

## Food Assistance Programs During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 crisis, public nutrition assistance programs are an important resource to help you put food on the table. This is a fact sheet about what changes have been made to help people access and use these resources. We will update this periodically as new changes are made.

### SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, Basic Food, formerly “food stamps”) provides money for buying food from grocery stores, farmers markets, and certified convenience stores. SNAP can also be used to shop for groceries online from certain retailers. Your monthly benefit is determined based on your net income after deducting the costs for certain necessities and your household size. You have the right to apply for SNAP any time you need help, including after recent or sudden job loss or a reduction in work hours.

#### *Important changes to SNAP:*

- There is a temporary, national waiver of the three-month time limit for SNAP for certain unemployed or underemployed adults. This means that in all counties, including King County, the work requirement (20 hours of work or approved activity each week) is lifted until further notice.
- Emergency SNAP allotments for March and April: many households on SNAP should have received an increase in their SNAP benefits for March and April. The added benefit for March was issued on or around March 31; the added benefits for April arrived with your normal SNAP issuance. Households that already receive the maximum SNAP benefit for your household size did not receive an increase.

To apply for SNAP, visit [Washington Connection](#) or call 1-877-501-2233. DSHS has expanded staff capacity to process applications over the phone so that you do not need to apply or be interviewed in person.

### WIC

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program provides nutritious food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, health assessments, and referrals. The assistance is for low-income pregnant or nursing mothers, infants, and children up to age 5; however, anyone that is income eligible—including fathers, grandparents, and foster parents—who is taking care of an infant or young child or a pregnant or parenting teen mom can apply for this assistance. WIC benefits are issued on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card and can be used to buy WIC-approved food items at grocery stores and certified retailers. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides cash value vouchers to families on WIC to shop at their local farmers market.

#### *Important changes to WIC:*

- WIC shoppers now have added flexibility when shopping for WIC-approved food items based on what stores have in stock.
- Application for benefits as well as all required appointments to receive benefits can be done remotely during the pandemic.

*To apply for WIC:*

- Call the Help Me Grow WA Hotline at 1-800-322-2588
- Text WIC to 96859
- [Visit Parent Help ResourceFinder](#)

## **School Feeding Programs**

Almost all school districts are operating child feeding programs during the school closures for the rest of the scheduled academic year. Meals are free and available to all children under the age of 18, regardless if the child is a student at the school. Schools provide up to two meals (breakfast and lunch) per child per day during the school week.

*Important changes to school feeding programs:*

- Schools can now provide multiple days worth of meals with one visit.
- A parent or guardian of a child can pick up meals without the presence of the child.

Visit [United Way of King County's statewide meals page](#) to find out how to access meals for your child.

## **Senior Home Delivered Meals**

Seniors over the age of 60 may be able to have prepared meals delivered to their homes.

Visit [Community Living Connections](#) or call 1-855-567-0252 to connect with a senior center near you.

## **Disaster Cash Assistance Program**

This is a program for all income-eligible Washingtonians who are not eligible for other cash assistance programs, including adults that don't have children and adults that don't have a Social Security Number. Disaster cash assistance benefits will be issued for one month in a 12-month period and can be used to pay for utilities, rent, hygiene products, food, or other essentials. Benefits can be from \$363 for a single individual to a max. \$1121 for a household of 8 or more people. To apply, visit [Washington Connection](#) and call 877-501-2233 to complete the required interview or call that number to do the whole application process.