VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Noncitizen Eligibility Partner Toolkit

Partner Messaging & Guidance | October 2026



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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

A Message from Our Commissioner

Dear Team Virginia Social Services,

Every day, we see the difference that access to food makes in the lives of Virginias. Protecting, administering, and communicating changes that impact food security to families remains some of our most important responsibilities as a social services system.

Recent federal policy changes under H.R. 1 have limited Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for certain noncitizen populations. These changes became federal law on July 4, 2025, and apply both to new applicants and participants at the time of recertification. While Virginia must administer SNAP in accordance with federal law, we are equally committed to ensuring that affected households receive clear, accurate, and timely information about what these changes mean for them.

This toolkit was developed to equip you and other nutrition stakeholders across the Commonwealth with coordinated messaging and resources to communicate SNAP eligibility changes for our noncitizen participants. Alongside advocates and community partners across the Commonwealth, we can help families understand the new eligibility rules, know what actions may be required during application or recertification, and connect with available assistance and support throughout the process.

Even as policies change, our approach must remain rooted in dignity, respect and service. Families should be able to understand their options, ask questions, and receive timely guidance without confusion or unnecessary barriers. Clear communication is essential to helping eligible households maintain access to nutrition assistance and helping all families navigate these changes.

This commitment is also reflected in Governor Spanberger's Executive Order 20, Keep Virginia Covered, which directs the Commonwealth to keep every eligible Virginian enrolled, to minimize administrative barriers wherever federal law gives us discretion, and to connect people with alternative food resources where federal eligibility no longer reaches them. It further directs us to work alongside food banks and community organizations to meet rising need. This toolkit puts that direction into practice.

Please take time to review the toolkit and participant support resources below. Additional information for the public can be found at dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges. Our staff will continue to update this webpage and Fusion as new materials are developed to help you guide participants.

Thank you for your continued partnership and unwavering commitment to strengthening nutrition security across Virginia. Together, we can ensure individuals and families receive the information, support, and pathways they need to move forward with confidence and dignity.

Sincerely,

S. Duke Storen

Commissioner, Virginia Department of Social Services

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to support for anyone who interacts with members of the public facing these eligibility changes. The information contained within is intended to provide a ready-to-use set of plain-language materials explaining the changes to SNAP eligibility for noncitizens under H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21), and designed to promote accurate, consistent information.

What is inside

- **Plain-language explanations** regarding which noncitizen groups remain eligible, which groups are now excluded, and how waiting periods apply, written for a general audience.
- **Key messages** that include the key details to lead with, so the same, accurate messaging is consistently communicated.
- **Ready-to-use materials** you can adapt for various communication needs, including newsletters, social media, and one-on-one conversations.
- **Answers to common questions** to support the inquiries community members are most likely to ask, with clear responses.

Using the materials

- The key messages are approved and ready to use as written. They are worded carefully to be accurate without adding to confusion or fear.
- The ready-to-use materials are built to be adapted, including for translation. Local details and resources are yours to adjust; the eligibility language should stay as written.
- Information is oriented toward the next step a person can take, applying, reporting a change, or connecting with their local department.

A few things to keep in mind

- These eligibility changes are not decisions made by the Commonwealth. These are federally mandated changes we are required to comply with, and the materials reflect that.
- Eligibility depends on a person's specific situation and documentation. Encourage people to apply or ask rather than assume they are ineligible.
- This toolkit reflects current federal guidance. If guidance changes, updated information will follow.
- Local details, office contacts, hours, and community resources, are meant to be added or adjusted for your audience.



ELIGIBILITY OVERVIEW

Changes to SNAP Eligibility for Noncitizens

A federal law called H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) changed which noncitizens can get SNAP benefits. These changes became federal law on July 4, 2025, and apply to new applications and to people already getting SNAP.

The new law limits who can get SNAP based on citizenship and immigration status. It does not change SNAP eligibility for U.S. citizens, including U.S. citizen children in families where other members are noncitizens. It also does not change the benefit amounts for households that remain eligible.

Virginia is reviewing the cases of current SNAP participants who may be affected at recertification. If your household is affected, your local department of social services will send you a notice. Please read all notices carefully.

SNAP Citizenship and Immigration Status Rules*

This table only shows citizenship and immigration status rules. Everyone must also meet all other SNAP rules, such as income limits.

Eligible BEFORE H.R. 1 (before July 4, 2025)	Eligible AFTER H.R. 1 (on or after July 4, 2025)
• U.S. citizens, including naturalized citizens • U.S. nationals • Lawful permanent residents (green card holders)** • Cuban and Haitian entrants • Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens • Refugees • Asylees (people granted asylum) • People whose deportation or removal is being withheld • Certain survivors of human trafficking • Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners	• U.S. citizens, including naturalized citizens • U.S. nationals • Lawful permanent residents (green card holders)** • Cuban and Haitian entrants (no waiting period) • Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens (no waiting period) Amerasian immigrants • Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants ***

Eligible BEFORE H.R. 1 (before July 4, 2025)	Eligible AFTER H.R. 1 (on or after July 4, 2025)
• Certain parolees • Conditional entrants • Amerasian immigrants • Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants • Certain American Indians born in Canada / members of federally recognized tribes • Certain Hmong or Highland Laotian tribal members	

** Everyone must also meet all other SNAP rules, such as income limits. This table only shows citizenship and immigration status rules.*

*** Most Lawful permanent residents must wait 5 years after getting a qualified immigration status before they can get SNAP. Some LPRs do not have to wait — see "The Five-Year Waiting Period" below.*

****These statuses generally arrive with their LPR status but may not always have LPR status upon arrival and may require status review*

> ### Key detail
>
> People in the "Before" column who are no longer listed can become eligible again if they become lawful permanent residents (green card holders) and meet all other SNAP rules.

The Five-Year Waiting Period

Most lawful permanent residents (green card holders) must wait 5 years before they can get SNAP. The 5 years generally start from the date the person first received a qualified immigration status — not necessarily the date on their green card.

Some lawful permanent residents **do not** have to wait 5 years. Exemptions include:

- Children under 18
- People receiving certain disability-related benefits
- People credited with 40 quarters (about 10 years) of work in the U.S., which can include work by a spouse or parent
- **People with a U.S.** military connection (active-duty members, veterans, and certain spouses and children)
- People admitted to the United States as Amerasian immigrant

- People who are American Indian born abroad
- Certain Hmong or Highland Laotian tribal members

• Refugees

- Individual Granted Asylum
- Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrants (SIV)
- Amerasians
- COFA Citizen
- Certain Afghan and Certain Ukrainian Humanitarian Parole
- Cuban Haitian Entrants
- Victims of Human Trafficking, and Deportation Withheld
- Hmong or Highland Laotian Tribal Member
- Victims of Severe Trafficking
- Certain Afghan Nationals Granted Parole Between July 31, 2021, and September 30, 2023
- Certain Ukrainian Nationals Granted Parole Between February 24, 2022, and September 30, 2024

Quick Check: Am I Still Eligible for SNAP?

1	**Are you a U.S. citizen or U.S. national?** You are still eligible if you meet all other SNAP rules.
2	**Are you a lawful permanent resident (green card holder)?** You may be eligible once you've held a qualifying status for 5 years, unless you qualify for an exemption. See "The Five-Year Waiting Period" above.
3	**Are you a Cuban or Haitian entrant, or a COFA* citizen?** You are eligible with no waiting period. ** COFA stands for the Compact of Free Association, a set of international agreements between the United States and the three independent Pacific Island nations of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.*
4	**None of the above?** You may no longer be eligible for SNAP yourself, but U.S. citizen children or other eligible household members in your home may still qualify. See "Facts for Mixed-Status Households."

General guide

This is a general guide only. Everyone must also meet all other SNAP rules, such as income limits. Contact your local department of social services to confirm your specific situation.

What Is NOT Changing

Benefit amounts

The law does not cut benefit amounts for households that remain eligible. If a household member loses eligibility, the household's benefit may change because the household size used in the calculation changes.

Eligibility for U.S. citizen family members

U.S. citizen children and other citizen household members can still get SNAP even if other people in the home are not eligible.

Other nutrition programs

These changes apply to SNAP. They do not change WIC, school breakfast and lunch programs, or help from food banks and pantries.

2026 Benefit Eligibility for Qualified Noncitizens

Recent federal changes may affect benefit eligibility for some noncitizen groups. The chart below outlines how these changes apply to specific immigration statuses and how eligibility differs across SNAP, TANF and Medicaid.

Important Note:

This is not a complete list of eligible statuses. Benefit eligibility is based on the immigration status of each individual in the household. For the statuses listed below, the five-year bar (waiting period) does not apply after a person becomes a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)/Green Card holder.

Immigration Status / Category	SNAP Food Assistance?	TANF Cash Assistance?	Full Medicaid as of October 1, 2026?	
			For non-pregnant adults	For under age 19 or pregnant
Refugee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holder	✓*	✓	✓*	✓
Asylee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Certain Afghan or Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Victim of Human Trafficking	✗	✓	✗	✓
Amerasian	✓	✓	✓*	✓
Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) / Green Card holder adjusted from statuses above	Individuals with the immigration statuses listed above become eligible for SNAP and Medicaid as soon as they become a LPR/Green Card holder, if they meet other program rules.			

** These groups generally arrive with LPR status and are therefore eligible.*

Individuals with statuses listed above who do not yet have LPR/Green Card holder status, but meet all other Medicaid eligibility rules, may still be able to receive Medicaid coverage for emergency services.

For assistance related to employment, healthcare, education and more visit the Office of New Americans at **dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/ona** and Resources for Navigating Eligibility Changes at **dss.virginia.gov/relief/eligibilitychangeresources**

Find further information about Medicaid changes at dmas.virginia.gov/news-updates/new-federal-requirements

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Key Terms

Plain-language definitions of terms used in this toolkit.

Noncitizen A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States. Federal SNAP rules use the term "alien"; this toolkit uses "noncitizen."	**Lawful permanent resident (LPR)** A person who has been given permission to live and work in the U.S. permanently. Often called a "green card holder."
Cuban and Haitian entrant A person from Cuba or Haiti with a special status under federal law. This can include certain parolees and asylum applicants from Cuba or Haiti.	**COFA citizen** A citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau living in the U.S. under Compacts of Free Association between these nations and the United States.
Refugee A person allowed to come to the U.S. because they faced persecution in their home country.	**Asylee** A person already in the U.S. who was granted protection (asylum) because they faced persecution in their home country.
Parolee A person allowed to enter or stay in the U.S. temporarily for humanitarian or other reasons.	**VAWA self-petitioner** A survivor of domestic abuse who applied for immigration status on their own under the Violence Against Women Act.
Qualified immigration status A group of immigration statuses defined in federal law. Having a qualified status is one part of SNAP eligibility, and the 5-year waiting period is generally counted from the date a person first got a qualified status.	**Five-year waiting period** The rule that most lawful permanent residents must wait 5 years before they can get SNAP. Sometimes called the "five-year bar."
Mixed-status household A household where members have different citizenship or immigration statuses — for example, U.S. citizen children living with noncitizen parents.	**Recertification** A review of a household's case to check whether the household is still eligible under the current rules.



FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

Common participant questions and concise answers that reinforce eligibility requirements and support.

1. How has SNAP eligibility changed for noncitizens?

Recent federal law changes narrowed the categories of noncitizens who can receive SNAP benefits.

SNAP eligibility is now generally limited to:

- U.S. citizens
- Lawful permanent residents (also known as “green card” holders) who meet the required waiting period, when applicable
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- Citizens of Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens

Applicants must also meet all other SNAP financial and non-financial eligibility requirements.

Some groups that were previously eligible, such as refugees, asylees, certain parolees, trafficking survivors, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners, are no longer eligible for SNAP unless they become lawful permanent residents (green card holders).

2. I am a refugee/asylee. Does this mean I lose all public benefits?

Not necessarily. While some noncitizen groups may no longer qualify for SNAP, they may still qualify for other programs such as TANF or Medicaid or if they meet those programs' eligibility requirements. Beginning October 1, 2026, federal rules under H.R. 1 will limit full-coverage Medicaid funding for many noncitizen non-pregnant adults. In Virginia, lawfully residing children and pregnant individuals will continue to retain their coverage.

3. Will my household's SNAP benefits change?

If members of your household remain eligible, benefit amounts will not change because of the law itself. However, if one household member is no longer eligible, your household's benefit amount may change because fewer people are included in the SNAP calculation.

The ineligible person's income and resources may still need to be considered when determining the eligibility and benefit amount for other household members.

4. Can I become eligible again if my immigration status changes?

If you become a lawful permanent resident (or “green card” holder) you may qualify for SNAP if you meet all other program requirements. Some green card holders, must meet a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying humanitarian immigration status. Contact your local department of social services if your immigration status changes.

5. How will I know if these changes affect my current SNAP case?

Your local department of social services will review your eligibility and notify you if your benefits will change or close. Be sure to read all notices carefully and report any changes in your immigration status.

6. If I lose SNAP eligibility, should I still apply for other benefits?

Yes. Eligibility rules differ by program. Even if you are no longer eligible for SNAP, you may still qualify for Medicaid, TANF, or other services and supports. Beginning October 1, 2026, federal rules under H.R. 1 will limit full-coverage Medicaid funding for many noncitizen non-pregnant adults. In Virginia, lawfully residing children and pregnant individuals will continue to retain their coverage.

7. Where can I get help understanding how these changes affect me or my family?

You can contact your local department of social services, speak with a legal services provider or immigration advocate, or visit Virginia's eligibility change resource pages for additional information and assistance.



HOUSEHOLD GUIDANCE

Facts for Mixed-Status Households

Many Virginia families include people with different citizenship or immigration statuses — for example, U.S. citizen children with noncitizen parents. If that describes your family, here is what you should know:

- **Your eligible family members can still get SNAP.** U.S. citizen children and other eligible household members can receive SNAP even if you are not eligible yourself.
- **You can apply for them without applying for yourself.** When you apply only for eligible household members, you are a "non-applicant." Non-applicants do not have to provide their immigration status. The non-applicant may omit providing Social Security numbers, immigration status and immigration control numbers. If the individual classifies as a mandatory household member (spouse, parent, child) then income and resource information must be provided.
- **Getting SNAP for your children does not count against you in the public charge test.** Under current federal rules, public benefits received by your family members are not considered in your own immigration case, and SNAP is not part of the current public charge test
- **Your household's benefit is based on the people who are eligible.** If some household members are not eligible, the benefit is calculated for the eligible members. Part of the ineligible members' income is still counted. The countable income is determined by subtracting allowable exclusions. Divide the income evenly among all household members, including the ineligible person. Count all but the ineligible person's portion. Resources of an ineligible person will be counted in full
- **Read every notice and respond by the due date.** If the local department of social services asks for information and does not receive it, benefits for the whole household could be delayed or stopped — even for eligible members.
- **Help is free.** SNAP outreach partners and local departments of social services can help you apply, prepare for your interview, and understand notices at no cost. You never have to pay anyone to apply for SNAP.

Social Media Posts

These posts are intended for **SNAP participants and families who may be affected by changes to noncitizen eligibility**. Community partners and local departments can share them through their own channels to explain the changes, highlight application and legal resources, and connect families with assistance.

Post #1

Post graphic: Noncitizen Eligibility Graphic.png

Federal law has changed SNAP eligibility for some noncitizens. SNAP is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (green card holders), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and COFA citizens. If your household is affected, your local department of social services will send you a notice. Be sure to read every notice carefully and respond by the due date.

Learn more about what has what changed and where to find assistance at the links below.

VDSS Office of New Americans: www.dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/ona/

VDSS Refugee Services: https://www.dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/ona/refugee-services/

Post #2

Post graphic: Your Children May Qualify.png

Parents: Even if you aren't eligible for SNAP, your U.S. citizen children may still qualify. You can apply on their behalf without sharing your own immigration status if you aren't applying for benefits yourself.

Free application help is available across Virginia. Learn more at www.dss.virginia.gov/relief/food-assistance/snap/engagement/outreach-partner.

Post #3

Post graphics: Legal and Immigration Resources **graphics** – 1, 2, 3

Post copy:

Changes to SNAP and Medicaid may affect eligibility for some noncitizens. However, trusted organizations across Virginia can help you understand your options and connect with services that support your family's well-being.

Immigration Advocates Network offers a searchable list of nonprofit organizations in Virginia that provide free or low-cost immigration legal assistance. Visit www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/search?state=VA to find an organization near you.

VDSS's Refugee Services page includes a list of agencies across the Commonwealth that help refugee communities find stability and build strong futures. Get connected at www.dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/refugee-services/.

Visit dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges to explore additional employment, nutrition, volunteer, and medical services that can help your family stay connected to the support you need.



LOCAL DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Local Department Messaging & Guidance

Messaging Samples for LDSS to Participants

Audience

Current and former SNAP participants and applicants.

Newsletter Blurb

Message #1 — SNAP Eligibility Has Changed for Some Noncitizens

A federal law changed who can get SNAP based on citizenship and immigration status. SNAP is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (green card holders, who generally must meet a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying immigration status), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. All other SNAP rules, like income limits, still apply.

We are reviewing eligibility when we certify or recertify your family for benefits. If your household is affected, you will receive a notice in the mail. Please read every notice carefully and respond to any request for information by the due date.

These changes do not affect U.S. citizen family members, including children — they can still get SNAP if the household qualifies.

CTA: Learn More | Link: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2 — Your Children May Still Qualify, Even If You Don't

If you are no longer eligible for SNAP because of the new federal rules, your U.S. citizen children or other eligible family members may still qualify. You can apply for them without applying for yourself, and you do not have to provide your own immigration status when filling out their forms. Please give our office a call at [insert local contact info] – we can help your family apply.

CTA: Get Connected to Resources | Link: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Newsletter SMS

Message #1

Federal law changed SNAP eligibility for some noncitizens. Learn who is affected and where to get help: [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Message #2

SNAP update: U.S. citizen children can still qualify even if a parent is not eligible. We can help you apply. [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Text Messages

Message #1

SNAP eligibility rules changed for some noncitizens under federal law. Read all notices from your local dept. of social services and respond by the due date. Info: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2

SNAP reminder: Keep your address and phone number up to date so you don't miss important notices. Update at commonhelp.virginia.gov

Message #3

Losing SNAP? Your U.S. citizen children may still qualify, and local food banks can help with groceries at no cost. Find local food resources at www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/all-food-banks or 211virginia.org.

Website Text

A federal law (H.R. 1) changed SNAP eligibility rules for some noncitizens. SNAP eligibility is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (green card holders, who generally must meet a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying immigration status), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. All applicants must also meet SNAP's other rules, such as income limits.

These changes do not affect U.S. citizen household members, including children. Families can apply for eligible members even if other members are not eligible, and household members who are not applying do not have to provide their immigration status.

Our offices are reviewing the cases of current SNAP participants who may be affected at recertification. If your household is affected, you will be sent a notice in the mail. If you receive a notice, read it carefully, respond to any request for information by the due date, and report changes in your immigration status. You have the right to appeal decisions you disagree with.

For help, contact our office at [insert local contact info] or visit dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges.



PARTNER COMMUNICATIONS

Community Partner Messaging & Guidance

Messaging Samples for Community Partners

Audience

Food banks, pantries, clinics, schools, faith communities, LDSS partners, and other organizations serving affected families.

Newsletter Blurb

Message #1 — SNAP Eligibility Has Changed for Some Noncitizens

A federal law (H.R. 1) narrowed SNAP eligibility based on citizenship and immigration status, effective July 2025. SNAP is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (generally after a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying immigration status), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. Groups such as refugees, asylees, certain parolees, trafficking survivors, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioners are no longer eligible unless they become lawful permanent residents. Afghan and Iraqi SIVs and Amerasians, generally arrive with their LPR status but may not always have LPR status upon arrival and may require status review.

Local departments of social services are reviewing affected cases at certification and recertification. If a household is affected, they will receive a notice in the mail. Partners can help by encouraging families to read all notices, respond to requests by the due date, and keep contact information current. Families losing SNAP may need referrals to food banks and pantries, which serve everyone regardless of immigration status.

CTA: Share Eligibility Information | Link: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2 — Noncitizen SNAP Changes - Help Mixed-Status Families Understand Their Options

U.S. citizen children and other eligible household members can still receive SNAP even when other family members are not eligible. Families can apply for eligible members only, and non-applicants are not required to provide immigration status.

Partners play a critical role in reducing fear and misinformation. Please share accurate information and connect families to free application help and legal services.

CTA: Read the FAQs | Link: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges/noncitizen/

Newsletter SMS

Message #1

SNAP eligibility changed for some noncitizens under new federal law. Help families learn who is affected and what to do: [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Message #2

Reminder: U.S. citizen children remain SNAP-eligible even when parents are not. Share free application help: [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Text Messages

Message #1

Federal law changed SNAP eligibility for some noncitizens. Help clients read and respond to social services notices on time. Details: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2

Serving families losing SNAP? Food banks and pantries serve everyone, regardless of immigration status. Find local food resources at www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/all-food-banks or 211virginia.org.

Website Text

Virginia has implemented H.R. 1 federal changes to SNAP eligibility for noncitizens. SNAP is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (green card holders), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. Most lawful permanent residents (green card holders, who must meet a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying immigration status.

These changes do not affect U.S. citizen household members, including children. Families can apply for eligible members even if other members are not eligible, and household members who are not applying do not have to provide their immigration status.

Local departments of social services are reviewing cases that may be affected and notifying impacted households. Partners should be prepared to help families understand notices, respond by deadlines, and explore other supports — including food banks and pantries, which serve everyone regardless of immigration status, and free or low-cost immigration legal services.

Visit dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges/noncitizen/ for FAQs, flyers, and referral resources.



PARTNER COMMUNICATIONS

Advocate Messaging & Guidance

Messaging Samples for Advocates

Audience and framing

Audience: legal aid, immigrant-serving organizations, community advocates, and family members helping loved ones.

Newsletter Blurb

Message #1 — SNAP Eligibility Has Changed for Some Noncitizens

Under H.R. 1, SNAP eligibility is limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents (green card holders, who must meet a 5-year waiting period, unless exempt due to qualifying immigration status), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. Refugees, asylees, certain parolees, trafficking survivors, VAWA self-petitioners, and other previously eligible groups are no longer eligible unless they obtain lawful permanent resident status.

Advocates should know: individuals who become lawful permanent residents may regain eligibility; affected households have appeal rights explained in every notice; and Virginia's recertification of affected cases is ongoing. Encourage the people you serve to read all notices, respond by due dates, and report immigration status changes.

CTA: Review Eligibility Changes | **Link:** dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2 — Reduce Fear: The SNAP Facts for Mixed-Citizenship Status Families

Eligible household members — including U.S. citizen children — can still receive SNAP when other members are not eligible. Families can apply for eligible members only; non-applicants are not required to provide immigration status.

Advocates are trusted messengers. Sharing these facts helps eligible children and families stay connected to food assistance.

CTA: Read FAQs | Link: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Newsletter SMS

Message #1

SNAP eligibility narrowed for some noncitizens under federal law. Help the people you serve understand the changes: [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Message #2

Advocates: eligible children can keep SNAP even when parents aren't eligible. Share the facts on mixed-status households: [[newsletter SHORT_URL]]

Text Messages

Message #1

SNAP rules changed for some noncitizens. Households have appeal rights — instructions are in every notice. Learn more: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges

Message #2

Status changes matter: people who become green card holders may regain SNAP eligibility. Encourage timely reporting to LDSS: www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency

Message #3

Free/low-cost immigration legal help is available across Virginia: immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/search?state=VA

Website Text

Federal law (H.R. 1) narrowed SNAP eligibility for noncitizens. SNAP is now limited to U.S. citizens and nationals, Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens. Local departments of social services are reviewing affected cases on an ongoing basis and sending notices with appeal rights.

Advocates can help by sharing accurate information about who remains eligible; reassuring mixed-status families that eligible members, including U.S. citizen children, can still receive SNAP; encouraging households to read and respond to all notices; and connecting families to food banks, application assistance, and immigration legal services.

Visit dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges/noncitizen/ for FAQs, flyers, and referral resources.



CONNECTIONS TO HELP

Resources for Participants

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)

- Resources for Navigating Eligibility Changes: dss.virginia.gov/snapchanges
- VDSS Food Assistance: dss.virginia.gov/relief/food-assistance
- SNAP Requirements FAQs: dss.virginia.gov/relief/food-assistance/snap/snap-requirements-faqs
- Apply Online: CommonHelp — commonhelp.virginia.gov | Call: 833-522-5582
- Find Your Local Department of Social Services: dss.virginia.gov/localagency/index.cgi
- VDSS Office of New Americans: Immigrant Services and Refugee Services — dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/ona

Food Access (no immigration status required)

- Federation of Virginia Food Banks — find your regional food bank: Fighting Hunger Across Virginia | Federation of Virginia Food Banks
- Call 2-1-1 or visit 211virginia.org to find food pantries and meal programs near you
- School meals: Eligible children can receive school breakfast and lunch regardless of immigration status
- WIC: Nutrition support program for pregnant women, new mothers, and children under 5 that is not affected by these SNAP changes: Women, Infants, and Children | WIC - Women, Infants and Children | WIC

Legal Help

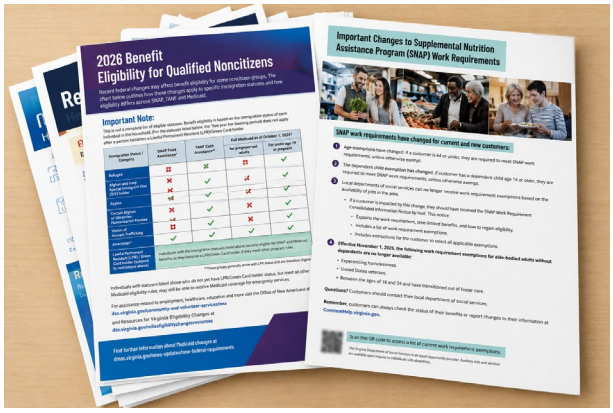
- Immigration Advocates Network — free/low-cost immigration legal services directory: immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/search?state=VA
- Virginia Law Help: virginialawhelp.org

Related Programs

- Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) — Information for Noncitizens: dmas.virginia.gov/for-applicants/information-for-noncitizens
- Enroll Virginia for health navigation: enrollva.org

Federal Guidance (USDA Food and Nutrition Administration)

- SNAP Implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 — Alien SNAP Eligibility (10/31/2025): fna.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility
- SNAP Provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill — Alien SNAP Eligibility — Q&A #1, REVISED (12/9/2025): fna.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility-qas1



PRINT-READY RESOURCES

Attachments

(1) 2026 Benefit Eligibility for Qualified Noncitizens flyer; (2) SNAP Outreach Flyer — Ways to Apply (English and Spanish); (3) SNAP Interview Flyer (English; multilingual versions: dss.virginia.gov/relief/food-assistance/snap/snap-interview-resources).

2026 Benefit Eligibility for Qualified Noncitizens

Recent federal changes may affect benefit eligibility for some noncitizen groups. The chart below outlines how these changes apply to specific immigration statuses and how eligibility differs across SNAP, TANF and Medicaid.

Important Note:

This is not a complete list of eligible statuses. Benefit eligibility is based on the immigration status of each individual in the household. For the statuses listed below, the five-year bar (waiting period) does not apply after a person becomes a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)/Green Card holder.

Immigration Status / Category	SNAP Food Assistance?	TANF Cash Assistance?	Full Medicaid as of October 1, 2026?	
			For non-pregnant adults	For under age 19 or pregnant
Refugee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holder	✓*	✓	✓*	✓
Asylee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Certain Afghan or Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolee	✗	✓	✗	✓
Victim of Human Trafficking	✗	✓	✗	✓
Amerasian	✓	✓	✓*	✓
Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) / Green Card holder adjusted from statuses above	Individuals with the immigration statuses listed above become eligible for SNAP and Medicaid as soon as they become a LPR/Green Card holder, if they meet other program rules.			

** These groups generally arrive with LPR status and are therefore eligible.*

Individuals with statuses listed above who do not yet have LPR/Green Card holder status, but meet all other Medicaid eligibility rules, may still be able to receive Medicaid coverage for emergency services.

For assistance related to employment, healthcare, education and more visit the Office of New Americans at **dss.virginia.gov/community-and-volunteer-services/ona** and Resources for Navigating Eligibility Changes at **dss.virginia.gov/relief/eligibilitychangeresources**

Find further information about Medicaid changes at dmas.virginia.gov/news-updates/new-federal-requirements

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SNAP Outreach Flyer — Ways to Apply (English)



SNAP Outreach Flyer — Ways to Apply (English)

SNAP Outreach Flyer — Ways to Apply (Spanish)



SNAP Outreach Flyer — Ways to Apply (Spanish)

SNAP Interview Flyer (English)



Are You Ready for Your SNAP Interview?

When applying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, in most cases an interview must be completed with a benefit program specialist (BPS). This interview is a snapshot of your household situation to determine eligibility for SNAP benefits. We need your help to clarify the information on your SNAP application. Think of the interview as a private talk with the BPS about your household situation. The goal of the interview is to clearly record your situation, so your SNAP application can be completed without delay.

Where will the interview take place?

The interview may occur by phone or in person with your local department of social services staff. The local agency will schedule an appointment and provide you with a letter with appointment details, such as date and time.

What do I need for the SNAP interview?

You can gather these documents you will need to answer the questions easily and correctly:

- Social Security card if you do not have your number memorized.
- Paystubs, benefit award letters (like those from Social Security or Veterans Administration), pension statements, self-employment records, child support payment records, etc.
- Lease, mortgage statement or rent receipt.
- Bank information for checking, savings and credit union accounts.
- Utility bills for gas, electric or water.
- Proof of identity. That may include:
  - » Birth certificate. » Driver's license.
  - » Social Security card. » Passport. » Work visa.
  - » Resident alien card. » Paystub.

What questions will I be asked?

You can expect to answer questions on your SNAP application, such as:

- What is your full name and birthday?
- What is your Social Security number?
- Where do you live? (You may qualify if you're unhoused or living with family/friends.)
- Are you a U.S. citizen? (Non-citizens may still qualify.)
- What is your monthly income?
- Do you have any type of bank account?
- How do you heat or cool your home, and do you pay bills for either?
- Do you pay rent or mortgage or utilities such as electric, gas, water or telephone?
- Do you pay a daycare expense?
- Do you pay medical expenses?

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Scan the QR code for more information about SNAP interviews including "How can I get ready for my SNAP interview?"

SNAP Interview Flyer (English)

What To Do If You Get a Notice: A Quick Checklist

- ☐ **Open every notice right away.** Don't set it aside — notices explain what's changing and what you need to do.
- ☐ **Check the due date.** Every notice includes a deadline for responding — mark it down.
- ☐ **Send what's requested by the due date.** Even a partial response is better than none — it can prevent benefits from being delayed or stopped for your whole household.
- ☐ **Ask questions if anything is unclear.** Call your local department of social services — find contact information here — or ask a SNAP outreach partner for help. It's free.
- ☐ **Keep eligible family members on the case.** If you are not eligible but others in your home are (like U.S. citizen children), ask what you need to do so they stay covered.
- ☐ **Keep your contact information current.** Update your address and phone number at commonhelp.virginia.gov so you don't miss anything.
- ☐ **Appeal if you disagree.** You have the right to appeal — instructions are included in your notice.
- ☐ **Get food help right away if you need it.** Call 2-1-1 or visit a local food bank — no immigration status is required.