



# FoodShare Wisconsin (Food Stamps)

The FoodShare program provides food assistance to eligible households by means of a plastic debit card that you can use like cash to buy food at grocery stores. Over 330,000 Wisconsin citizens use FoodShare each month to stretch their food budgets. Households receive an average of \$170 a month. You can quickly find out if you may be eligible by visiting the new ACCESS website at <http://www.access.wisconsin.gov>

## ELIGIBILITY

### Am I Eligible?

**LOW-INCOME individuals and families of all ages are eligible.** You do NOT have to receive W-2 assistance to qualify, but must meet the following criteria:

- You are a U.S. citizen or eligible alien (ineligible aliens can apply because others in the households, such as U.S.-born children, may still qualify).
- You meet the income limits of the program. There are NO asset limits.
- You meet work requirements unless you are exempt.

### What Are the Income Limits?

**GROSS INCOME** (your income BEFORE deductions). Most households must have GROSS income below the limits listed in the chart.

**NET INCOME** (your income AFTER deductions). Most households must also have NET income below the NET income limits in the chart. Your NET income is the amount left after subtracting from your GROSS income some of your costs for shelter, child care, child support and certain other expenses. An eligibility worker will calculate your NET income. Most one and two person households that meet the GROSS income limit can qualify for \$10 in benefits even if their NET income is above the limit.

Gross Income Limits Increase October 1, 2006							
Household Size	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Monthly <b>Gross</b> Income Limit	\$2,140	\$2,682	\$3,226	\$3,770	\$4,312	\$4,856	\$5,400
Monthly <b>Net</b> Income Limit	\$1,070	\$1,341	\$1,613	\$1,885	\$2,156	\$2,428	\$2,700

### Does the Work Requirement Apply To Me?

**SOME FOODSHARE** recipients are required to work. If this applies to you, you must register for work and accept any reasonable job offer. Some people may be asked to attend workshops to help them prepare for and find a job. However, many people are NOT required to work in order to receive FoodShare. Some examples include persons who are:

- age 60 or older, or age 15 or younger;
- age 16-17 if not head of a household OR if head of a household then in school or training at least half time;
- pregnant women
- physically or mentally unable to work;
- enrolled in college at least half time;

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- caring for a child under age 6, or for an older child or adult who cannot care for themselves;
- already working 30 hours/week or earning at least \$155/week;
- receiving unemployment insurance or attending a drug or alcohol treatment program

## **BENEFITS**

### **How Much Can I Receive?**

**THE AMOUNT** you receive depends on your family size and your NET income. As your NET income decreases, the amount of your benefit increases. An average household receives \$170/month.

### **What Can I Purchase With FoodShare?**

**YOU CAN** buy food items at most grocery stores, as well as seeds and seedlings for home gardens. You may not buy non-food items like soap, paper products, alcohol, tobacco or pet food.

### **How Are Benefits Delivered?**

**YOU WILL** be given an electronic debit card resembling a plastic credit card. Your benefits are put into your account electronically once a month. At the checkout counter, you use the card like a debit card. After your purchase you'll get a printed receipt showing the amount left in your account. Other customers will not know you are paying with FoodShare.

## **APPLICATION**

### **Can I Find Out Quickly If I May Be Eligible?**

**YES**—just visit the new **ACCESS** website using any computer that connects to the internet. If you don't have internet access at home or work, you may be able to use a computer at your public library or at a community organization. Call them first. When you visit the website you (or someone helping you) simply type in information about your household, income and bills. **ACCESS** then quickly tells you if it looks like you may be able to get FoodShare. **ACCESS** also quickly checks if you might qualify for a variety of other assistance programs such as health insurance, school meals and more. Just go to <http://www.access.wisconsin.gov>.

### **How Do I Apply?**

**FOODSHARE** is administered by the Iowa County Department of Social Services. Their phone number is 608-935-9311. More information is available on-line at [www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/](http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/). Beginning in June of 2006 you will be able to apply for food stamps using the **ACCESS** website described in the paragraph above.

### **How Often Do I Have to Re-Apply?**

**MOST HOUSEHOLDS** can be certified to get food stamps for up to 12 months at a time with only one face-to-face interview a year. Many households are required to complete a mail-in change report form after 6 months to update their household information and continue receiving benefits.