

SNAP 101 for Veterans



October 2019

DTA

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long term economic self-sufficiency.

DTA serves 1 in 9 residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance (cash benefits) and food assistance (SNAP benefits), as well as workforce training opportunities.

What is SNAP?

- SNAP is a federal nutrition assistance program overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides monetary assistance for food
- SNAP is the largest nutrition assistance program in the country – with more than 40 million people participating each year
- The program officially became nationwide under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 and is reauthorized under the farm bill every 5 years

Household Composition

Table 1. SNAP Household Composition

<p>A SNAP Household (HH) is defined as:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An individual who lives with others and <u>purchases & prepares</u> most meals separate from others ➤ A group of individuals who live together <u>and purchase and prepare</u> meals together ➤ Other circumstances
<p>Persons that CANNOT be separate households:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Spouses living together ➤ Unmarried partners with children in common, living together ➤ Children under 22 living with parents ➤ Unrelated child(ren) under 18, where adult supervises or financially supports
<p>Some Ineligible Households:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Residents of commercial boarding houses ➤ Residents of institutions that provide more than 50% of meals as part of their regular services ➤ College Students on meal plans that provide more than two-thirds of their meals

SNAP Gross Income Limits

Table 3. SNAP Gross Income Limits, FY 2019

Household Size	200% of Federal Poverty Level
1	\$2082
2	\$2818
3	\$3555
4	\$4292
5	\$5028
6	\$5765
7	\$6502
8	\$7238
For each additional member add:	\$737

SNAP Eligibility Standards

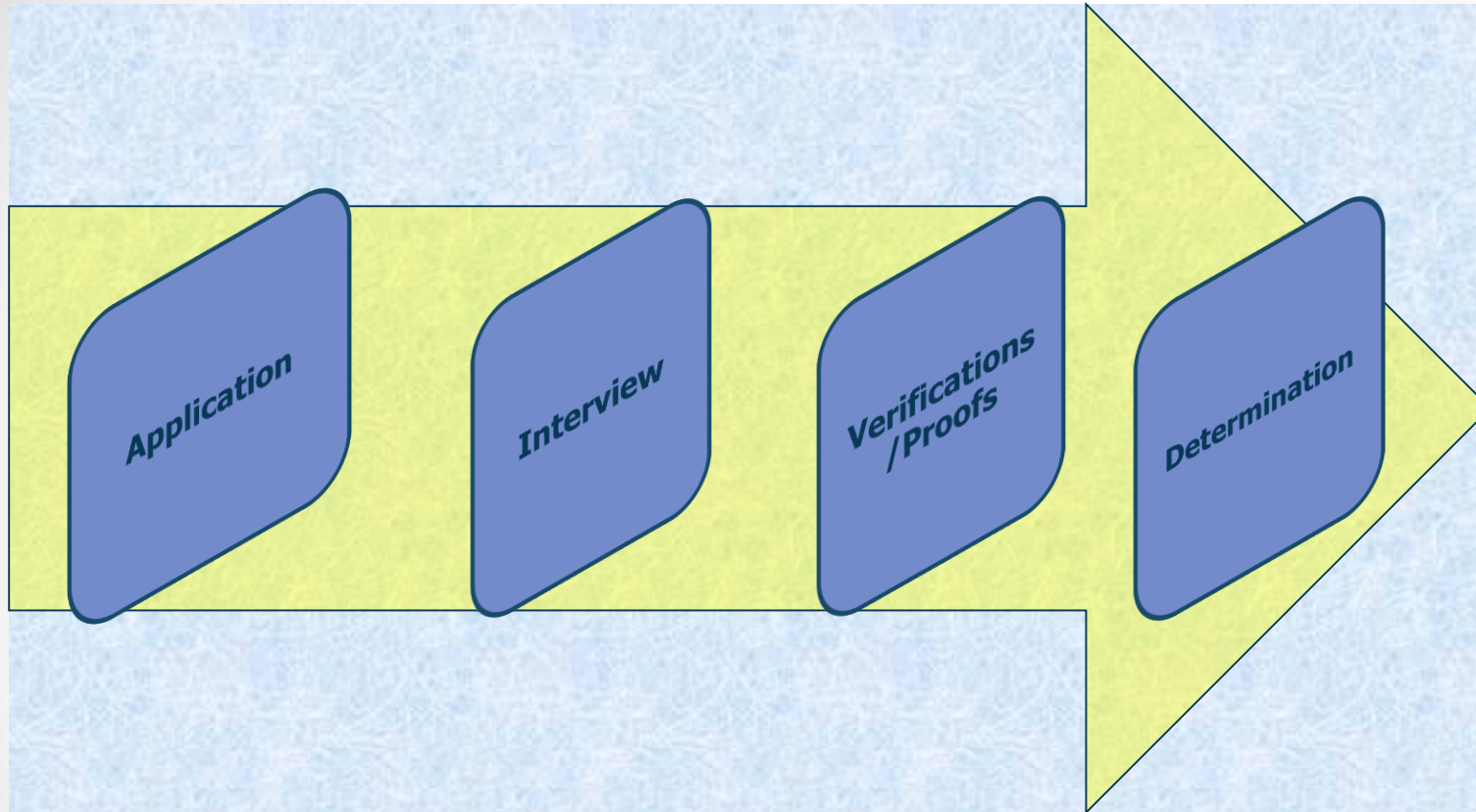
Non Financial:

- Residency
- Citizen/Noncitizen Status
- Elderly/Disabled Status
- Work Requirements
- Social Security Number
- Identity
- Student Status

Financial:

- Earned or Unearned
 - E.g. Veterans Administration Pension and Compensation Benefits
- Actual and anticipated "Reasonably Certain" income used to determine eligibility and benefit level

SNAP Application Process



The application process can take up to 30 days. Within the 30 days, an interview will be conducted, verifications must be submitted and a determination will be made. If applicable, the client has an additional 30 days to submit the verifications/proofs.

DTA Connect

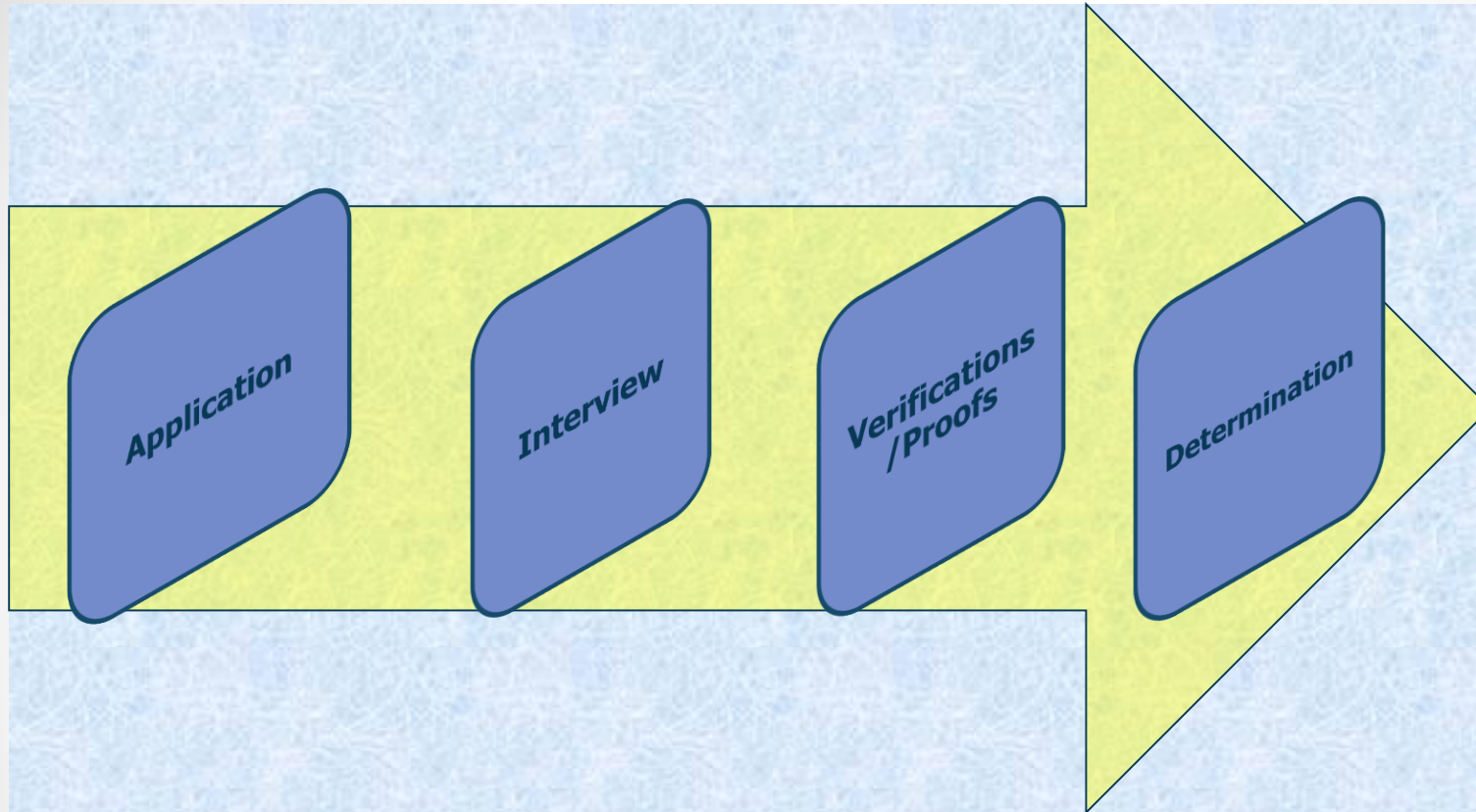
DTA Connect is a free mobile app and website

DTAConnect.com



- All information on DTA connect is secure and confidential
- At any time, a DTA client can
 - Complete a SNAP application
 - See their case status and SNAP amount
 - Upload and submit documents
 - Find out if documents sent to DTA have been processed
 - Get alerts for appointments
 - Read and print notices and letters

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Mandatory Verifications

Table 5. Mandatory Verifications

Verification	Some Documents the Client May Provide
IDENTITY	Driver license, birth certificate, hospital birth record, court records
PROOF OF MA RESIDENCE	Current rent receipt or lease, deed, mortgage statement, Landlord Verification Form, Shared Housing Verification Form, Voter Registration Card, Letter of Intent to Reside
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	Must be provided orally or in writing for all household members
EARNED INCOME	Proof of gross income for all household members, pay stubs of the last 4 weeks, a statement from the employer written on company letterhead, termination letter if job ended within the last 60 days, Schedule C or Business Records for self-employed, etc.
UNEARNED INCOME	Electronic interfaces with other agencies: i.e. Social Security or Unemployment. Benefit or award letter, copy of payment document or check, or written statement from agency making the payment, Child Support income
NONCITIZEN STATUS	US Citizenship can be self-declared and won't need to be verified unless the worker finds the information questionable. Alien Registration Card, Employment Authorization Card, Temporary Resident Card, Arrival-Departure Record or other written documentation from USCIS.

Impact of Veteran Benefits on SNAP Benefits

Table 2. Impact of Veteran Benefits on SNAP Benefits, as of 2019

Included in SNAP Benefit Calculation	Excluded from SNAP Benefit Calculation
Annuity Payments	One Time Bonuses
Basic Pay Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)	Payments (\$200-\$1200 per month) given to the child of a Vietnam veteran disabled in any way by spina bifida
Chapter 115 benefits awarded directly to the client	Chapter 115 benefits given directly to landlord and/or utility company for housing or heating/cooling
Combat Pay received prior to deployment to a federally-designated combat zone	Combat Pay while one is actively serving in a federally-designated combat zone
State financial aid earmarked for costs of living	Federal financial aid Montgomery GI Bill Benefits Post-9/11 GI Bill payments earmarked for educational costs (e.g. tuition, books) Federal work-study income
Disability Compensation, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), Special Monthly Compensation (SMC)	

Optional Verifications

Optional Verifications **may be verified** to maximize SNAP benefits.

Verification	Some Documents the Client May Provide
Shelter Costs**	Current rent receipt, Landlord Verification Form or lease agreement, mortgage statement. Self-Declaration
Dependent Care Costs (Child or Adult Care)**	Written statement from the child/adult care provider or a canceled check or money order paid to the child/adult care provider. Self-Declaration
Heat and Utilities**	Current bills for oil, gas, electricity, telephone (including cellular phone), fuel assistance letter. Self-Declaration
Medical Costs	Only eligible to the Elderly or Disabled and only if costs exceed \$35 per month. Receipts for out-of-pocket expenses, such as co-payments or premiums on health insurance, prescription costs, transportation expenses, vitamins, service animal expenses, etc.
Child Support Payments	Court documents showing a legal obligation AND proof of payment.
** Can be verified through Self Declaration (unless questionable), but must be in writing	

Medical Expense Deduction

Standard Medical Deduction:

Households that verify allowable medical expenses *greater* than \$35 per month but less than \$190 per month will be allowed a medical expense deduction of \$155

Actual Medical Deduction:

Households that verify medical expenses *greater* than \$190 per month will be allowed a medical deduction equal to the verified medical expenses minus \$35

Example of Medical Expenses

Medical Care:

- Psychotherapy
- Dental care
- Rehabilitation services
- Nursing care / home nursing care (PCA's)
- Service animal expenses

Prescription Medications:

- Direct payments
- Co-pays
- Postage and handling costs for receiving medications by mail

Over the Counter

Medications*:

- Pain relievers
- Vitamins
- Herbal & dietary supplements
- Insulin

*Do not need to be approved by a licensed medical practitioner or a qualified health professional

Medical Equipment:

- Purchase/repair of wheelchairs or mobility aids
- Prosthetics
- Personal emergency response systems (ex.: Lifeline)

Examples of Proofs for Claiming Medical Expenses

- Unpaid bills or receipts that show dates of service and what the client owes
- Insurance bills with premium amounts due
- Pharmacy printout with co-pays
- Over the counter receipts – save most recent receipt, indicate on the receipt how often it is used
- Addresses and frequency of medical appointments
- Pension statements showing cost of health insurance
- **Housing Authority rent calculation worksheets which include a medical expense deduction line item**

SNAP Benefit Levels

Household Size	Maximum Benefit Levels
1	\$194
2	\$355
3	\$509
4	\$646
5	\$768
6	\$921
7	\$1018
8	\$1164
For each additional member	\$146

Certification Periods



- Clients working and/or in school will be certified for 12 months with an interim report at 6 months
- Elderly (age 60+) and disabled households with no earned income will be certified for 36 months with no interim report

Change that must be reported within 10 days of the change:

- Income goes over 200% FPL

Elderly/Disabled Simplified Application Project (EDSAP)

Eligible households:

- All household members must be either: elderly; disabled (defined by SNAP); children *under* 18, regardless of disability status
- Must have no countable earned income
- May have no income

This new reporting type will for eligible households:

- Extend certification periods from 12 months to max 36 months
- Eliminate the Interim Report
- Continue to waive the recertification interview

EDSAP Reporting Requirements

EDSAP reporting households have no monthly gross income limit but must report:

- If anyone move into or out of the household
- If any household member starts to receive earned income in any amount at any point during the certification period

*Information that is “verified upon receipt” must still be acted upon immediately, even if the client was not obligated to report the change

*Households are **not** required to report when a child turns 18.

Senior Assistance Office (SAO)

DTA's SAO assists SNAP-only clients aged 60 years and older by phone and mail. There are no in-person appointments at this office, but seniors can still do business in-person by going to a local DTA office.

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



Phone: **833-712-8027**

Continue to send all documents to Taunton:

Fax: **617-887-8765**

Mailing address: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406, Taunton,
MA 02780-0420

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)



An EBT card looks like a credit card and can be used at the same payment terminal at any store or market that accepts SNAP

Where can Benefits Be Used?

- Convenience Stores
- Supermarkets
- Farmers' Markets
- **Hanscom AFB Commissary**



What Can I Buy?

Any grocery item can be purchased with SNAP Benefits (including seeds or plants for growing food), except alcohol and prepared meals sold hot and ready to eat

Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

SNAP will double benefits when purchasing fruits and vegetables:

For every \$1 spent at a certified HIP retailer on eligible fruits and vegetables, a SNAP household will receive \$1 back on the EBT card to be spend on any SNAP eligible food, up to a monthly limit

HIP retailers: farmers' markets, farm stand, CSA, mobile markets

**This program is available on a seasonal basis

Household Size	HIP Monthly Cap
1-2 persons	\$40
3-5 persons	\$60
6+ persons	\$80

*As of 2019



Fresh. Canned. Dried. Frozen.

It's **HIP** to be healthy!

SNAP & Veterans

US Military Service Indicator

- DTA is now capturing each household member's military status
- When a client indicates that a member of the household has prior U.S. military service/ status, the possibility of income received based on military service and/or vendor payments made by a VSO on behalf of the household member is reviewed with the client



Chapter 115 Benefits

- Massachusetts needs-based program that provides qualifying veterans and their dependents financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel and medical care
- If the VSOs make vendor payments directly to a household's landlord or utility company for the household's housing/cooling costs, these payments are **excluded from countable income for SNAP eligibility purposes**



New DTA/Chapter 115 Benefits

Vendor payments made on behalf of a veteran may be verified by completion of the *Veterans Vendor Payment Form*

The vendor payment can be verified by, for example:

- VSO
- DVS
- VA

Submission of a letter from any federal, state, or local veterans' service organization.



Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
Veterans Vendor Payments Form

Give this form to DTA

- By Mail: DTA Document Processing Center, P.O. Box 4406 Taunton, MA 02780-0420
- By Fax: (617) 887-8765
- Upload to the DTA Connect App
- In person at your local DTA office

Instructions

DTA needs more information about the amount of your Veterans Benefits that are paid on your behalf to companies, organizations, and individuals outside of your household. You can use this form or ask the agency making payments on your behalf to give you a letter that includes: the amount of money paid, how often it is paid, and to whom it is paid.

If you have any questions or are unable to get this information, please call DTA at 1-800-382-2363.

Part A: To Be Completed by the client.

Client Name _____ Agency ID or last 4 of SSN _____

Part B: To Be Completed by the Veterans Organization.

Please fill out all that apply to you:

Expense Item	Amount Paid	Frequency of Payment	Who Directly Receives This Payment? (Ex. Landlord, Utility Co., Mary Smith)
Rent			
Mortgage			
Condo Fee			
Property Taxes			
Property Insurance			
Heat (oil, gas, or propane)			
Electricity			
Gas			
Phone			
Medical			
Other (see below)			

If Other is selected, please explain what it is used for:

Name of Person Completing This Form _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chapter 115 example:

- Larry, a retired US Army veteran verifies that his only source of income is \$1,255 in Massachusetts Veterans' Benefits
- Larry's rent is \$900 per month, not including heat
- The VSO makes vendor payments of \$405 directly to the landlord for Larry's rent and \$250 to a utility company for heat

\$ 1255 income

- \$ 405 vendor payment for rent

-\$ 250 vendor payment for utilities

\$ 600 countable income

For shelter expenses, subtract the Vendor Payment amounts from the client's shelter expense:

\$900 rent

-\$405 vendor payment paid directly to the landlord

\$495 Allowable shelter expense

Give Larry the heating SUA since he pays a portion of his heat.

SNAP & Students

Who is subject to student eligibility rules?

A student between 18-49 enrolled at least half time in:

- An institution of post-secondary education (college, university, online school, correspondence school)
- Vocational or technical school
- A program that provides for completion of a high school diploma or the equivalent (Hi-set program)
- School for the physically or mentally disabled



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Student Eligibility Requirements

A student may be eligible for SNAP if they meet all other requirements and:

- Get federal work study & work or expect to work during the semester
- Receive financial aid from the state MASSGrant program
- Attend a community college or vocational school and participate in a program that will lead to employment
- Work 20 hour or more a week, on average, for pay
- Care for a child < 6
- Care for a child aged 6 to 11 for whom adequate child care is not available to attend class or work for 20 hours or more a week
- Get TAFDC
- Are in school through a state approved education or training program
- Have a temporary or permanent disability
- Receive services through Mass Rehab commission

Other EBT Benefits

SNAP Path to Work

- Voluntary Employment and Training (E&T) program for under and unemployed SNAP clients

SNAPpathtowork.org

- Connects people with employment and training providers at community organizations and community colleges
- Programs include:
 - Job search, job search training, job retention, education (e.g. ESOL, HiSet/GED), vocational skills training, work experience and apprenticeship

Clients can train for a career in healthcare, construction, culinary & more!



Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed)

Nutrition education classes and resources

MAHealthyFoodinaSNAP.org

- Healthy recipes and cooking tips
- Cooking ideas for shopping on a budget
- Guidelines for ways to be more physically active
- Suggestions on how to get the most out of farmers' market visits



EBT Card to Culture

- DTA and the Mass Cultural Council have partnered together to offer discounted or free admissions to many of the Commonwealth's best museums and cultural institutions
- There is no limit to the number of times that one can use their EBT card
- For participating organizations, visit:
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ebt-card-to-culture-organizations>

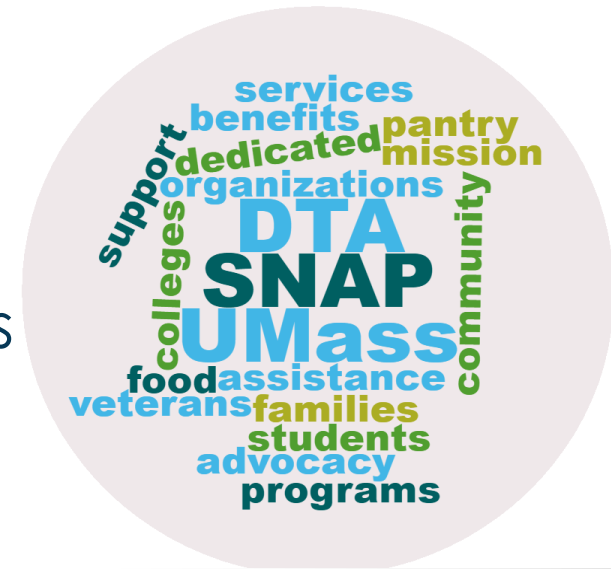
SNAP Outreach Partnership

SNAP Outreach

- Outreach partners helping individuals and families access SNAP benefits (applying, recert., etc.) will receive federal funds for SNAP outreach activities, as well as trainings and technical assistance
 - As a partner you could be eligible for ~50% reimbursement for allowable costs
 - Costs include: funding for staff required to administer the program and directly support application assistance, additional administrative costs for planning, implementing and operating a SNAP outreach program, administer staff working on the program, etc.
- Contract with UMass Medical
- Access to DTA Connect – partner side

SNAP Outreach

- DTA in collaboration with UMMS has contracts with a total of **80 Partners**:
 - 49 Community Service Organizations
 - 20 Councils on Aging
 - 3 Public Schools
 - 3 State Food Banks
 - 3 Veteran Service Organizations
 - 2 Community Colleges



Contact Information

For all additional questions, please contact:
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