

Supporting students through SNAP verification during the COVID-19 Pandemic Q&A

Q: How is this different from the info a student may provide on <https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/>?

A: MNbenefits.gov is DHS's new online application where anyone can apply for the 9 public assistance programs that we have available in Minnesota, SNAP being one of them. The 2646 form is a tool that can be used when students don't have any other documentation readily available to verify their student status. This is a financial aid information form that is used to verify a student's income eligibility with the county. The process, from application to verification, is outlined below -

The eligibility determination for SNAP has several internal screens. The mnbenefits.mn.gov form is a very short online application that students (or anyone) can use to apply for any of the 9 public assistance programs available in the state. That form, once filled out, is submitted to the student's county or tribal agency (based on where the student lives). From there, the student is contacted for an interview with a county or tribal worker. During the interview, the county or tribal worker will determine that the applicant is a student and request verification of the student's income and enrollment status. That's where we get into more of the details that we discuss in the training.

Q: Where can I find a blank copy of the 2646 (Financial Aid Information) form?

A: <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-2646-ENG>

Q: We have 3/4 time (9-11) credits, can that option be added in the "attends" line?

A: Yes, DHS will work on adding a ¾ time enrollment option to the form.

Q: I have had county workers in the past reach out to me regarding "expense type" as they did not understand that is reflecting their "budget" rather than actual expenses. Is it possible to change or add in the word budget for a clearer understanding?

A: Yes, DHS will work on clarifying this in the SNAP for Students Handbook (currently in progress).

Q: We have a financial aid summary which we pull from our systems and send it directly to the student. This information includes the same information the form is requesting. Can that be used in lieu of filling out this form?

A: Yes, as long as the summary identifies all of the income and expenses that are listed on the form. Other methods of providing income information are also acceptable, as long as the income and expense categories are the same.

Q: We note on the form that we're using estimated information if completing before aid apply since we have students in early August (athletic programs) that apply. If we waited until well into September when aid applies, wouldn't that be detrimental to the student? Or should we also be waiting?

A: You may use estimated information as long as you identify on the form that the information is ESTIMATED. Another option, for students who may be in urgent need of food assistance, is postponing verification in order to meet time requirements for issuing SNAP benefits as soon as possible. County and tribal workers have the ability to postpone verification for 30 days (and then another 30 days pending) so that the applicant can receive expedited benefits within 5 business days. If the applicant does not provide income verification within that 30-60 day time frame (or if they are deemed ineligible for benefits based on the information provided to the county, their SNAP benefits will end at that time.

Q: What happens when a student's file isn't completed yet and we cannot fill out that info right away, does that impact their SNAP? And could we do to help in those cases?

A: If the student meets the criteria to have their case expedited, they can receive benefits prior to verification taking place. See above.

Q: Students would be required to report changes in financial aid to the county, correct? Because [it is considered a] change in income?

A: Yes. During the interview, SNAP applicants will be told by the county/tribal worker what changes they need to report. The student will need to verify their income at least every 6 months in order to maintain their SNAP benefits

If you have additional questions related to SNAP for college students during the COVID-19 pandemic, please contact: karen.nelsen-huss@state.mn.us