I’M HOMELESS AND HUNGRY. WHAT HELP IS OUT THERE FOR ME?

In Louisiana, you should be able to get food stamps if you:

- Live in Louisiana;
- Haven’t just finished serving time for a felony;
- Don’t have any warrants; and
- Have a low enough income.

HOW DO I GET FOOD STAMPS?

Apply at any Office of Family Support. The one closest to downtown New Orleans is at 1661 Canal St. (near South Claiborne). You do not need an appointment, but be prepared to have to wait in line. You may apply and then be asked to come back again later, as well. If you are asked to come back, be sure to leave a signed application, however. If you get SSI, you can also apply at any Social Security office.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING WITH ME TO APPLY?

If you have it, you should bring proof of how much money you have coming in. But, even if you don’t have any papers, go ahead and apply. The state will help you get what you need if you ask them for help and can’t get it yourself.

DO I NEED A PHOTO ID TO APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS?

NO. You do need some form of identification, but a letter from a homeless shelter or other service provider will do. If told that you need photo ID to apply, please get in touch with New Orleans Legal Assistance right away.

DO I NEED AN ADDRESS TO APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS?

You need to have some place where the food stamp program can send you mail. This can be a shelter or day center, though. You do not need a home address.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET MY FOOD STAMPS?

The state has certain time limits for how long it can take to give you food stamps. If you are really broke, however, and have less than $100 in monthly income and less than $150 in cash or other assets, you should be eligible for expedited food stamps. You should get those within a week. You need to make sure to tell the worker that you want expedited food stamps if you fall into this category. Even if you can’t get expedited food stamps, the state must still make a decision in 60 days.

I WORK A LITTLE BIT WHEN I CAN; CAN I STILL GET FOOD STAMPS?

If you have a low enough income, you can get food stamps even if you have money coming in. How much you can be earning depends on how large your family is and what sort of expenses you have. It is always best to apply even if you are not sure you will qualify.

HOW MUCH WILL I GET?

This also varies with how much money you have coming in and how large your family is. If you have income but still qualify, it could be as little as $10. If you have a large family, it could be hundreds of dollars. The state has to send you a letter saying how it figured out how much you’re getting. If you would like to make sure that you’re getting everything that you should, contact New Orleans Legal Assistance or Southeast La. Legal Services for help.

I’M ON THE STREETS AND DON’T HAVE A KITCHEN OR A FRIDGE. WHAT GOOD ARE FOOD STAMPS TO ME?

Food stamps can be used at some homeless shelters for meals. Also, you can buy food like bread or peanut butter, which you can eat without needing a fridge or a kitchen. You cannot usually use food stamps to get pre-prepared foods, though.
THE STATE DENIED MY FOOD STAMPS OR ISN'T GIVING ME ALL THAT I SHOULD GET. WHAT CAN I DO?

Appeal any decision that the food stamps office makes if you think the decision was wrong. To appeal the decision, you only get 90 days from the day that the food stamp office sent the decision to you. Appeal by either going to any Office of Family Support and asking or getting legal help to file an appeal. If you appeal within 10 days, you can keep getting your food stamps while you are waiting on your hearing. But, if you lose, you will have to pay the state back.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I APPEAL?

You will get a hearing with an Administrative Law Judge. These hearings are held at the Office of Family Support. The state will explain why the state did what it did. You can ask questions and explain why you think that the state was wrong. You have a right to have someone help you with your hearing. You can get this help by contacting New Orleans Legal Assistance.

FREE LEGAL SERVICES

Southeast La. Legal Services

New Orleans and Jefferson
New Orleans Legal Assistance
(an office of SLLS)
1010 Common, Ste. 1400 Annex
New Orleans, LA 70112
504-529-1000
(call ext. 252 or 254 for Homeless Legal Advocacy Project, or come in on the first or third Wednesday of any month from 1-3 p.m). For food stamps emergencies or deadlines, come in anytime between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.

St. Bernard/Plaquemines
9001 W. Judge Perez Drive, #203
Chalmette, LA 70043
504-277-8211

Covington
2100 N. Highway 190, Ste. B
Covington, LA 70434
985-893-0076

Hammond
1200 Derek Drive, Ste. 100
Hammond, LA 70403
985-345-2130

Information in this brochure cannot replace the advice of a lawyer.

This brochure is for information only and is not legal advice. Legal advice depends on the specific facts of each case. This information cannot be guaranteed to be up-to-date, as laws change. Talk with a lawyer if you have a legal problem.

HOMELESS AND HUNGRY: GETTING FOOD STAMPS WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A HOME

QUESTIONs AND ANSWERS

Produced by Homeless Legal Advocacy Project, New Orleans Legal Assistance (an office of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services) 1010 Common, Ste. 1400 Annex