



New Federal Changes to Non-Citizen SNAP Eligibility

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

New federal rules have changed which non-citizens are eligible for SNAP benefits based on immigration status. All states, including Rhode Island, are required to implement these changes to SNAP eligibility for non-citizens.

New applicants as well as current households already receiving SNAP may be impacted by this federal change. In order to meet the immigration related eligibility requirements, applicants must live in the United States and fall into one of the following categories when applying:

- U.S. Citizen or National
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) w/5-years of residency *
- Cuban and Haitian entrant (CHE)
- Compacts of Free Association (COFA) citizen

Customers whose DHS records do not reflect one of the immigration statuses listed above are encouraged to submit updated documents or proof of a qualifying non-citizen status for SNAP.

** Some lawful permanent residents may qualify without a waiting period if they meet specific federal exceptions. Exemptions may apply based on age, disability, work history, or other qualifying exemption.*

What changed with SNAP eligibility for non-citizens?

Federal changes have narrowed SNAP eligibility for certain non-citizens seeking or currently receiving SNAP benefits. Some non-citizen customers who were previously eligible for SNAP may no longer qualify based on their immigration status. If all other SNAP eligibility requirements are met, an applicant must also fall into one of the following categories in order to continue receiving SNAP benefits:

- U.S. Citizen or National
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) w/5-years of residency *
- Cuban and Haitian entrant (CHE)
- Compacts of Free Association (COFA) citizen

DHS is required to implement these federal changes, which are also being implemented across the nation.

Who is still eligible for SNAP under the new rules?

The federal rules related to SNAP eligibility for non-citizens have been revised, and eligibility is now limited to individuals in the following categories:

- U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals
- Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs or green card holders), subject to federal waiting-period rules and exceptions
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- Citizens of countries with Compacts of Free Association (COFA)

Other SNAP program requirements are still required for all applicants.

Are refugees and people granted asylum still eligible for SNAP?

Refugee status or asylum status alone no longer qualifies someone for SNAP under the new federal rules. A person who was previously eligible based on refugee or asylum status may still qualify only if they later obtained an eligible status, such as lawful permanent residence, and meet the applicable SNAP program rules.

What if someone was receiving SNAP as a refugee or asylee before the law changed?

An individual who was previously receiving SNAP as a refugee or asylee will now be subject to the updated federal rules.

Are there any exemptions or exceptions for people who are no longer eligible?

The updated immigration categories themselves are not negotiable under federal law and must be met alongside other SNAP program requirements in order to receive benefits. Some lawful permanent residents may qualify for SNAP without waiting five years and is determined on a case-to-case basis.

What about lawful permanent residents who have lived in the U.S. less than five years?

Many lawful permanent residents must wait five years before becoming eligible for SNAP, however, some may qualify sooner through federal exemptions. Individuals that convert to a lawful permanent resident status from one of the following categories are not subject to the five-year waiting period:

- Refugees
- Individuals granted asylum
- Deportation withheld
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants (CHE)
- Amerasians
- American Indians Born Abroad
- Hmong or Highland Laotian Tribal Members
- Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants (SIV)
- Certain Afghan Nationals Granted Parole Between July 31, 2021, and Sept. 30, 2023
- Certain Ukrainian Nationals Granted Parole Between Feb. 24, 2022, and Sept. 30, 2024,
- Victims of severe trafficking

Additionally, lawful permanent residents are not subject to the five-year waiting period, regardless of prior immigration status, if they: are under 18 years old; have 40 qualifying work quarters; are blind or disabled; were lawfully residing in the U.S. and are 65 or older on Aug. 22, 1996; or have a U.S. military connection. Customers should report all information related to work history, disabilities, and immigration status to help identify potential exemptions that may apply to the applicant's unique circumstances. Customers should report all information related to work history, disabilities, and immigration status to help identify potential exemptions that may apply to the applicant's unique circumstances.

What if someone is in a mixed-status household?

SNAP eligibility is not determined by household immigration status. If one household member is no longer eligible due to the recent changes to non-citizen SNAP eligibility, that person alone may be removed from the case. Other eligible household members may continue to receive benefits if they meet SNAP rules.

Do people need to report a change in immigration status?

While you are not required to report a change in immigration status, DHS is required to verify immigration status at initial application and recertification. Providing updated and accurate information when requested helps avoid delays or interruptions in benefits.

Will people have to repay SNAP benefits they already received?

No. Households will not be penalized for benefits received that was prior to the federal changes made to non-citizen SNAP eligibility, as long as all other information was correct in the case.

How can affected individuals get access to essential food with this change?

These SNAP eligibility changes for non-citizens does not affect access to:

- Food pantries
- Soup kitchens
- Community meal programs
- Other charitable food assistance

Visit staycovered.ri.gov/SNAP-updates for more information on the available resources around the state.

I am unsure if the new federal rules apply to me?

If you are unsure about the new federal changes and whether it impacts your case, you are encouraged to review DHS notices mailed to you carefully and respond to those notices promptly. Additional information about the federal changes is available at staycovered.ri.gov/SNAP-updates and DHS staff remain available at 1-855-697-4347 to discuss the specifics of your case.

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