



Updated September 2025

## North Carolina Immigrant Eligibility for Nutrition Programs

### What is SNAP or Food Stamps?

**SNAP (food stamps) is a program that provides benefits on a card each month which can only be spent on certain grocery items.**

### Who Qualifies for Food Stamps?

To qualify for food stamps:

- You must reside in North Carolina.
- You must have income below certain limits, and
- If you are an adult who is under the age of 55 who does not live with children, you must be working or meet an exception to the work requirement.
  - Certain pregnant women and children with incomes over 138% of federal poverty level.
  - Some adults over age 64 if they have low income and few assets.

More information can be found [HERE](#).

### Can I receive SNAP (food stamps) if I am not a citizen?

Yes, but you must have an eligible immigration status to qualify for SNAP (food stamps). The chart on the next page shows which noncitizens can be eligible for SNAP. Since Congress changed the law in July 2025, the categories of immigrants who can be eligible for SNAP are very limited.

### Do I need a Social Security Number (SSN) to Receive SNAP?

People who are applying for food stamps for themselves must show that they have a Social Security Number (SSN) or have applied for one. People who do not have an SSN

should leave the question blank and say, "I am not applying for benefits for myself."

That person will not receive SNAP benefits for himself or herself. The SNAP program **cannot deny SNAP benefits to other eligible members of the household because one person does not provide an SSN.**

### Does the SNAP program share my information?

First, if you are not applying for SNAP benefits for yourself (only for other family members), you do not have to provide any immigration information about yourself. The SNAP program should not ask your immigration status if you are not applying for SNAP for yourself. Second, the law prohibits sharing personal information with immigration officials about people who use government-funded health or social services. But under the Trump administration, that information may sometimes be shared with immigration enforcement, even if that's against the law. This helpful guidance explains more: [bit.ly/dataprivacy-eng](https://bit.ly/dataprivacy-eng)

### What is WIC and who qualifies?

The Women, Infant, and Children's Nutrition Program (WIC) provides nutritional support to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and children.

To qualify for WIC, you must show that you reside in North Carolina, and you have income below certain limits.

WIC is available to:

- people who are pregnant
- breastfeeding mothers up to 1 year after the birth, and
- infants and children up to age five.

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### What are the school lunch/breakfast program and SUN Bucks, and who qualifies?

Free/reduced price school lunch and breakfast programs provide lunches and breakfasts to children in public schools and some (but not all) private and charter schools. To qualify for the free or reduced cost school lunch/breakfast program, you must show that you reside in North Carolina, and you have income below certain limits.

SUN Bucks provides a one-time payment of \$120 for summer food assistance to children who also qualify for free/reduced price school lunch or food stamps. More info is [here](#).

### Can I receive WIC, school lunch/breakfast, or SUN Bucks if I am not a citizen?

Yes. The WIC Program, school lunch/breakfast, and SUN Bucks programs in North Carolina are available to everyone, with or without current lawful immigration status.

### Do I need a Social Security Number (SSN) to receive WIC, school lunch/breakfast, or SUN Bucks?

No. If the application asks for an SSN, leave it blank.

### Do WIC, school lunch/breakfast, or SUN Bucks programs share my information?

No. As of September 2025, there has been no information about the federal government sharing information from these programs with any other agency, and such information should be protected by law.

### U.S. Citizen Family Members of Immigrants

U.S. citizen children and family members of immigrants are eligible for any/all public benefit programs if they meet all other eligibility criteria. It does not matter what the immigration status of their family members is.

### Public Charge Rule

Many immigrants have heard that they should not apply for benefits programs because they will have difficulty getting a green card in the future. This rule does not include any nutrition programs. If you are eligible, you or your family members can use SNAP, WIC, school lunch/breakfast, and

SUN Bucks programs with no impact on your immigration application.

### How do I apply for nutrition programs?

#### SNAP:

- Contact or visit your local county DSS office, or
- Apply online at: <https://epass.nc.gov>

#### WIC:

- Visit your local WIC agency (which is often the public health department), or
- Apply online at: <https://bit.ly/NC-wic>

#### Free/reduced price school lunch

- Speak to your child's school or visit your child's school district website for an online application

#### SUN Bucks

- Children participating in other nutrition programs will be automatically enrolled. If you are not automatically enrolled, ask your child's school about enrollment or apply online here: <https://bit.ly/SUNBucksapp>



# North Carolina Immigrant Eligibility for Nutrition Programs

IMMIGRATION STATUS  This is not an exhaustive list of immigration statuses eligible for SNAP (Food Stamps or nutrition programs) <sup>1</sup>	VERIFICATION DOCUMENTS  Many types of immigration documents are acceptable to prove immigration status. Potential verification documents are not limited to those provided in the list below.  Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) and Green Cards/LPR Cards both contain letter and number codes in the center of the card that help identify the cardholder's immigration status category.	SNAP			WIC	FREE/ REDUCED PRICE LUNCH AND BREAK- FAST, SUN BUCKS
		Children under 18	Disabled Adults, Elderly Adults, Pregnant Adults, Adults with Dependents	Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents		
Afghani Parolees Admitted 07/31/21–09/30/23 (and their spouses or children paroled in at later dates)	Form I-94 indicating "parole," "212(d)(5)," SI or SQ; EAD marked C11; passport marked OAW, OAR, or PAR	X	X	X	✓	✓
American Indian born in Canada	Tribal membership card	✓	✓	▲	✓	✓
Asylee	EAD marked A5 OR order granting Asylum OR I-551 marked "AS"	X	X	X	✓	✓
Battered Alien (Violence Against Women Act) (includes approved and certain pending VAWA applications)	Form I-797 Notice of Action (reference to pending I-130/I-360) OR EAD marked C9, C10, C14 or C31.	X	X	X	✓	✓
Citizens of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau" (COFA Migrants)	EAD Marked A8 or I-94 marked "COFA"	✓	✓	▲	✓	✓
Cuban-Haitian Entrant	EAD marked C8 or C11 OR I-551 card coded CA, CU, HA, or HB	✓	✓	▲	✓	✓
Granted Withholding of Deportation or Removal	EAD marked A10 or C10	X	X	X	✓	✓
Deferred Action	EAD marked C14 or I-797 approval notice	X	X	X	✓	✓
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	EAD marked C33	X	X	X	✓	✓
Iraqi or Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIV)	Iraqi or Afghan Passport with an IV visa marked SIV, CPR, or SIP	X	X	X	✓	✓
Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) <sup>1</sup>	"Green Card" (Form I-551). The "category code" in the middle helps identify how the cardholder obtained his or her green card.	✓	★	△	✓	✓
Non-Immigrant Visa Holder (includes student visas, tourist visas, work visas, U [victim of crime] visas and many more)	Form I-94 or passport indicating admission with nonimmigrant visa OR EAD marked A6, A7, A9, A15, A19, A20, C1, C3, C4, C5, C6, C17, C21, C26	X	X	X	✓	✓
Order of Supervision (with employment authorization)	EAD marked C18	X	X	X	✓	✓
Parolees Admitted for Less than One Year	Form I-94 indicating "parole" or "212(d)(5)," EAD marked A4 or C11	X	X	X	✓	✓
Parolees Admitted for More than One Year (Nicaraguans, Venezuelans are included; see different rules for Ukraine, Afghanistan)	Form I-94 indicating "parole" or "212(d)(5)," EAD marked A4 or C11	X	X	X	✓	✓
Refugee	EAD marked A3 or A4 OR refugee travel document (I-571)	X	X	X	✓	✓
Temporary Protected Status (TPS)	EAD marked A12 OR I-797 approval notice	X	X	X	✓	✓
Trafficking Victim/ "T" Visa	EAD marked A16 OR I-797 approval notice OR I-551 coded ST6	X	X	X	✓	✓
Trafficking Survivors – Derivative beneficiaries	I-797 Notice of Action indicating T2, T3, T4 or T5 status OR I-766 EAD marked C25 OR I-551 coded ST7, ST8, ST 9 or ST0	X	X	X	✓	✓
Ukrainian Parolees Admitted 2/24/22 – 09/30/23 (and their spouses or children paroled in at later dates)	Form I-94 indicating "parole" or "212(d)(5)," EAD marked C11; passport marked U4U or UHP	X	X	X	✓	✓
Undocumented immigrants/immigrants with no current legal status	Not applicable (N/A)	X	X	X	✓	✓
APPLICANTS						
Applicant for Asylum or withholding of deportation/removal	I-797 showing pending I-589 or CAT OR I-766 EAD coded C8	X	X	X	✓	✓
Applicant for Adjustment to LPR Status w/Approved Visa	Receipt showing pending I-485 OR I-688B of I-766 EAD coded C8	X	X	X	✓	✓
Applicant for Temporary Protected Status	Receipt or notice showing filing or pending status of Form I-821 OR Form I-688B or I-766 EAD coded C19	X	X	X	✓	✓
Applicant for Cancellation of Removal or Suspension of Deportation with employment authorization (not through VAWA)	Receipt or notice showing filing Form EOIR-40, EOIR-42, or I-881 OR Form I-688B or I-766 EAD coded C10	X	X	X	✓	✓
Applicant for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status	Form I-797 Notice of Action Special Immigrant Juvenile Approval Notice OR I-551 coded "SL6"	X	X	X	✓	✓

<sup>1</sup> Legal Permanent Residents ("LPRs") who come through either family or employment pathways must generally wait 5 years for eligibility for SNAP. LPRs who came originally as refugees, asylees, certain parolees from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Cuba, and Haiti (and some others as indicated on this chart) do not have to wait 5 years. Immigrant children who are Legal Permanent Residents, refugees, asylees, and trafficking victims (and some other categories indicated on this chart) do not have to wait 5 years for SNAP.

- ✓ = Eligible, no five-year bar or any waiting period required
- ★ = Eligible, only after 5 year waiting period
- X = Not eligible

- ▲ = Eligible, with no five-year waiting period, work requirements may apply
- △ = Eligible only after a five-year waiting period, work requirements may apply