

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

(Last updated January 2023)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) requires most households receiving benefits to demonstrate that they continue to meet program eligibility criteria every six months. This process is called recertification. As part of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement for recertification was suspended. In July 2022, this requirement was reinstated, and the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) must request that SNAP households provide documentation to review eligibility. To better address questions the public may have about processing these recertifications, DPA has compiled frequently asked questions (FAQs). DPA may update the following FAQs on its website at:

<https://health.alaska.gov/dpa>.

I have sent my application to DPA using the contact information provided. How do I know it was received by DPA?

If you sent your application by email, check your email's "Sent Items" folder for verification the email was sent. If by fax, you may have received confirmation that your fax went through. You can be fairly confident that if you mailed or placed your application in the local office drop box DPA will receive it. You can also drop off your application at the local office during business hours. You can obtain proof of mailing if needed using certified mail, or receipt of a date-stamped copy by the local office (a picture from a smart phone could also provide proof).

At this time, DPA does not send notice that applications have been received, but DPA will begin sending "application received" notices in early 2023. For case status you can call 1-800-478-7778 and select the option for the Program Information Line. This automated system is not staffed. It asks you questions, and you use the keypad on your phone to answer. The system can tell you if your application has been received, once division staff have entered it into the system. It is best to continue checking the automated system for case status instead of asking for a staff member to check your status, because using staff time may slow down processing.

Should I send my application again if I do not hear back from DPA?

Please only send if there are changes you need to report to DPA since you completed the recertification form. The division must review and process all applications received, including duplicate applications, which can create unnecessary work for DPA staff and slow down processing.

How do I know the status of my application if I have a case number?

You can check your case status using the Virtual Contact Center at 1-800-478-7778. Select the option for the Program Information Line if you have a case number. This automated system is not staffed. It asks

you questions, and you use the keypad on your phone to answer. Because information in this system depends on data entry by DPA staff, it might take a few weeks until the system can tell you that your application was received.

I need to talk to a staff member but do not want to wait on the phone?

You can leave a message or try again on a different day when the wait time to speak with DPA staff is shorter. Call volumes are usually lower in the middle of the week or month. You can also contact DPA staff via email (hss.dpa.offices@alaska.gov) or fax (1-888-269-6520). DPA will give notice as needed when there is action on your case. We're continuously looking for ways to improve our phone services to provide the best customer service for people using it. If you have a suggestion for improvement, please share them with DPA staff or email them to hss.dpa.offices@alaska.gov.

What is the Virtual Contact Center's (VCC) call schedule?

The VCC is currently open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The VCC will only accept calls when they can be answered within the business day. The schedule and options on the queue may vary. The VCC is open on Wednesdays but limits services to focus on processing. Menu options and tips for contacting the VCC on Wednesdays are available online at:

<https://health.alaska.gov/dpa/Documents/dpa/press/VCC-Wednesday-Schedule-Notice.pdf>.

Options currently include:

- To check the status of your case using the automated system, please select option 1. The automated system cannot provide a status for all Medicaid case, childcare or WIC.
- If you are calling to apply for Medicaid and have an urgent need, please select option 2.
- If you are receiving Medicaid and need to add a newborn, report a pregnancy, or need an address updated for travel, please select option 3.
- If you are trying to reach a long-term care or childcare worker and do not know the extension, please select option 4.
- If you have general questions, need a new quest card, Medicaid coupon, P-EBT card or need to change your address, please select option 7.
- To report suspected fraud, please press 8.

What are the application processing timelines?

Applications are worked within 30 calendar days of receipt unless they are entitled to expedited service, which are worked within 7 calendar days of receipt. Expedited service is available on new applications and application forms to households with less than \$150 in anticipated monthly gross countable income and with countable liquid resources that do not exceed \$100. It is also available on new applications and application forms when households who have combined countable monthly gross income and liquid resources that are less than the household's monthly shelter expenses. Due to the delay DPA has a dedicated team working overdue applications and recertifications.

When do benefits start and end?

If eligible, a household's certification period begins the first day of the month when they applied, but benefits start the date the application was received by DPA. Eligibility ends on the last day of the month of a certification period. For example, if you first applied on January 15 and were determined eligible, your eligibility notice would state that January benefits are prorated from January 15 to 31, and your certification period begins on January 1 and ends on June 30 (assuming a 6-month certification period).

When will I know to recertify for SNAP?

After a household is determined eligible, a certification period is assigned and stated in their eligibility notice. Households in which all household members are elderly or disabled that have no earned income may be given a certification period of up to 24 months. All other households will be given a certification period of 6 months.

DPA will send notice approximately 45 days in advance of the end of a certification period requesting a recertification application by the 15th of the following month to avoid a delay in benefits. For example, your recertification notice and application is sent to your mailing address on May 16. It asks for return of your completed recertification application by June 15 to avoid a delay in July benefits. It states that benefits will end on June 30 if a recertification application is not received.

What can I do to help improve the processing time on my application?

Submit your application as soon as possible to request assistance. Applications are processed in the order they are received. Be sure to provide all the required information in your application to avoid having the application pended we may request additional information in order to determine eligibility. Tips to avoid a pended application this are available on DPA's [website](#).

Can you give me a timeline for how soon I will get my benefits?

Unfortunately, DPA cannot provide a specific time for processing because each case is unique, and teams dedicated to processing different types of cases may vary. There is a dedicated team focused on processing the oldest applications first. General information about current processing times are available online on [DPA's News & Updates](#). DPA is committed to processing applications within the 30-day timeframe.

Is there any way to get more help? My situation is urgent.

SNAP is a supplemental food program. Like foodbanks (<https://foodbankofalaska.org/>), SNAP gives extra help when people need it, but the program is not expected to cover all of a person's or family's food needs. If you are experiencing food insecurities, please reach out to Alaska 2-1-1 for other community resources that may be able to help each person's unique needs. Simply dial 2-1-1 on a phone or visit <https://alaska211.org/>.

My case closed because I did not send my recertification application in on time. What can I do?

You can use the recertification application or [Eligibility Review Form \(GEN-72\)](#) within 30 days of closure to request that benefits continue. After 30 days you will need to reapply using the Application for Services [\(GEN-50\(c\)\) Form](#).

I sent pended items to hss.dpa.offices@alaska.gov and haven't heard back yet?

Pended cases are usually scheduled for processing within 10 days. If needed, you can call the VCC at 1-800-478-7778 for a status of the items.