

Partnering with Families to Build Economic Security During Emergencies



How Head Start Can Help You Access Food Assistance

Families may experience food shortages during an emergency or natural disaster. Head Start and Early Head Start **family services staff and home visitors** can partner with you to:

- Access food assistance
- Track your progress and celebrate your successes



Spotlight On: Food Assistance

Access Food Assistance

Your family services staff or home visitor can give you information about different types of food assistance programs. They can help you determine your eligibility and help you apply.

- **WIC and SNAP:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help you meet your food needs.
 - The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 adds \$500 million to the WIC program to cover increases in program participation.
 - The federal Food and Nutrition Service is approving states to provide increased benefits to SNAP households that normally receive less than the maximum benefit, to address temporary food needs.

- Use the WIC State Waivers and the SNAP State Waivers online search tools to learn about waivers in your state to address temporary family food needs.
- Learn more about WIC and SNAP, and how to apply for benefits, on the Food and Nutrition Service website.
- **Food banks:** Use the Find Your Local Food Bank online tool to locate food banks and meal distribution programs in your community.
- **National Hunger Hotline:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Hunger Hotline provides information about meal sites, food banks, and other local social services across the country. For English, call 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479). For Spanish, call 1-877-8-HAMBRE (1-877-842-6273).
- **Food shopping tools:** The USDA has online tools to help families set budgets for healthy meals, plan meals, and read food labels. You can find the tools on ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- **Food assistance for families with school-aged children:** The USDA is coordinating several efforts that may apply to older siblings of children in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
 - The Meals-to-You program provides families in rural school districts with boxes that contain 20 nutritious meals—10 breakfasts and 10 lunches—for children who would normally receive breakfast and lunch at school over two weeks. Contact your school district to see if it is participating in this program.
 - Use the Meals for Kids Site Finder online tool to find free meals for your school-aged children. This website has information on nearby school meal distribution sites, as well as hours of operation and contact information. The service is available in English and Spanish.
 - The Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program gives some households with school-aged children an EBT card that families can use to buy food. The P-EBT card has the value of the free breakfast and lunch reimbursement rates for the days that schools are closed. Schools must close for at least five consecutive days for families to receive a P-EBT card. For your family to be eligible, your children must receive free or reduced-price school meals and attend schools that offer free school meals. The P-EBT program is currently available in 19 states. You can learn more on the Food and Nutrition Service website.

Track Your Progress and Celebrate Your Successes

Family services staff and home visitors can follow up with you about your progress toward accessing food assistance. Celebrate your successes!

Other Family Tip Sheets about building your family's economic security during emergencies are available. Check with your Head Start and Early Head Start family services staff or home visitor.

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0014 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and Office of Child Care, by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

For more information about this resource, please contact us:
PFCE@ecetta.info | 1-866-763-6481



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement