

FOOD ASSISTANCE (SNAP) BENEFITS CHANGES

A new work requirement is going into effect for SNAP in Illinois in February 2026. Most people must work or volunteer a minimum of 80 hours per month or participate in certain training or education to receive SNAP benefits. Most SNAP recipients need to meet the work requirement, unless they qualify for an exemption. If the work requirement is not met for three months in a three year period, then SNAP benefits will be terminated. If a SNAP recipient is not meeting the work requirement beginning in February 2026, they could lose SNAP benefits as soon as May 2026.

A PERSON IS EXEMPT FROM THE SNAP WORK REQUIREMENT IF THEY:

- Are age 17 or younger, or age 65 or older
- Have a physical or mental condition that prevents them from working or makes it difficult to keep work
- Are experiencing chronic homelessness
- Are pregnant
- Live in a SNAP household with a child under age 14 that purchase and prepare food together
- Are an Alaska Native, American Indian, American Urban Indian, or California Indian
- Are attending a school, college, or training program at least half-time
- Have applied for or are receiving unemployment benefits
- Are in a drug or alcohol addiction treatment program or suffering from substance addiction
- Are currently receiving TANF and are participating and complying with the TANF work and training requirements
- Are providing care for another person who needs help caring for themselves
- Are responsible for the care of a child under the age of six
- Are an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer working 30 or more hours a week paid, unpaid, or paid in-kind (living stipend)
- Are a migrant or seasonal farm worker under contract with an employer to begin employment within 30 days for an average of 30 hours per week or earning wages at least equal to \$217.50 per week before taxes and other deductions (*This means that Illinois residents who earn the \$15 minimum wage may satisfy the work requirement if they work at least 14.5 hours per week.*)
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REQUESTING EXEMPTION FROM THE SNAP WORK REQUIREMENT

SNAP recipients who fall under the above listed categories can request an exemption from the work requirement. Exemptions are subject to DHS review and approval.

If you have issues with your SNAP benefits or the SNAP work requirement, if your SNAP benefits are being terminated, or if you need help requesting an exemption from the work requirement, PSLS may be able to assist you. Visit pslegal.org or call PSLS at 800-531-7057 to speak with a member of our staff and apply for our services.