

About FloridaLawHelp.org

FloridaLawHelp.org is administered by Florida Legal Services, Inc. and is produced in cooperation with Pro Bono Net and the legal services organizations and government agencies throughout Florida and the United States.



The Florida Bar Foundation, with *Interest on Trust Accounts* program funding, provides support for this service.

This brochure is for general education only. It is not intended to be used to solve *individual problems*. If you have specific questions, see an attorney.



FloridaLawHelp.org

To locate your local legal aid or legal services office, please visit us on the web at

www.floridalawhelp.org

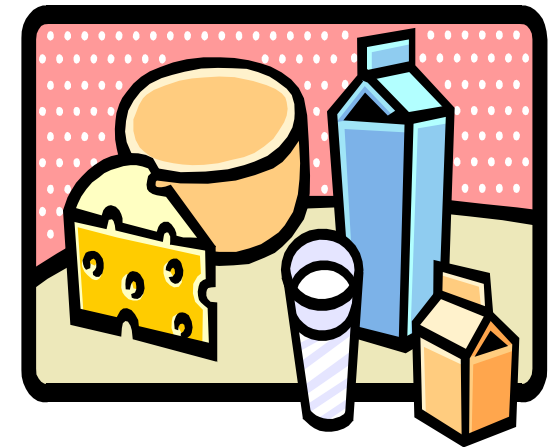
Your local legal aid or legal services office can be located through either the “Find Local Help” or “Directory” links.

If you don’t have access to the internet, consult your local Directory Assistance for the number of the legal aid or legal services office nearest to you.

Special thanks to Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc.

FloridaLawHelp.org

What you need to know about



FOOD STAMPS

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Food Stamp Program is to help low-income people buy nutritious food. The amount of Food Stamps you can receive is based on your household size, income and assets. Food Stamps can be used to buy food but cannot be used to buy alcohol, pet food, soap, toothpaste, toilet paper or hot food from a store's deli.



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET YOUR FOOD STAMPS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF FILING YOUR APPLICATION

- File your application the **SAME DAY** you go to your local Department of Children and Families (DCF) or community partner's office (a community partner is a private organization or church that may be closer to you and that can assist you with applying for Food Stamps).

If your family includes someone who is ineligible for Food Stamps because of immigration status, the rest of your family can apply for Food Stamps without including that individual.

If you have little or no income, ask for "EXPEDITED SERVICE." DCF has seven (7) calendar days to get you "emergency" Food Stamps if you qualify. The seven-day period begins from the date you apply.

- If you have trouble getting the required verification of house Hold size, income, or assets, submit a written request to DCF for help. If DCF is unable to assist you, contact your local legal services office for help with verification.
- Keep a copy of any documents you submit to DCF and note the date on it to verify that you submitted those documents in a timely manner. Keep a copy of the verification you submit for your own records.

Knowing your Food Stamp rights can help you and your family get better treatment.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR STAMPS ARE REDUCED OR CUT OFF

- You have the right to continue getting the same amount of Food Stamps IF you file an appeal within **TEN (10) DAYS** of the DCF notice stating there will be a reduction or termination of your Food Stamps. You have 10 days from the *date on the notice* to file your appeal.
- **PUT YOUR REQUEST FOR A FAIR HEARING APPEAL IN WRITING AND KEEP A COPY.** You should immediately contact your local legal services office for assistance with the fair hearing.
- **DO NOT SIGN A WAIVER FOR ANY REASON UNLESS AN ATTORNEY OR PARALEGAL ADVISES YOU TO DO SO.**

WHEN YOU ARE RECERTIFIED

- You should keep getting Food Stamps on time IF you file your recertification application by the 15th of the last month your Food Stamps are scheduled to end.
- If you have trouble getting the required verification, notify your caseworker. Contact your local legal services office if you continue to have problems.