

FOOD STAMPS (OREGON TRAIL CARD)

1. WHAT IS THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM?

The Food Stamp Program was enacted by Congress to help low-income households maintain proper nutrition by giving them a means to purchase food. Most food stamp households now receive Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. These cards are also known as Oregon Trail cards. These cards work like ATM or bankcards. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) to access the funds in your food stamp account.

Some food stamp households in Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington counties are eligible to receive food stamps by direct deposit into a bank account as an alternative to receiving food stamps by EBT. This is available for individuals who are 65 or older or who receive SSI.

OAR 461-165-0082

2. AM I ELIGIBLE FOR FOOD STAMPS?

You are eligible for food stamps if you are a U.S. citizen and your income is modest or low.

3. AM I ELIGIBLE FOR FOOD STAMPS IF I AM NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?

If you are not a citizen, you might be able to receive food stamps if you are a permanent resident, you entered the US lawfully, and you meet certain other requirements. Some lawful permanent residents can receive food stamps immediately, while others may have to live in

the US lawfully for five years before becoming eligible to receive food stamps. Your immigration status at the time you entered the US will determine whether you are eligible for food stamps immediately or whether you have to wait five years. Children under 18 years of age, and disabled adults who reside in the US lawfully are eligible for food stamps without waiting five years. The non-citizen eligibility rules are very complicated. If you are a non-citizen and have questions about whether you are eligible for food stamps, call the Public Benefits Hotline at 1-800-520-5292.

OAR 461-120-0125

4. ARE THERE FINANCIAL FACTORS I MUST MEET IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR FOOD STAMPS?

To get food stamps there are two financial tests you must meet.

- (1) **Resource Test.** Your total resources (checking accounts, savings accounts, stocks and bonds, equity in vehicles, real property, etc.) cannot be more than \$2,000 per household. If there is an individual who is 60 years or older or disabled, their resources cannot be over \$3,000.

OAR 461-160-0015

Some people are “**categorically eligible**”. That means that the resource and the income tests don’t apply to you. *You do not have to meet the income or resource test if you receive certain*

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other public benefits such as TANF (or any benefit or service funded by TANF such as child care, Assessment program benefits, JOBS benefits, TA-DVS), SSI, or if your countable income is less than 185% of the federal poverty rate and you have received the Information and Referral Services pamphlet from DHS.

OAR 461-135-0505

- (2) **Income Test.** You must meet the countable income (income before taxes are deducted from your check and after exclusions are deducted from your income) and adjusted income (income after deductions are taken) limits. If there is someone over 60 or disabled or “categorically eligible” (on TANF or receiving services under TANF, GA, SSI, in the Assessment program, or has income that is less than 185% of the poverty level and has received a pamphlet about Information and Referral Services), then they only have to meet the adjusted income limit.

OAR 461-135-0505; 461-160-0020
461-160-0400; 461-160-0430

If you are **self-employed**, there is a special income test to determine your eligibility for food stamps. If you have any qualifying business expenses you will have 50% of your gross receipts excluded from your income to determine if you are eligible for food stamps.

OAR 461-145-0920, 461-145-0930

5. HOW MUCH WILL I GET IN FOOD STAMPS?

Your food stamps will be based on your household or family size and income. There are also deductions that you can get. The deductions

will reduce the income that will be counted for food stamps (and increase your food stamps). The deductions that you may qualify for are:

- (a) dependent care costs
- (b) for people who are 60 or over or disabled, medical and dental costs, including nursing care, attendants and housekeepers, assistance animal costs, medical transportation and lodging, medical insurance and co-payments, medications and medical supplies
- (c) an earned income deduction if your income comes from working
- (d) a standard deduction based on the number of people on your food stamps grant
- (e) child support payments that you pay for a child not in your household
- (f) a shelter deduction for your housing and utilities

OAR 461-160-0400; 461-160-0415
461-160-0420; 461-160-0430

6. HOW DO I APPLY?

- If there are minor children in your household or you are an adult without a disability and you do not have children in your household, contact your local Department of Human Services (DHS) office
- If there are no minor children in the household, and you are elderly or disabled, contact the Disability Services Office (DSO)

The agency must issue your food stamps 30 days from the date you submit your application providing you submit the necessary documents to them (i.e., utility bills, rental agreements,

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proof of income and citizenship, information on resources). If you need food stamps more quickly than that, you should apply for "**expedited**" food stamps.

When you first apply for food stamps, and then once each year after that, you will have an interview in the office. This interview should be on the day that you apply for benefits. If you cannot have an interview on that day, you can ask for a special appointment. Your caseworker is required to interview you within 20 days from when you apply.

OAR 461-115-0210; 461-115-0230
Family Services Manual FS B 8

7. WHAT ARE THE OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD STAMPS?

(1) Students

If you are 18 or older but under 50 and you are a post-secondary student, and go to school at least half-time, you can only get food stamps if:

- (a) you are not disabled, and you go to school at least half-time, and:
 - (i) you are a student approved for state or federally-funded work-study job and you perform the work; or
 - (ii) you work at least 20 hours per week including self-employment if the self-employment income is at least equal to federal minimum wage multiplied by 20 hours per week; or
 - (iii) you are a student responsible for the care of a child in your home and the child is under age 6 or age 6 through 11 and the food stamp branch determines that

adequate child care is not available; or

(iv) you are a student who is a single adult with the responsibility of caring for a child under 12; or
(v) you are student receiving TANF

- (b) you are a student who is physically or mentally unable to work and you go to school at least half-time; or
- (c) you are a student between 18 and 49 and enrolled in an institution of higher education less than half-time; or
- (d) you participate in an employment training activity through the Workforce Investment Act, a displaced workers program, JOBS, or employer sponsored on-the-job training;

OAR 461-135-0570

If you are a post-secondary student and do not fall into one of the categories listed above, you will not qualify for food stamps. For more information, call the Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292) or your local Legal Aid office for possible advice or representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

(2) Work Requirements

- (a) To be eligible and maintain eligibility for food stamps, you must accept offers of employment, even if it is temporary or part-time;

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- (b) You must also maintain employment by not reducing your hours below 30 hours per week, not quitting your job within 30 days prior to your application (or any time you receive food stamps), and by not being dismissed for striking while a federal, state, or county employee;
 - (c) If you are not already working or in the JOBS Program, you will have to participate in the OFSET Program and look for a job or go to job search training classes;
- (3) You do not have to participate in the OFSET Program if you:
- (a) have a disability that prevents you from working;
 - (b) are participating in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program;
 - (c) are pregnant or responsible for the care of a child under 6 years old or a disabled person;
 - (d) are a student attending high school or a training program or institution of higher learning at least half time;
 - (e) receive unemployment benefits or have applied for them and you are required to register for work through the Employment Department;
 - (f) lack adequate child care, transportation or have another serious problem that prevents you from participating in the OFSET Program.

OAD 461-130-0325, 461-135-0521, 461-190-0310

8. WHAT IF I APPLY AND I AM DENIED FOOD STAMPS?

If the Division denies your food stamp application, they must send you a notice stating the reasons why. If you feel the decision is incorrect, you have 90 days from the date of the notice to request a hearing. In order to have a hearing, you must fill out and file a hearing request form.

To obtain this form go to your local food stamp office and ask the receptionist for a **DHS Form 443 (Administrative Hearing Request)** or get it on the Internet. (Go to www.dhs.state.or.us. Click on "Forms" at the top. Then click on "Find a DHS Form." Put in 443 for the number and click on "Search.")

Immediately fill out the form and turn it back in to the receptionist. *Ask the receptionist for a receipt to prove you turned in the form.* To find out about your hearing rights, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid office for possible advice or representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

OAD 461-025-0310

9. WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH MY FOOD STAMP ALLOTMENT?

You have a right to request that your worker show you how your food stamps were calculated. You are entitled to certain income deductions for earned income that you report, child care and child support that you pay, and shelter costs. You should ask your worker to provide you with **DHS Form 221 (Food Stamp Benefits Computation.)** This is a computer-generated form that will show you how the DHS arrived at the food stamp allotment. Review this form

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carefully to determine that all information is correct and that you received the correct deductions. *If you find any errors, notify your worker immediately and request a hearing.*

10. HOW DO EBT (OREGON TRAIL) CARDS WORK?

When you are determined to be eligible for food stamps, you will be sent an EBT card (also called an Oregon Trail Card). The food stamp payment you are eligible to receive will be held in an account for you that can only be accessed with your EBT/Oregon Trail Card using your PIN (Personal Identification Number).

When you buy groceries at major supermarket outlets (Safeway, Fred Meyer, etc.), the check stand computer will automatically separate your food items from your non-food items. You will then slide your EBT/Oregon Trail card through the machine and enter your PIN. The machine will subtract the total amount for the food items purchased from your food stamp account. You will need to keep track of how much you have left in your account.

Some smaller markets may still have to separate your food items from non-food items by hand, but they will still accept your EBT card.

11. WHAT IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MY EBT CARD?

If you have problems with your PIN, accessing your funds, etc., you can call **1-888-997-4447** to discuss your problem. If you have problems with the amount put into your account, refer to section 9 above regarding disagreement with your food stamp allotment.

12. WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ON OTHER BENEFITS PROGRAMS?

For more information, call the Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292) or go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of benefits programs.

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