

# USDA Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) Awards and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The information below is for the farmers and ranchers who applied for and received a one-time, lump-sum award from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the USDA Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP). DFAP was created to address the consequences of prior discrimination by USDA in USDA farm lending. This general information will help people who receive these USDA DFAP awards understand the potential impact of the money on SNAP benefits.

The USDA DFAP Award may affect your SNAP eligibility. Everyone's situation is different. Be sure to consult an attorney or advocate knowledgeable about SNAP in your state for advice.

See below for a list of resources.

## What are SNAP benefits?

SNAP is a federal program that provides benefits to low-income households to help pay for food at local grocery stores. SNAP benefits are administered by state human service agencies. SNAP eligibility and program rules differ in each state.

## How could my USDA DFAP award affect my SNAP benefits?

Your eligibility for SNAP depends on your household's income and assets/resources. The lump-sum award you receive from the USDA DFAP is not income, but a resource. If your total resources increase above the maximum allowed by SNAP, **you will no longer be eligible for SNAP**. But if you remain eligible, your DFAP award will not affect the amount of SNAP you receive.

## When is my USDA DFAP award considered “income” for SNAP?

A one-time, lump-sum payment by the government, like the USDA DFAP award, is never considered income for SNAP purposes.

## When is my USDA DFAP award considered a “resource?”

Any of the USDA DFAP award left over after the month you receive it is a resource. For example: if you receive an award of \$5,000 in June, and you spend \$1,000 in June, the remaining \$4,000 is a resource beginning in July and continuing each following month you have the money.

## What are the SNAP resource limits in my state?

If you still have enough of the USDA DFAP award the month after you receive it to increase your total resources above the maximum allowed in your state, you will not be eligible for SNAP.

In Vermont, SNAP resource limits are:

- There are no resource limits for households with income at 185 percent of the federal poverty level or below.
- \$4250 for households that:
  - Have income over 185 percent of the federal poverty level; and
  - Include at least one eligible household member who is disabled or 60 years of age or older.
- \$2750 for households that:
  - Have income over 185 percent of the federal poverty level; and
  - If the only disabled or elder member of the household is otherwise ineligible for benefits.

## What can I do to avoid or minimize the impact of the USDA DFAP award on my SNAP benefits?

If your USDA DFAP award will increase your resources above the limit, you can avoid its impact on your SNAP benefits by spending it in the month you receive it. It is a good idea to save receipts or other documentation of how you spent it, just in case your state agency has questions.

Some permissible ways to spend the DFAP award include: paying off bills (e.g. past due rent, utilities, credit cards); buying new furniture or household goods; buying new farm equipment; buying an irrevocable prepaid burial policy; buying gift cards for stores you often shop at (Wal-Mart, grocery store). Generally, it is not a good idea to pre-pay rent. If you have a large amount of money, consider funding a 529 account (for children's educational expenses) or an ABL account (savings for people who were disabled before age 26). Neither of these accounts are considered resources for SNAP.

**DO NOT GIVE THE MONEY AWAY.** Giving away the money could make you ineligible for the SNAP program for up to one year.

## Do I need to report the USDA DFAP award to the human services agency in my state?

Best practice is to report all significant income and resource changes within 10 days of the change. Keep all receipts and other documentation of how the funds were spent in case your state agency asks you to prove you no longer have the funds available to you.

In Vermont, you do not need to report assets if you are 185 percent of the federal poverty level or below. If asset limits apply (see above), you must report them as soon as they become assets (on the first of the month after they are received).

If you spend the whole award in the month you receive it, you do not need to report it. If you have any money left over in the month afterward, and it pushes your resources above the limit, you should report it.

## How do I get information about my SNAP benefits?

Contact your state SNAP agency. You can find contact information for Vermont's Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/contact> or by calling the Vermont Benefits Service Center at 800-479-6151.

## Where can I find more resources related to the impact of the USDA DFAP award on my SNAP benefits?

Many USDA DFAP award recipients can request brief legal advice through the American Bar Association Free Legal Answers platform at <https://abafreelegalanswers.org/>. You will need to select the state where you live and provide income and asset information to determine eligibility for free legal advice, which is generally available to people with household income below 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. When answering questions about your assets, do not include your USDA DFAP award. Once you are approved, you can create an account to ask a question and get advice from a volunteer attorney.

You can also contact the Legal Aid office that serves your community. Not all Legal Aid programs can assist with these kinds of questions, and they only serve people who meet financial and other eligibility requirements. You can look up your local Legal Aid at <https://www.lsc.gov/about-lsc/what-legal-aid/i-need-legal-help>.

Additional resources and information are available at <https://www.nlada.org/USDA-DFAP/award-recipients>.

For general questions about your DFAP award, contact the DFAP Call Center at 1-800-721-0970.