

Ohio Direction Card (Food Stamp Benefits)

What is the food stamp program?

Food stamps are a monthly benefit given to eligible families to help them buy food. The program is designed to increase nutritional levels, to expand buying power, and to safeguard the health and well-being of Hamilton County residents living in low-income households.

Who can get food stamps?

Families and individuals can receive this benefit. Eligibility is based on factors such as family size, income, assets (checking and savings accounts, stocks and bonds, etc), resources and expenses.

Generally, individuals and families with low or no income may qualify. Healthy people under the age of 60 years old may have to participate in a work activity to receive benefits. **Approval is not automatic.** Applicants must meet federal requirements for the program.

How are food stamps distributed?

Once eligibility is determined, the *Ohio Direction Card* is issued and sent to the individual's or family's address on record. It can be used at most grocery stores across Hamilton County.

How does the card work?

The card looks similar to and works like a credit or debit card. It can be used in most any food store checkout line. Check with the grocery store you go to most frequently and ask how your card will work.

When users make eligible grocery purchases, they simply swipe the card through a reader at the register. The amount is deducted from the total monthly benefit amount. Remember that "eligible grocery purchases" means food or food products except alcohol, tobacco, and food prepared to eat immediately, such as food at restaurants.

Is there a time limit for eligibility?

It depends on the household's circumstances. Recertification – a review of each household case – usually happens at least once every 12 months. Some cases may be reviewed more often if there are many changes or if someone earns money through a job, public assistance, or Social Security, to name a few.

How does HCJFS maintain the program's integrity?

In addition to case reviews, random situations are reviewed to determine current eligibility and appropriate use of the benefits.

How to apply:

In person:

Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services
222 E. Central Parkway, 1st Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45202

By mail:

Call (513) 946-1000 to have an application mailed to you.

Online:

Visit the HCJFS web site at www.hcjfs.org and click on the Forms/Applications link on the right side of the screen

What to bring to your first appointment:

- Proof of your social security number
- Birth certificate
- Proof of any income you receive
- Proof of money in the bank
- Proof of housing costs (rent / mortgage)
- Child support benefits, if any
- Proof of disability, if you claim it