

Becoming SNAP Certified

A guide to help retailers applying to accept SNAP benefits at their stores



BEFORE GETTING STARTED

This is a toolkit for technical assistance providers to use as they help retailers apply to accept benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The goal of this toolkit is to demystify the SNAP application process and help retailers navigate the application process. It was developed and produced by the SNAP/WIC Retailers Project Team of the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger.

INTRODUCTION

What will retailers need before starting their retail application with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)?

To qualify to accept benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at a store, it must offer for sale, on a continuous basis, **at least three varieties** of qualifying foods in each of the four categories of staple foods.

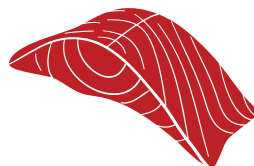
STAPLE FOODS



Breads / cereals



Fruit /
vegetables



Meat / fish /
poultry



Dairy products

At least two of these categories must include perishable foods. See examples here:



-OR-

The store must have over 50% of its total gross sales in staple foods (not counting food items such as coffee, tea, cocoa, soda, candy, condiments, spices, and prepared, ready-to-eat foods).

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Retailers will also need to provide the following information:

- ☒ Date that the store opened under the current ownership
- ☒ Business name and address, exactly as it is spelled on their business license
- ☒ Color copy of a current business license (i.e., a health permit, food inspection permit, sales tax permit, seller's permit, business license, lottery license, or beer or wine license). If they do not have a license, please contact the SNAP Retailer Service Center at 1-877-823-4369.
- ☒ Color copy of photo identification (ID) for all owners, partners, corporate officers, and shareholders (i.e., driver's license, passport, or military ID). A photo can be saved and uploaded as a .jpeg file.
- ☒ Color copy of the social security card or ITIN for all owners, partners, corporate officers, and shareholders. A photo can be saved and uploaded as a .jpeg file.
- ☒ Actual sales data from the store's most recent IRS business tax return, if it has been open under current ownership longer than one year; if not, an estimate of the store's annual sales (Average monthly sales revenue multiplied by 12 months = estimated annual sales for a new business)
- ☒ Store hours of operation

Retailers will also need to answer the following question:

Is your business any one of the following?

- ☐ Delivery route
- ☐ Food-buying cooperative
- ☐ Farmers' market
- ☐ Farm stand, stall, or u-pick
- ☐ Military commissary/exchange
- ☐ Specialty food store that primarily sells one food type (such as meat/poultry, seafood, bread, or fruits/vegetables)

****If the business meets the definition above, they are classified as a Farmers' Market and will need to select the Farmers' Market Application on the "Application Type" page.***

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- ✓ Before a retailer starts their application, they must create an account on [Login.gov](https://www.login.gov).



They will need to provide the following information:



Email address –

Designate a primary email address and check it frequently for application updates.



Secure password –

Passwords must be at least 12 characters and should not include commonly used words or phrases.



One additional

authentication method
to keep the account secure (for example, a mobile phone number to receive texts for verification).

- ✓ Designate a primary point-of-contact for the store to monitor progress of the application.
- ✓ Have access to a printer to print several disclosures and agreements throughout the application process. Any printed disclosures and agreements must be printed and signed in blue ink.
- ✓ Bookmark the application page so they know how to return to their application to check on the status.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED



Things to make sure retailers are aware of:

- ✓ After the application is reviewed, a representative of the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) may inspect the store before approving the application and assigning the store a SNAP permit. Make sure the retailer has the items listed above in stock and easily identifiable. Produce (fruits and vegetables) should look fresh and be stored properly.
- ✓ Retailers will eventually need a point-of-sale (POS) system that is compatible with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards that have the SNAP benefits.
- ✓ Retailers will incur a monthly subscription fees (of about \$20/month) to process EBT card transactions.
- ✓ Retailers cannot begin to accept SNAP benefits until they have a SNAP permit and receive their FNS number.
- ✓ Retailers cannot use the SNAP permit that belonged to any previous owner of their store.
- ✓ If the store changes ownership, if they move, or if they close the store, the SNAP permit is void.
- ✓ Retailers cannot transfer their permit to someone else. If they are closing or selling their business, they must inform FNS and return their permit to FNS.
- ✓ If retailers own more than one store, they must apply for a SNAP permit for each store.
- ✓ Remind retailers that they should not post their SNAP permits publicly. They should keep the permit and FNS number in a safe place as they would any important document and account number.

STARTING THE APPLICATION



Key things to know in the “Ownership Information” section:

- The business address must match the address on their registration with the Secretary of State. **This is VERY important and will cause your application to be returned if it does not match.**
- The retailer’s name must match the name on their social security card or ITIN paperwork. **This is VERY important and will cause your application to be returned if it does not match.**



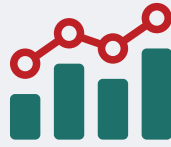
Key things to know in the “Sales Information” section:

There is a requirement for retail food sales to meet or exceed \$250,000 **and/or** the store must have over 50% of its total gross sales in staple foods (not counting food items such as coffee, tea, cocoa, soda, candy, condiments, spices, and prepared, ready-to-eat foods).

To calculate if the store has 50% of its total gross sales in staple foods:

- They can use their taxes from last year to guesstimate;
- Or guess what they hope monthly sales to be (multiplied by 12 = annual revenue);
- Or state that their business will sell more staple foods than other items.

STARTING THE APPLICATION



Key things to know in the “Inventory” section:

What is the difference between an accessory food and a staple food?

Staple food categories:

- Vegetables or fruits
- Dairy products
- Meat, poultry, or fish
- Breads or cereals (e.g., beans, barley, rice, tortillas, flour, granola, and oatmeal)



Accessory foods:

- Accessory food products are generally considered to be food items consumed as snacks or desserts, as well as food items that complement or supplement meals, such as most beverages and spices.
- Find out more about accessory foods from the USDA:



What are the inventory stocking requirements?

- Retailers must have three out of the four Staple Food categories and THREE units of each category available.

Example: If they sell fruit (Produce Staple Food Category), they must stock three kinds of fruit: Apples, bananas, and oranges. And, they must have at least THREE of each item for sale (three apples, three oranges, and three bananas at minimum).

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

- ✓ **Have all the required documentation uploaded on the computer used for submission.** Once a retailer begins the application, they have 30 days to complete it. However, it is easiest to submit everything at the same time.
- ✓ **Upload supporting documents to the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) portal.** Files can be .pdf or .jpeg. This step is not intuitive and can be complicated!

Many retailers experience issues uploading their supporting documentation. Instructions regarding supporting documents are provided on-screen AFTER they submit their application and are specific to their application. Please save these instructions.

Retailers will need to upload:

- ✓ Color copy of a current, valid business license (i.e., a health permit, food inspection permit, sales tax permit, seller's permit, business license, lottery license, or beer or wine license).

If they do not have a license, contact the SNAP Retailer Service Center at 1-877-823-4369.

- ✓ Color copy of a valid photo identification (ID) for all owners, partners, corporate officers, and shareholders (i.e., driver's license, passport, or military ID). Make sure the copies include the front and back of each document on separate pages.
- ✓ Color copy of the social security card or ITIN for all owners, partners, corporate officers, and shareholders. Make sure the copies include the front and back of each document on separate pages.
- ✓ Signed copy of the certification form. They can do this using Adobe Acrobat Sign, Docusign, or print it out, sign, and take a photo to upload it. It's encouraged that you read the certification form out loud before the retailer signs it.

If they print it out to sign, make sure they sign in blue ink.

AFTER APPLICATION SUBMISSION



What's the status of a retailer's application?

- Retailers can check their application status by [logging into their USDA account](#) or contacting the SNAP Retailer Service Center at 1-877-823-4369 to inquire.



Retailers may be asked to answer additional questions or provide additional documentation as part of the application process.

- Keep an eye out for emails or letters from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

Retailers may receive a letter requesting hard copies of their personal documents.

- If so, they must mail physical, paper color copies of their photo ID, SSN, or ITN number (front and back on different pages).

How long will it take to become authorized?

- FNS has up to 45 days from the date that a completed application is received to make a determination.

Retailers can expect an inspection.

- After the application is reviewed, a representative of FNS may inspect the store before approving the application and assigning the store a SNAP permit. Make sure the retailer has the items listed above in stock and easily identifiable. Produce (fruits and vegetables) should look fresh and be stored properly.

Can retailers begin accepting SNAP benefits after submitting their application?

- Under no circumstances can retailers accept any SNAP benefits until their store has been licensed under their ownership.

AFTER APPLICATION SUBMISSION

A STORE IS NOW APPROVED! WHAT'S NEXT?



Congratulate the retailer!

- Share training for store workers: [Watch USDA training videos.](#)



Help them get connected to additional resources to start accepting SNAP benefits on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards.



Remind them to save their FNS number. They will need to reference this number in the future, so make sure they document and save it.



Display signage. FNS will send retailers a sign to tell customers that they now accept SNAP/EBT. Display signs will say "We welcome SNAP customers."



Maintaining SNAP status: Currently, there is no requirement to reapply for a permit once approved. Although, a retailer is subjected to evaluation at any time by FNS or State offices. These evaluations usually cover access, inventory, minimum shelf requirements, etc.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Make sure retailers have your contact information** and instructions on how to contact you (email, call, or text).
- **Make sure you have the retailer's contact information** and instructions on how to contact them (email, call, or text).
- **For all other questions, contact the SNAP Retailer Service Center** at 1-877-823-4369.