

Do I Meet the “Eligible Student” Criteria for SNAP?

SNAP has some specific rules related to students. Under those rules, some full-time students participating in higher education may not be eligible for SNAP (even if they meet the SNAP financial rules). If you are a student, please review the steps below to see if you fall into the eligible student category.

If you have read this checklist and you still have questions about whether you meet the eligible student criteria, please contact your local DHS office. You can visit www.access.arkansas.gov to complete a pre-screener and submit an application online.

STEP 1 Check which box applies to you:

- I do not have a meal plan at my school. – **Continue to STEP 2.**
- I live on-campus with a meal plan that provides less than 50% of my 3 daily meals. – **Continue to STEP 2.**
- I live on-campus with a meal plan that provides over 50% of my 3 daily meals. – **STOP. Your meal plan may make you ineligible. Only a DHS eligibility specialist can make the determination that you are an ineligible student. Please contact your local DHS office to confirm your eligibility status.**

STEP 2 If you meet at least one criteria listed below, you may be eligible to participate in SNAP.

- I am a student age 50 or older.
- I am a student age 17 or younger.
- I have a child under the age of 6.
- I am attending high school or high school equivalency courses.
- I work at least 80 hours every month.
- I am currently working in a Work Study position. *No minimum hours at Work Study position required.*
- I am approved for and my school anticipates that I will fill a Work Study position.
- I have a child between the ages of 6 and 12 and I can't find child care to allow me to work at least 80 hours a month or to allow me to participate in Work Study.
- I am a student who is living with a disability as defined in Arkansas SNAP policy or as verified by a statement from a physician or other health professional.
- I receive TEA (Transitional Employment Assistance). – *CASH ASSISTANCE PRO for Parents w/ Low Income*
- I am a student and part of my education expenses are partially or fully covered by Rehabilitative Services.
- I am enrolled part time or full time in a school or training program but it is not an institution of higher education. No high school diploma or equivalency certificate (GED) is required to enroll.
- I am participating in an on-the-job training program where I am currently being trained by the employer. *Classroom training will not meet this criterion. If you are in classroom training, you'll need to meet another student criterion listed in this box.*
- I am participating in a program under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the SNAP E&T Program, Section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974, or another program approved by the Food and Nutrition Service.

Apply
online or at
your local
DHS office!

STEP 3 The following types of students may not be eligible for SNAP:

- I do not meet any of the criteria listed in STEP 2.

NOTE: Other eligible household members may participate in SNAP even if you are an ineligible student. Please contact your local DHS office to learn about your eligibility for SNAP.

Talk to
your local
DHS office

Do Student Loans Affect SNAP Eligibility?

Generally, no. Student loans are not considered income in SNAP because they have an expectation of repayment. **But**, students must keep student loan money separate from other money so the county office can know what is student loan money and what isn't. Students can keep student loan money and non-student loan money separated in two different bank accounts. When students need to spend some of their student loan money, they can transfer a portion into their other account.

Here's what Arkansas SNAP policy says about student loans:

5404 Educational Income

SNAP Manual 01/01/03

Educational income received by eligible students will be excluded in its entirety. This exclusion covers all federal, state and privately funded educational assistance. Some common sources of educational income are listed below:

- Programs authorized under title IV of the Higher Education Act
- Programs authorized under the bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Student Assistance Programs
- Programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- Scholarships or other grants funded through private and publicly funded education programs
- VA educational assistance paid through the Montgomery GI Bill

Source: <https://ardhs.sharepointsite.net/DHSPolicy/DCOPublishedPolicy/SNAP5000.pdf>

If you aren't sure whether your student loans or income counts in your SNAP case, you should ask your DHS eligibility specialist.

Did you know...

...that if you may be able to get student loans deferred while you are participating in SNAP? Contact your loan servicing agency for more information. Keep your certification letter from DHS to help verify your SNAP participation. DHS does not manage student loan deferments.

...that you need to report on your application or to your caseworker if you receive regular financial assistance from someone. For example, if your parents send you \$50 each month.

...that you can use SNAP benefits at approved farmers' markets.

...that students can conduct SNAP outreach on campus? Contact your school's Community Relations office to see if any groups already work on your campus. Need ideas for outreach? Check out the Food Research and Action Center's publication "Making a Difference" for tips to reach eligible students. (www.frac.org/pdf/making_a_difference.pdf)