

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 EMERGENCY GUIDE TO BENEFITS

This guide will help you learn how to receive benefits during this difficult time. Be safe if you need to apply in-person for benefits. This guide **is not** legal advice.

SNAP/TANF is a fast way to get food and cash assistance. You might get benefits as quick as 7 days if you lost income due to COVID-19. Any household that qualifies gets the maximum amount. Apply at the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

- Online at **www.access.ms.gov/Application**
- By phone at **601-359-4500**

Unemployment will help you pay your bills. If you qualify for unemployment, you get an amount based on your past wages plus \$600 per week. If you can not work because of something related to COVID-19 you can get benefits by applying at the Mississippi Department of Employment Security:

- Online at **<https://accessms.mdes.ms.gov/accessms/faces/login/login.xhtml>**
- Email online form to **UIClaims@mdes.ms.gov** or to your local WIN JOB Center
Download form at **<https://bit.ly/2VBzEqV>**
- By phone at **888-844-3577**

Medicaid will help you get health insurance to cover doctors, medicines, and treatments. If you already get Medicaid, the state cannot terminate you unless you move out of state or ask to be cut off until this emergency is over. Apply at the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

- Online at **www.access.ms.gov/Application**
- By phone at **800-421-2408**
- Fax form to the Office of Eligibility at the Division of Medicaid at **601-576-4164**
- Mail form to **550 High Street, Suite 1000, Jackson, MS 39201**
Medicaid Form can be downloaded at **<https://bit.ly/34JIZSR>**

Social Security disability claims are still going on, but slowly. Some actions to end benefits or collect on overpayments have been put on hold.

The \$1200 economic payment will come automatically for most people (including SSI & VA beneficiaries). If you worked but did not file a tax return for 2018 or 2019, fill out this form:
<https://bit.ly/2XRIAME>

If you are working, you can get up to 2weeks of paid sick leave for COVID-19 and up to 10 more weeks paid to take care of a child whose school has closed.

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 EMERGENCY GUIDE TO BENEFITS - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SNAP/TANF BENEFITS (FOOD STAMPS)

You can use SNAP to buy groceries and you can use TANF to buy other necessities. The Department of Human Services runs SNAP.

How much money can you have and still qualify?

- **Income Limit:** The way that DHS calculates income is complicated. Generally, your monthly income must be less than 130% of the poverty line for the number of people in your household (about \$1,353 for one person; about \$2,789 for four people). DHS will leave out some kinds of income and take into account of some bills.
- **Resource Limit:** You can only get SNAP/TANF if you have less than \$2,250 in resources. The exception to this is if you have someone living in the household who is 60 years of age or disabled, which would increase the resource amount to \$3,500. Resources are things such as bank accounts, extra cars, withdrawals from retirement funds, or property that you own that's not your home.

How much do you get?

Normally, DHS figures the amount that you get based on a complicated process. As a result of coronavirus, you may get more than you usually qualify for. At least for April (possibly longer), and household that qualifies gets the maximum amount for the number of people in the household. One person: \$194. Two people: \$355. Three people: \$509. Four people: \$646. About \$150 more for each extra person.

Can immigrants get SNAP? Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) can receive SNAP if they have had LPS status for 5 years. The following people with legal status can receive SNAP right away (no waiting period) if they meet the other eligibility requirements: people under 18, refugees with asylum, trafficking victims, and veterans.

How do you get SNAP?

Step 1: Apply at www.access.ms.gov/Application or by phone at **601-359-4500**

Step 2: Keep copies (or take pictures) of all the paperwork you give to MDHS.

Step 3: Answer any follow-up questions from MDHS. MDHS may set up a telephone interview to get more information.

Step 4: If you get denied or get less than you should, you can appeal. To appeal, mail a letter (certified, if you can afford it) stating that you want to appeal the denial or amount of your SNAP to:

MDHS Office of Administrative Hearings
P.O. Box 352 , Jackson, MS 39205

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 EMERGENCY GUIDE TO BENEFITS - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7 Tips to Help

#1 KEEP TRYING AND STAY SAFE

The state's websites might crash. Phone lines are busy. Going in person might be dangerous and can also be slow. Be patient and keep applying.

2 KEEP PROOF

Write down names, titles, phone numbers, dates, and what people say. Take screenshots of online messages. Keep copies of papers you turn in. Keep any papers or letters you get from an agency in a safe place.

#3 START ALL APPLICATIONS

Don't just wait on unemployment. You can also apply for SNAP/TANF, Medicaid, or other benefits. It's hard to know when you will start to get benefits, so apply ASAP for anything that you might qualify for.

#4 APPEAL IF YOU ARE DENIED AND THINK YOU SHOULD QUALIFY

Each program has a time period for you to appeal. Read the letter closely. Keep a copy of it. Turn in your appeal and get proof that you turned it in.

#5 CALL LEGAL SERVICES AT 800-498-1804 IF YOU CAN'T GET BENEFITS

We will help as best as we can. Even if we cannot take your case, we will give you advice on your issue.

#6 TELL MDHS IF YOU START GETTING UNEMPLOYMENT

Programs like SNAP/TANF have income limits. Unemployment does not count against those limits. Let the Mississippi Department of Human Service (MDHS) know if you start receiving unemployment benefits, so it can stop SNAP/TANF if you are no longer eligible.

*Note: The \$600 per week of extra unemployment **can** affect your SNAP/TANF eligibility. The \$1200 economic impact payment **does not count** as income for Medicaid, SNAP/TANF, SSI or any other program that is funded in whole or in part with federal funds.

#7 SHARE YOUR STORY

You have a right to speak with elected officials or reporters. Share your story to help them understand what's happening and how to fix problems.

Disability and Language Translation

People with disabilities or who do not speak English fluently may have a harder time getting benefits. Please call Legal Services if you can't get disability accommodations or language translation.

Contact MS Center for Legal Services at 800-498-1804 or go online for more resources

<http://www.mscenterforlegalservices.org/>