

## Food Help for Your Health

### *Crossword Puzzle Article*

In these hard times, the choice between food and medicine can be a real problem. When it comes to your health, don't bargain.

The Food Stamp Program can help buy the food you need to stay healthy. With new changes, there may be more than 1 million older (age 60+) New Yorkers eligible for benefits – are you?

- ❖ As an entitlement program, if you are eligible, you will get monthly benefits to buy the food you like at local stores or farmers' markets.
- ❖ **Households with an older adult get an average of about \$90 per month in food stamp benefits. The lowest monthly benefit is \$16.**

### **Do I qualify for food stamps?**

Qualifying for food stamps, and the benefit amount you can receive, depends on things such as income, expenses, and resources. Here are a few of the special rules to help more people 60+ qualify for food stamps:

- Couples may have monthly incomes up to \$2,428 before their savings are counted. For older singles, the amount is \$1,805 per month.
- *All* food stamp households who live in subsidized housing and do not pay for their own heating/cooling costs can get more benefits (averaging \$50-\$60/month more) while getting an added HEAP benefit.
- Your out-of-pocket medical costs (over \$35/month) may help raise your benefit amount.

### **How do people get and use their benefits?**

People use benefits with a plastic Electronic Benefit Transfer card (called an EBT card) at the checkout counter. They may use all of their food stamp benefits each month or save them (up to 12 months) for other shopping trips. Benefits are deposited into a household's account every month. Those who have a fixed income may only have to recertify their benefits every two years.

## **How can New York's Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) help?**

In order to help more eligible people get the food stamp benefits they need, New York's Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) is in our county (and many other areas around the state) to help people sign up.

- ❖ NOEP Coordinators are trained to help people apply. This helps make sure you will get the full amount of the monthly benefits you are eligible for.
- ❖ NOEPs understand the importance of trust and privacy, and will guide you through a prescreening in a friendly and supportive way.
- ❖ NOEPs may help you gather and copy your original documents, fill out the application, arrange a phone interview instead of an office visit, and check that proper rules are being applied to your case. NOEPs may even make home visits and help with translation if needed.

Local NOEPs offer free and private conversations to help you. If you or someone you know is having trouble paying for the food they need, food stamp benefits may be a big help! Even if you've applied before, new changes make now the time to try again. Visit [www.foodhelpny.org](http://www.foodhelpny.org) or call 1-800-865-5542 to find a NOEP Coordinator near you.

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