

Food Stamp Talking Points

If someone is looking for more information:

"FSP is the new name for Food Stamps. It is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food."

"The name isn't the only thing that's changed about Food Stamps. Now all money is deposited monthly onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card. In Maryland, it's called an Independence Card. Because this works like a debit card, it is much more safe, easy, and private."

"You can use your Independence EBT card at most grocery stores as well as many corner stores and farmers' markets."

If someone seems hesitant but not rejecting you outright:

"1 in 6 Marylanders struggle to feed themselves each month. Food Stamps can help you buy enough healthy food."

"Even if you think you're not eligible or you have been ineligible in the past, Food Stamps rules have changed in recent years. You might be eligible now."

If someone says they "don't accept welfare" or that families who need it more should get it:

"Food Stamps benefits are not a handout—you've earned this (much like social security)—and you deserve to use it when you need it."

"Food Stamps have no cap; as many people as are eligible can receive benefits. This means that if you receive benefits, you're not taking away from others."

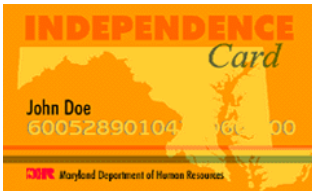
If someone is a recent immigrant or an undocumented resident:

"In general, only citizens or legal immigrants who have been in the country for 5 years can get Food Stamps. Some other groups are eligible too."

"If you are not a citizen, but your children were born in the U.S. (so they are citizens), you can still apply for Food Stamps on their behalf."

"Applying for Food Stamps won't affect your immigration status or make you a 'public charge'."





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If someone is skeptical about whether it's worth it to apply:

"The minimum monthly benefit has recently increased to \$16 per household, which adds up to \$192 per year. The average monthly benefit is \$130 per person."

"Special rules may help you receive higher benefits. You may be able to get more benefits if you:

- Pay high medical or housing bills for someone in the house who is elderly (60+) or disabled
- Pay for the care of a dependent child or disabled adult in the house

If you prescreen someone and they appear to not be eligible:

"It doesn't hurt to try and apply; it's possible that I'm missing something while prescreening you. Plus, rules are always changing, so even if it's true that you aren't eligible now, you might be eligible in the near future."

If someone is already enrolled in Food Stamps:

"Are you aware that you have to submit mid-cert forms and recertify?"

"You can now do this online at www.marylandsail.org."

"You will get a letter in the mail about mid-certification. It is important that you answer the questions honestly and that you quickly mail it back. This is so you continue to receive benefits."

If someone needs food immediately:

"If you are in special need because of very low income, you may receive benefits within 7 days, if eligible. Otherwise, it may take up to 30 days to receive Food Stamps."

Refer to additional resources sheet.

