



Medical-Legal Partnership Hawai'i  
a project of the William S. Richardson School of Law  
[www.mlpchawaii.org](http://www.mlpchawaii.org)

# Three ways to apply for Benefits during COVID-19



## APPLY BY MAIL

Fill out and print the application:

[https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP\\_Application\\_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf](https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP_Application_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf)

Mail or drop off your application at the DHS office closest to you:

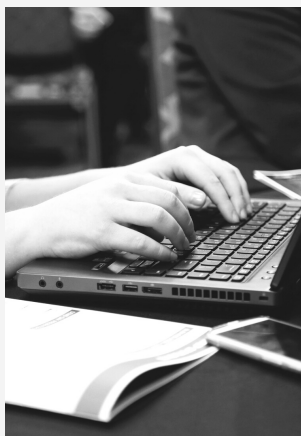
<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Statewide-processing-Center-list-online-02-16.pdf>



## APPLY BY PHONE

Call the DHS office that is closest to your area and a person will assist you with the application. Leave a message if no one answers and tell them to call you..

<https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Statewide-processing-Center-list-online-02-16.pdf>



## APPLY BY EMAIL

Fill out and print the application:

[https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP\\_Application\\_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf](https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP_Application_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf)

Scan or take a picture and send as an email attachment to: [BESSD.StatewideBranch@dhs.hawaii.gov](mailto:BESSD.StatewideBranch@dhs.hawaii.gov).



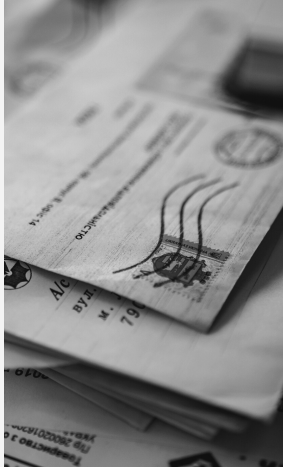
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# How to stay on benefits during COVID-19



## **REPORT ANY CHANGES**

Report all changes in work hours and income to DHS. Save proof that you reported changes.



## **WATCH YOUR MAIL**

The state has temporarily suspended all six-month reporting. Watch your mail for when you will need to report.



## **CALL IF CUT OFF**

if you have been cut off of benefits, immediately call your DHS processing center or reach out for legal help.



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### **FAQ Regarding Food Stamps (SNAP) Benefits During COVID-19**

#### **Who can get food stamps? Will I qualify?**

Low income United States citizens and certain immigrants who are 'qualified aliens' can receive SNAP benefits.

#### **Who are the immigrants who are 'qualified aliens' who can receive SNAP benefits?**

'Qualified aliens' are generally those who have been lawful permanent residents (green card holders) for more than 5 years, refugees, those who have deportation stayed, and individuals on special victim visas. If you are an immigrant on a different status and are not sure if you qualify for food stamps, it may be best to speak to a lawyer before applying. Receiving public benefits as an immigrant can mean different things for immigrants who are not green card holders.

#### **I have a child who is a United States Citizen but I am not. Should I apply for benefits?**

If you have children who are United States citizens you may be eligible to get limited benefits for United States citizen children in your family.

#### **I am in the United States under the COFA treaties. Can I get food stamps?**

No, immigrants from the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and Marshall Islands present in the United States under the COFA treaties do not qualify for benefits. If you have children who are United States citizens you may be eligible to get limited benefits for United States citizen children in your family.

#### **I just lost my job. Can I still apply for food stamps even though I do not have a job?**

Yes, you can still apply for food stamps. Before COVID-19, you could only get food stamps for a short period of time if you were not working and not disabled. However, under the CARES Act (the federal coronavirus law), because it is difficult to find work right now, you can get food stamps even if you are unemployed.

#### **How do I apply for food stamps?**

The Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS) provides free language interpretation by calling 1-888-764-7586 and pressing 7.

Under the CARES Act (federal coronavirus law) you can apply three ways since DHS offices are closed to the public.

##### **1) Apply by paper (mail or dropbox)**

DHS prefers you to fill in the food stamp and benefit application form online, print out the application form once you have used the computer to fill it in, and mail in the application form or drop it off at the nearest state processing center mail drop box.



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The benefit application form is for both food stamps (SNAP) as well as cash welfare benefits for people who are disabled and unable to work full time (GA), or needy families (TANF). You can find the application form to fill out online at:

[https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP\\_Application\\_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf](https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2020/03/SNAP_Application_2019-form-fillable-3-23-20-final.pdf)

DHS has offices in each area of the island and gives you a “processing center” location based on your address. You can look here for the address and phone numbers for all the processing centers to find the processing center closest to you. <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Statewide-processing-Center-list-online-02-16.pdf>

### **2) Apply by phone:**

You can also call a DHS processing center to apply for benefits over the phone. DHS has offices in each area of the island and gives you a “processing center” location based on your address. You can look here for the address and phone numbers for all the processing centers to find the processing center closest to you to call. <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Statewide-processing-Center-list-online-02-16.pdf>

### **3) Apply by email:**

If you are able to print out and sign the application, you can take a picture or scan your complete application and send as an email attachment to:  
BESSD.StatewideBranch@dhs.hawaii.gov.

### **Where do I drop off my application for benefits? Who do I call to apply for benefits?**

DHS has offices in each area of the island and gives you a “processing center” location based on your address. You can look here for the address and phone numbers for all the processing centers to find the processing center closest to you. <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Statewide-processing-Center-list-online-02-16.pdf> If you happen to go to the wrong processing center do not worry. Just make sure you watch your mail and when you receive mail about your application, take note of what processing center sends you the mail.

### **How much food stamps will I get?**

Food stamps are based on a calculation of how many people there are in your household, how much income you have, how much cash and things of value you own, and how much you pay for rent and utilities. It is very specific to your situation, so you should consider applying if you need help buying food. Although rules are relaxed because of the federal coronavirus law



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changes, you should have documents and evidence that show what your income is and how much you pay for rent and utilities.

### **I just lost my job. I currently receive food stamps. Will I be able to get more food stamps?**

Because food stamps are calculated based on income, you will likely qualify for more food stamp benefits because your income at this time is lower. Report all changes in your income with documents to show what your current income is to your DHS processing center. Even if you are unemployed, under new federal coronavirus rules you can continue to receive food stamps. Sample letters to report a change income are attached.

### **I have been receiving food stamps for a long time, but I know that I have a report coming up. Do I need to be worried about being cut off my benefits?**

DHS has said they will grant extensions to all reporting requirements during this time. Carefully watch your mail for what you need to do to report in the future to stay on your food stamp benefits. Make sure that your mailing address is up to date. Mail in information to your DHS processing center if you have changed your address.

### **My work hours got cut. I am still working but I get less money. Will I qualify for benefits?**

Food stamp benefits are based on the total income of your household but also calculate what things such as rent and medical bills that a family has to pay. If you think that you can qualify for benefits please fill out an application and let the DHS staff look to see if you are eligible. In general United States citizens and only certain immigrants get benefits. Please see our FAQ above. You can look at what the income limits for food stamp benefits are by looking online here: <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/snap/>

### **How do I get my food stamps?**

Your food stamps or SNAP benefits will be loaded onto an EBT card or Kokua Card that will be sent to the mailing address on the application. You can use that card like a debit card at stores to buy food that is not prepared. Mailed information will tell you how to check online to see what benefits you have. Many stores will also have information on the receipt to tell you how much food stamps you have left on your card.