KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: SNAP Benefits and Food Access

From time to time all families experience need. If food assistance is something you’re looking for help with you may be eligible for food stamps (now called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP). When you apply for SNAP you have basic rights. This is a brief guide to help you to better understand those rights and where to get more help.

What do I need to apply for SNAP:
To apply for SNAP there are some mandatory verifications to prove you are eligible:
- Identity and Massachusetts residency
- Earned and unearned Income
- Legal immigration status if you are seeking SNAP for yourself but you are not a US citizen.

To get a higher SNAP benefit, you can claim certain expenses that are deducted from your income. If you have these expenses, bring verifications for:
- Child Support that you legally owe and paid
- Medical expenses over $35/month (if you are disabled or aged 60 or older)

You can also self-declare other costs without needing verification
- Rent or home ownership (mortgage, taxes, insurance)
- Utilities (be sure to tell DTA if you pay for heating or cooling, or if you receive fuel assistance)
- Child Care, including transportation costs and any before/after school costs

Who can help me gather these verification documents?
Your DTA caseworker has a legal obligation to assist you gathering documents that prove your eligibility, but you need to ask him or her for that help.

How much SNAP assistance can I get?
Do you want to calculate your income to see if you may be eligible for SNAP? Here is a calculator that can give you a ballpark of what your household may be eligible for:

- Project Bread: http://www.gettingfoodstamps.org/canigetsnap.html

When Applying for SNAP Benefits you can apply any number of ways:
- In person at a local DTA Office. (The Dudley Square office is the closest to Rosie’s Place and is located at 2201 Washington St. Their hours are M-F 7:30a.m-5p.m)
- By phone: call the DTA Assistance Line – 1-877-382-2363
- Online at: http://www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice
- Apply at SSA District Office—If you receive SSI
- You can get an EBT card right away—that doesn’t mean that there are benefits on that card but don’t get rid of it!
- Designate an authorized representative to help with applying and/or receiving the EBT card
- Have your TAFDC or EAEDC application treated as food stamp application.
Below is a timeline to consult when applying for SNAP Benefits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Signed or online application received by DTA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>DTA will call you for expedited screening within five days OR DTA will send a letter if you have no phone number to contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Expedited benefits issued if eligible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>DTA will Interview you for regular non-expedited applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 30</td>
<td><strong>DTA Notice of Approval or Denial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 60</td>
<td>You have a RIGHT to reopen your case if missing verifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 Days</td>
<td><strong>You have a RIGHT to appeal UP TO 90 days after the date of the notice</strong></td>
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**Information on Offices**

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has more than 20 offices across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. If you are not sure which office to contact or you have questions about how to apply for DTA programs, please contact DTA’s Application Information Hotline at 1-800-249-2007, Monday through Friday from 8:45 AM – 5:00 PM.

**DTA Centralized SNAP Office for SSI recipients**

You can apply for SNAP at any local DTA office or on-line. Once your SNAP benefits are approved by a local office, your SNAP case is usually transferred to this Centralized SNAP Office in Chelsea (formerly in Malden) for ongoing case activities. However, you have the right to go to any DTA office for help or to drop off verifications.

Centralized SNAP/SSI Office contact information:
Telephone Number: (800) 590-4820  Fax Number (617) 551-1841

**Where can I send my verification documents?**

You can drop off your documents at your local DTA office or you can mail them to DTA’s Document Center. Make sure to include your name and your “Agency ID” or your date of birth and social security number on each document. Only send photocopies and NOT originals to:

DTA Document Center
P.O. Box 4406
Taunton, MA 02780-0420

To learn more about the application process, your rights and other topics go to http://www.masslegalhelp.org/income-benefits/food-stamps

**To find additional food resources in your community, call the FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333. Hotline Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 A.M. - 7 P.M. and Saturday, 10 A.M. - 2 P.M.**