



Information for Councils on Aging & Senior Centers assisting seniors with SNAP applications

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION

DTA's mission is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to help individuals and families achieve greater economic self-sufficiency, including food and nutritional assistance, economic assistance, and employment supports.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as food stamps is our nation's first line of defense against food insecurity. The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has implemented some recent changes that make it easier to assist elder clients.

EDSAP: Elderly/Disabled Simplified Application Project

Did you know that seniors (aged 60+) and disabled individuals now have more time to recertify? DTA recently implemented the Elderly/Disabled Simplified Application Project (EDSAP); this new reporting will extend certification periods for eligible households from 24 months to 36 months. It also eliminates the Interim report requirement and will continue to waive the Recertification interview. Extending the certification period will help ensure that vulnerable households remain program eligible and do not lose benefits for administrative reasons.

In order to be eligible, a household must meet certain requirements.

Household composition:

All household members must be either:

- disabled (as defined by SNAP)
- elderly
- children under 18, regardless of disability status

Eligible households must have no earned income (income from wages or self-employment) or they may have no income.

EDSAP reporting households must report:

- changes in Household Composition
 - did anyone move into or out of the household?
- changes in Earned Income status
 - did any household member receive earned income in any amount at any point during the certification period?

Senior Assistance Office (SAO)

The SAO was opened in January 2018, it seeks to:

- increase the number of senior households receiving a medical deduction through comprehensive screening
- increase the use of accommodations and assisting persons/organizations
- decrease the number of households in receipt of the minimum monthly benefit amount and
- decrease the churn rate for this population



The Senior Assistance office is located at:

72-100 Front St., Holyoke, MA 01040*

*Note: there are no in-person appointments, all interactions are by phone and mail. If clients prefer to do an in-person interview, they can still go to their local DTA office.

Phone: **833-712-8027**, if calling on behalf of your client, either have them present at the time of the call or have a signed permission from the client on file with DTA that allows you to speak on their behalf.

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/department-of-transitional-assistance-snap-senior-assistance-office-sao>

Senior Application

The new SNAP application for Seniors has a larger font size, asks about medical expenses and allows clients to self-declare their mileage to and from their doctor or pharmacy. It allows clients to give permission to an assisting person or agency to speak with DTA on their behalf. The new application also permits clients to designate an Authorized Representative – no extra form required for either option. Authorized representatives are able to conduct the phone interview for the client without them being present.

Seniors who apply for SNAP using the *SNAP Application for Seniors* are automatically served by the Senior Assistance Office. Additionally, clients choosing to apply online will have their application diverted to the SAO if:

- the grantee's Date of Birth indicates that the Head of Household is 60 years or older, and
- all adult members of the household are age 18 or over, or
- the social security number of a household member in the web application matches the SSN of a client who is in the first available worker (FAW) model and already flagged for the SAO, regardless of reported ages

If a household member listed on the web application doesn't have an age, the application will default to the first available worker (FAW) model.

To download the application go to:

https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/08/27/snap_app_seniors_english_fillable.pdf

Senior applicants may feel more comfortable working with their local council on aging or senior center to apply for SNAP. If you are an outreach partner or simply assisting with the process, it's important to review the application process with the client. Making sure the client understands that completing the application with your agency is the first step in the process, the next step is an interview with DTA, and the final step is sending in their proof documents so a caseworker can make a determination.

For a complete list of SNAP outreach partners go to:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/01/30/outreach%20partners%20active%20list.pdf>

If you are not already a SNAP outreach partner and are interested in becoming one, go to:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/snap-outreach-for-partners>



Community Partners

Starting in October 2017, DTA has added 20 new Councils on Aging/Senior Center partners to serve elder clients in their communities. SNAP outreach is a joint effort between DTA and local agencies and community organizations to educate and support SNAP recipients and applicants. Seniors especially appreciate working with a trusted local partner to help them navigate the SNAP process.

Our outreach partners help clients:

- Complete SNAP applications
- Gather information or documents for client verifications
- Understand the application process
- Remain eligible for SNAP by helping with the recertification process

Outreach partners help increase the quality of applications we get. This helps reduce time spent to process these applications. This effort helps both clients and our staff, and improves program satisfaction. As a contracted SNAP outreach partner, the COAs and senior centers are eligible for approximately 50% federal reimbursement for allowable outreach costs.

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) and the **Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)** are actively engaged in a data exchange and outreach projects to identify shared clients. This includes training their Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) workers on how to assist seniors with the application process.

Through DTA's joint work with EOEA, both agencies have also collaborated on indentifying some of the barriers that current elderly clients are facing on accessing their SNAP benefits through the High EBT Balance pilot program.

DTA is committed to ensuring that we are working together to promote food security among older adults and senior citizens.