteria automatically qualify for WIC.

The best way to sign up is to head to signupwic.com to find the WIC clinic nearest and call to set up an appointment. Please make sure to call and schedule an appointment.

- **The Franklin County Office on Aging's Home-Delivered Meals program** ensures Franklin County residents ages 60 and older have accessible and affordable food options delivered straight to their homes. The program provides free hot and cold meals that can be tailored to any residents' diet or lifestyle. Any income verification for the program has been suspended through Dec. 31, 2023.

The free Home-Delivered Meals program is offered through Franklin County Senior Options, which has been providing community-based services to residents since 1993. Additional services available through Senior Options include adult day care, personal care, respite care, minor home repair and emergency response systems. The Office on Aging also provides Caregiver and Kinship Support programs, as well as administers Adult Protective Services for older adults who are in danger of being abused, neglected or exploited.

To learn more about the services available through the Franklin County Office on Aging, call **(614) 525-6200** or visit officeonaging.org.