

# WASHINGTON BASIC FOOD PROGRAM – BASIC FOOD



## WHAT IS THE BASIC FOOD PROGRAM?

Basic Food is a food and nutrition program for individuals and families who meet income guidelines. Also known as the Food Stamp Program, Basic Food helps people to afford a nutritious diet by providing eligible households an electronic benefits card and monthly benefits to buy food at participating grocery stores.

## THE RULES HAVE CHANGED!

Beginning October 1, 2008, Basic Food will be available to more people in Washington. The gross income limits will increase to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Net income limits and asset limits are also waived under this expansion.

Many people who had too much income for the program will be eligible with the higher income limits. Everyone who applies for benefits in September 2008 will also be looked at for eligibility in October under the higher income limits.

## HOW MUCH INCOME CAN MY HOUSEHOLD HAVE AND BE ELIGIBLE FOR BASIC FOOD?

You may be eligible for Basic Food if your household's income (before taxes or other deductions) is not more than the amounts listed below based on the number of people in your household:

### HAVE INCOME AT OR UNDER THE AMOUNTS BELOW BASED ON HOW OFTEN YOU ARE PAID:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MONTHLY	TWICE MONTHLY	EVERY-OTHER WEEK	WEEKLY
1	\$1,734	\$867	\$800.31	\$400.15
2	\$2,334	\$1,167	\$1,077.23	\$538.62
3	\$2,934	\$1,467	\$1,354.15	\$677.08
4	\$3,534	\$1,767	\$1,631.08	\$815.54
5	\$4,134	\$2,067	\$1,908.00	\$954.00
6	\$4,734	\$2,367	\$2,184.92	\$1,092.46
7	\$5,334	\$2,667	\$2,461.85	\$1,230.92
8	\$5,934	\$2,967	\$2,738.77	\$1,369.38
9	\$6,534	\$3,267	\$3,015.69	\$1,507.85
10	\$7,134	\$3,567	\$3,292.62	\$1,646.31
Add for each person over 10	\$600	\$300	\$276.92	\$138.46

## WHAT IS THE MONTHLY BENEFIT AMOUNT FOR BASIC FOOD?

Monthly benefits vary by: the number of people in the household, income, and living expenses household members pay for such as rent, mortgage, utilities, childcare, and child support.

- The **average** monthly benefit families received in 2007 was \$181.18
- The **highest** monthly benefits beginning in October 2008 are:
  - ◊ \$176 for a one-person household;
  - ◊ \$323 for a two-person household; and
  - ◊ \$463 for a three-person household.

## THERE ARE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS WHEN YOU RECEIVE BASIC FOOD!

Besides monthly benefits to buy food, receiving Basic Food:



- Automatically enrolls school-age children in the free school meal program;
- Qualifies you for low-cost local phone service through the Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP); and
- Shows that your family meets the Women Infants and Children (WIC) income test.

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### HOW TO APPLY:

- Submit an application in person at the local DSHS Community Services Office (CSO), by mail, or online at [www.onlinecso.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.onlinecso.dshs.wa.gov)
- Have an interview for benefits. We can arrange a phone interview if an in-office interview is inconvenient;
- Provide your social security number, proof of your identity, and proof of the income and living expenses for people you are applying for. We can help you get this proof if needed.

### WHEN DO BENEFITS START?

- On average, we approve applications for eligible households in **less than nine days**.
- More than half of all applications approved in **less than six days**.

When we approve an application for Basic Food, benefits go back to the date of the application.

### DO ASSETS LIKE A HOME, CAR, OR MONEY IN THE BANK IMPACT ELIGIBILITY FOR BASIC FOOD?

No. There is **no asset test** for Basic Food. You can own a home, have a reliable car, and have money in checking, savings, or a retirement plan and still be eligible for Basic Food.

### ARE BASIC FOOD BENEFITS LIMITED TO U.S. CITIZENS?

**No!** The federal Food Stamp Program is limited to U.S. citizens and immigrants that meet specific program rules. The state pays for Basic Food benefits to *legal immigrants* who do not meet the citizen rules for the federal program.

Additionally, non-citizens who receive Basic Food **are not** considered a “[public charge](#)”. Getting Basic Food benefits will not impact someone’s immigration status with the US Citizenship and Immigration Service.

Undocumented immigrants and non-citizens who are tourists or other non-immigrants cannot receive Basic Food.

### HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BASIC FOOD?

- Call us toll free at 877-514-FOOD (3663)
- Learn more online at [www.onlinecso.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.onlinecso.dshs.wa.gov). If you don’t have the internet or a computer, you can use the computer at many public libraries.