

Becoming a Food Stamp Retailer

WIC-authorized vendors who are also interested in accepting food stamp benefits can call (877) 823-4369 or download more information and/or the online application at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/register.htm.

What is the food stamp program?

The food stamp program (now called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) helps put food on the table for about 18 million people in the United States – more than 2 million in California each month.

Today, food stamp benefits are only issued through the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, a kind of debit card through which beneficiaries transfer food stamp payment to retailers.

What will I have to do?

Any retailer who would like to accept food stamp benefits must be licensed to participate. To be eligible, a store must sell food for home preparation and consumption and meet at least one of these two criteria:

(A) Offer for sale at least three different varieties of food in each of the following four staple food groups (with perishable foods in at least two categories) on a daily basis:

- ▶ Bread and grains
- ▶ Dairy
- ▶ Fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Meat, poultry, fish

OR

(B) At least 50 percent of your store's total sales (e.g., food, non-food, services) must be from the sale of eligible staple food.

How do I apply?

1. Call (877) 823-4369 or download more information at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/register.htm

OR

2. Contact staff at your local Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) field office. They are available to answer questions and advise on program rules and procedures.



Photo by Lydia Damiller

Definitions

Perishables: Foods that are fresh, refrigerated, or frozen. Packaged or canned goods are not considered perishables.

Staple Foods: Basic dietary items (e.g., bread, flour, fruits, vegetables, beef, chicken, and fish). Snack or accessory foods (e.g., chips, soda, coffee, condiments, and spices) are not staple foods. Ready-to-eat, prepared foods are also not considered staple foods.

Variety: Different types of food. For example, your store has a variety of dairy items if you sell milk, yogurt, and cheese on a daily basis. It would not have a variety of dairy items if you only sold three versions of milk (e.g., skim milk, evaporated milk, and whole milk).

FNS Field Office Contacts (California)

Los Angeles Field Office (402) Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
360 East 2nd Street, Suite 705
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 894-7834
(213) 894-7838 fax

Satellite Office Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
Sandra Day O'Connor U.S. Courthouse, Ste. 426
401 West Washington Street, SPC 65
Phoenix, AZ 85003-2159
(602) 379-4941
(602) 379-6019 fax

Counties served:
Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura

Sacramento Field Office (409) Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
801 "I" Street, Room 416
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 498-5790
(916) 498-6487 fax

Counties served:
Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Inyo, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, Yuba