

State Hearings

If you don't agree with an action or a decision on your benefits made by your CDJFS, you can ask for a state hearing. You can also ask for a state hearing if you think your CDJFS has not done something it should have. **For free legal help, call the Ohio State Legal Services Association toll free at: 1-866-LAWOHIO.**

Civil Rights

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is a public agency which manages federal money. Laws do not allow discrimination in managing programs that use federal money. Discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or political beliefs is against the law. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, send your complaint to:

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Bureau of Civil Rights
150 E. Gay Street, 18th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Telephone: (614) 644-2703 or toll free 1-866-227-6353
TTY hearing impaired: 1-866-221-6700
Fax: (614) 752-6381

OR

USDA

Director, Office of Civil Rights
Room 326-W, Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
Telephone (202) 720-5964 (Voice & TDD)

The Food Stamp Program is directed by the Food and Nutrition Service. The Food and Nutrition Service is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In Ohio, the county departments of job and family services (CDJFS) manage the Food Stamp Program. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services supervises the CDJFS. Your CDJFS determines if you are eligible for food stamp benefits. ***To learn more about your right to apply for food stamp benefits, the state hearing process, and your civil rights, ask your CDJFS for a copy of JFS 08000, "Your Rights."***



Ted Strickland, Governor
State of Ohio

Helen E. Jones-Kelley, Director
Ohio Department of Job and
Family Services

Office of Communications
JFS 08003 (Rev 10/2007)

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider

Ohio's Food Stamp Program



You should read this booklet if:

- You need help with food, AND
- Your income is low.

What is the Food Stamp Program and how are benefits issued?

The Food Stamp Program provides you with assistance in buying food through the use of an electronic benefit transfer card. Benefits are issued to you using the ***Ohio Direction Card***. The card is very easy to use. You will use this card at stores that are authorized to accept it. The Ohio Direction Card allows you to purchase more and better food for better health. ***If your Ohio Direction Card fails to work, call 1-866-386-3071.***

Your county department of job and family services (***CDJFS***) determines if a low income ***household*** is eligible to receive food stamp benefits through the Ohio Direction Card. These households are also called ***assistance groups***. A household can be one person or more than one person. Most households are families, but a household can also be a group of people living together who are not of the same family.

A household:

- Lives together, AND
- Buys food together, AND
- Prepares and eats meals together.

An adult child living with his/her parents is usually treated as part of the parents' household. To be a separate household, the adult child must be over age 22 even if the adult child is married and living with their own children or spouse. Also, the adult child must buy and prepare his/her food separately from his/her parents. People who are living in a group living arrangement may also be able to get food stamp benefits if they are:

- Age 60 or older and living in housing paid for with federal funds.
- Blind or disabled and living in a group living arrangement.
- Living in an alcohol or drug treatment center.
- Living in a center for battered women and their children.
- Living in a homeless shelter.

Household's with no earned income at the time of application must include changes in all of the following information:

- The number of people in your household.
- Any change in address and any resulting change in shelter cost.
- Any change in your household savings if the total cash and savings of all household members amount to \$2,000 or more.
- Any change in legal obligation to pay child support.
- Any change in the source of your household's income.
- A change of more than \$50 in your household's total gross monthly unearned income.
- Any change in wage rate or salary or a change in full-time or part-time employment status.
- Any change in work hours that brings an individual below 20 hours per week, 80 hours monthly, if you are an able-bodied adult without dependents and receiving time-limited benefits.

Households with ***earnings*** are only required to report changes in their total gross monthly income if it exceeds the gross monthly income standard for their household size or if an able-bodied adult's work hours fall below 20 hours per week. If you do not tell your CDJFS about a change, you may not get all the benefits you are entitled to receive OR you may receive more benefits than you should. If you get help you should not have had, you may have to pay it back.

Food stamp fraud is a serious crime.

You can be charged with fraud if you hide information or you do not tell the truth about yourself and your household. You can be charged with fraud if you do not report a change that might affect your case.

It is a crime if you:

- Trade or sell the Ohio Direction Card.
- Use someone else's Ohio Direction Card without authorization.
- Use the Ohio Direction Card to buy non-food items.

The crimes you can be charged with include theft by deception, perjury, falsification, or trafficking of food stamp benefits. If found guilty of any of these crimes, you can be stopped from getting food stamp benefits in the future. You could be fined or jailed or both. You could be made to pay back the assistance you received improperly. The jail sentence can be up to 20 years and the fine can be as much as \$250,000. There are federal laws that apply to food stamp fraud which can also be applied.

You CANNOT use the Ohio Direction Card to buy:(con't)

- Household goods such as cleaning supplies.
- Food that will be eaten in the grocery store.
- Hot foods that are ready to eat in the grocery store.
- Food sold to be heated while you are still in the grocery store.
- Most other items that are not food.

How do I apply for food stamp benefits and receive an Ohio Direction Card?

You need to apply at your CDJFS. The telephone number should be listed in the phone book under "Department of Job and Family Services" in the "Government Offices-County" section. You can get an application form at the CDJFS or ask the CDJFS to send one to you. Make sure you get a brochure called *JFS 8000 "Your Rights"* from the CDJFS. This brochure will give you information about how to apply for many types of help including food stamp benefits.

If you are receiving or applying for SSI, you can apply for food stamp benefits at your Social Security Administration office.

If you have little income or no income, you may be able to receive "expedited" service. Expedited (fast) service is available if your household has no income. If the CDJFS decides that you are eligible for ***"expedited" service***, you will receive food stamp benefits within ***24 to 72*** hours of when you applied.

If your household has very little income, the CDJFS will decide within ***seven (7) days*** from when you applied if you can get food stamp benefits and you will get the food stamp benefits within the same seven days.

What must I do after I apply for food stamp benefits?

You must tell your caseworker within 10 calendar days about any changes that may affect your food stamp benefits.

What do I need to bring when I apply for food stamp benefits?

Your caseworker will need to have the items listed below for each person in the household. Ask your caseworker for help if you need it.

- Identification of the person making the application.
- Proof of Social Security numbers or proof of application for Social Security cards, if applying for benefits.
- Proof of alien status if you are not a U.S. citizen, if applying for benefits.
- Proof of your household's income and any other money you get.

Bring pay stubs, child support orders, award letters or self-employment records. Your CDJFS will look at how much money your household has and decide if you are eligible for food stamp benefits. You will also need to provide proof of what resources your household owns. Resources are things you own or you are buying such as land, stocks, bonds, and rental property. Resources also include things such as savings accounts and checking accounts.

If any member of your household receives Ohio Works First (OWF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) benefits and services, that person's resources will not be counted.

Not all resources are counted when the CDJFS decides if you are eligible for food stamp benefits. Items that do not count as resources include:

- The home you live in and the property around it.
- Burial plot(s). One per household member.
- Personal belongings such as furniture, appliances, clothing, jewelry.
- Money in most pension funds.
- Life insurance policies.
- Motor vehicles.

Make sure you report ALL of your resources. Your CDJFS needs to know about all of your resources to determine what counts as a resource and what does not.

To determine if you are eligible for food stamp benefits, your caseworker will also need proof of the following items:

- Your housing costs. This includes your rent or mortgage payment including property taxes and house insurance.
- Utilities that you pay and how much you pay for them including gas, electric, fuel oil, propane, water, and telephone.
- Medical bills that you must pay yourself if you are at least 60 years old or disabled.
- Proof of any child support that you pay. You must be legally required to pay the support AND it must be paid to someone who lives outside your home.
- Proof of any dependent care costs you pay AND that it is being paid to someone who lives outside your home.
- Other bills that you pay. Your caseworker may need to ask you for proof of other bills that you must pay.

Bring bills or records of these items with you to your food stamp interview. It will save you time, speed up the time you may need to wait to get food stamp benefits, and avoid return trips to the CDJFS.

The information you give to the CDJFS will remain private. The CDJFS cannot give out information about you unless you say it is alright to do so. However, the CDJFS can give information to the police to help find criminals.

Your CDJFS may check the information that you provide. By using your Social Security number, the CDJFS may contact other agencies or people to make certain the information provided is correct and that you receive the correct food stamp benefits.

What types of things can I buy with the Ohio Direction Card?

You can buy food, as well as seeds and plants to grow food using your Ohio Direction Card. Remember, stores must have a license to accept the Ohio Direction Card.

If you do not see an Ohio Direction Card sign or you are not certain that the store has a license to accept the card, check with the store manager or a cashier before doing your shopping.

You can buy prepared meals with the Ohio Direction Card ONLY if the meals are:

- Prepared and brought by a food service (such as ***Meals on Wheels***) that delivers meals to the household. The food service must have a license to accept the Ohio Direction Card.
- Prepared and served by a drug and alcohol treatment center or a group home.
- Prepared and served by a shelter for battered women and their children.
- Served by an agency which provides dining to people who are age 60 or over. The agency may also provide dining for people who receive SSI. The agency must have a license to accept the Ohio Direction Card.
- Prepared and served to homeless people by a non-profit agency. The agency can be public or private, but it must be licensed to accept the Ohio Direction Card.
- Bought by people who are at least 60 years old or disabled (and their spouses) at a restaurant. The restaurant must have a license to accept the Ohio Direction Card.
- Bought by homeless persons; and the restaurant must have a license to accept the Ohio Direction Card.

You CANNOT use the Ohio Direction Card to buy:

- Alcoholic drinks.
- Cigarettes and tobacco products.
- Vitamins.
- Medicines.
- Pet food.
- Paper goods.