

Georgia Department of Human Resources

FOOD STAMPS IN GEORGIA

The Food Stamps program is a federally funded program that helps low-income households improve their nutrition. In Georgia, it is administered by the Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). Last year, food stamp benefits added \$1.33 billion to Georgia's economy.

In 1998, Georgia began using electronic benefit transfer replacing food stamp coupons with a debit card. Food stamp recipients now use their EBT cards at food retailers to purchase food items.

Who qualifies?

Households whose gross income is no more than 130 percent of the federal poverty level and who have no more than \$2,000 in assets (or \$3,000 for households with an elderly member).

Able-bodied recipients between the ages of 18 and 50 with no dependent children can receive food stamps for only three months within a three-year period. They can continue to receive food stamps only if they find employment or participate in a work activity. Georgia was one of 37 other states to be granted a waiver from the three-month rule for counties or cities with more than 10 percent unemployment or with a "labor surplus," which means there are more people looking for jobs than there are jobs.

What do food stamps buy?

Food stamp benefits can be used at stores to buy any kind of food, but they cannot be used for alcohol, tobacco, soap or any other non-food item except vegetable garden seeds. People who are homeless or elderly or disabled may use food stamps to buy prepared meals. It is illegal for recipients to use benefits for anything other than purchasing food. DHR's Office of Investigative Services investigates cases of misuse of food stamps or overpayment.

The stats:

- People receiving food stamps, August 2002.....632,155 (278,731 households)
- Average size of household receiving food stamps.....2.3 people

Racial/ethnic breakdown:

Blacks	64.4 percent	Hispanic	1.6 percent
Whites	33.1 percent	Asian	.7 percent

- Average number of households and individuals receiving food stamps each month:

	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002
Households	296,442	260,030	261,220	236,329	235,162	260,778
People	721,969	638,926	587,476	516,609	515,538	576,522

- Total value of food stamps issued in FY 2002.....\$578.4 million (federal funds only)
- Average monthly food stamp allowance per person.....\$83.61
- Maximum monthly benefit for household of three.....\$356