



## **Hurricane Harvey- Talking Points**

### **Disaster Food Benefits**

- 1. What is D-SNAP? (Updated 9/6)**
- 2. What is the difference between D-SNAP and expedited SNAP? (Updated 9/8)**
- 3. When will D-SNAP be available in my county? (Updated 9/6)**
- 4. What emergency food benefits are available? (Updated 9/5)**
- 5. How can I get hot foods using my EBT card? (Updated 9/1)**
- 6. How can I get a replacement EBT card? (Updated 9/6)**
- 7. Are replacement benefits available for August? (Updated 9/5)**
- 8. Are September SNAP benefits available early? (Updated 9/5)**
- 9. My EBT card is showing a different balance than I was expecting. Can I use it? (Updated 9/5)**
- 10. What if I need to renew my SNAP benefits? (Updated 9/1)**
- 11. How will the mail to and from HHSC be affected by the hurricane? (Updated 9/8)**

### **1. What is D-SNAP?**

- The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) offers short-term food assistance benefits to families affected by a disaster.
- Eligible households receive one month of benefits, equivalent to the maximum amount of benefits normally issued to a SNAP household of their size.
- D-SNAP is designed to help when people return to their homes and have access to electricity and grocery stores.
- D-SNAP is only available for those who are not currently receiving regular SNAP benefits.
- Benefits are issued via an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card, called a Lone Star Card, which can be used to purchase food at any SNAP-authorized retailer (such as grocery stores or convenience stores).
- D-SNAP must be federally approved and is only available in the counties that receive a federal disaster declaration as they begin recovery efforts.
  - ◇ Counties included in the "Individual Assistance" federal disaster declaration are Aransas, Austin, Bastrop, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Karnes, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Liberty,



Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Wharton

## 2. What is the difference between Disaster-SNAP and expedited/emergency SNAP?

- D-SNAP

- ◇ The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) offers a one-time benefit for food assistance to families recovering from the disaster.
- ◇ D-SNAP can only be approved for counties that have received the federal disaster declaration as they begin recovery efforts. • Counties included in this federal disaster declaration are Aransas, Austin, Bastrop, Bee, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Hardin, Harris, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Karnes, Kleberg, Lavaca, Lee, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Wharton
- ◇ To be eligible, you must:
  - \* be from a county that has been declared a federal disaster area.
  - \* have experienced a loss of income, destruction of your home OR a disaster-related expense such as temporary shelter or home repairs.
  - \* not currently get regular SNAP food benefits.
- ◇ Once D-SNAP is approved, you must apply in person at a designated D-SNAP location. You will not be able to apply on YourTexasBenefits.com.

- Expedited/Emergency SNAP

- ◇ Regular, non-disaster SNAP benefits are available to applicants statewide, and provide an ongoing monthly benefit to eligible households to help people buy food and other eligible items they need for good health.
- ◇ Expedited/Emergency SNAP is not a specialized program related to disasters. It is expedited processing of applications for regular SNAP benefits that is provided to applicants that meet certain criteria.
- ◇ To be eligible for expedited processing for regular, non-disaster SNAP benefits, one of the following conditions must apply:
  - \* Resources of \$100 or less, and monthly income less than \$150.
  - \* Combined resources and monthly income are less than the most recent monthly expenses for rent/mortgage and utilities.
  - \* A family includes a migrant or seasonal farm worker who has \$100 or less in resources and very little income or income has terminated.



- ◇ Those who qualify for expedited processing must also meet eligibility qualifications, such as income and citizenship criteria.
- ◇ You can apply for SNAP online at [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com). If you do not have access to a computer or mobile device, you can call 2-1-1 (or 1-877-541-7905) and select Option 2 to find other options.

### **3. When will D-SNAP be available in my county?**

- HHS is working with federal and local partners to implement disaster-related SNAP food benefits (D-SNAP). When D-SNAP is approved, we will let you know how and when to apply through HHS communications channels (HHS website, 2-1-1, HHS social media, [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com)).

### **4. What emergency food benefits are available?**

- HHS is working with federal and local partners to implement disaster-related SNAP food benefits (D-SNAP). When D-SNAP is approved, we will let you know how and when to apply through HHS communications channels (HHS website, 2-1-1, HHS social media, [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com)).
- If you currently receive SNAP, you are able to temporarily purchase hot foods and hot food products from any SNAP retailer (such as grocery stores or convenience stores) in Texas, with the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards (Lone Star Cards) through September 30, 2017. Hot foods or hot food products include prepared foods from a grocery store deli or a rotisserie chicken.
- If you need food or water now (short term food resources), you can call 2-1-1 and select Option 5 to find places where you can get it, such as food pantries or disaster distribution centers in your area.

### **5. How can I get hot foods using my EBT card?**

- You can use your EBT (Lone Star) card to temporarily purchase hot foods and hot food products from any SNAP retailer (such as grocery stores or convenience stores) in Texas through September 30, 2017.
- Retailers that normally accept SNAP benefits were told to allow purchases of hot and prepared foods.
- If you tried to purchase hot or prepared food items at one of these retailers and were denied, please send the name and location of the retailer to Lone Star Business Services by calling (512) 206-4748 or by emailing [LoneStar@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:LoneStar@hhsc.state.tx.us).

### **6. How can I get a replacement Lone Star card?**

- If you get SNAP or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and need a replacement EBT card (Lone Star Card) due to the card being lost or destroyed, you can get a new card three ways.
  - ◇ If you do not have access to mail, you can get a new card at a local HHS office. You can call 2-1-1 and select Option 2 to find the closest office to you.



- ◇ If you have access to mail, you can call the Lone Star Help Desk at 1-800-777-7EBT (1-800-777-7328) and a new card will be mailed to you.
- ◇ If you are in the Houston area and need a new card, you can go to the Houston Food Bank at 535 Portwall Street in Houston. Cards may be picked up at the food bank on Sunday and Monday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

## **7. Are replacement benefits available for August?**

- If you get SNAP and live in one of the 58 counties affected by Hurricane Harvey, a percentage of your August benefits have been replaced to account for food you lost due to the disaster.
- Replacement benefits were automatically added to your EBT card on September 2, 2017. You do not need to take any action to receive the replacement benefits.
- To check the replacement amounts, you can visit [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) or call the Lone Star Help Desk at 1-800-777-7EBT (1-800-777-7328).
- If you get SNAP and your benefits were issued on or after August 26, 2017, you must report your food loss to get replacement benefits. You will need to complete Form H1855, Affidavit for Nonreceipt or Destroyed Food Stamp Benefits by September 30, 2017, to have them replaced. The form is available online and in local offices. Once completed, the signed form can be mailed or returned to a local office. To receive replacement benefits immediately, you must go to a local office. You can call 2-1-1 and select Option 2 to find the closest open local office to you.

## **8. Are September SNAP benefits available early?**

- SNAP benefits were issued early for clients in counties affected by Hurricane Harvey. If you live in any of the 58 counties declared a state of disaster by the governor, you received your September benefits on September 1, even if that is not when you normally receive your benefits.
- You do not need to take any action to receive your benefits early. You can use these benefits once they are on your EBT (Lone Star) card at any SNAP retailer (such as grocery stores or convenience stores) in Texas.
- To check your benefits, you can visit [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) or call the Lone Star Help Desk at 1-800-777-7EBT (1-800-777-7328).
- The change affects October benefits for some clients as well. If you normally receive your benefits on October 12, 13 or 15, your October benefits will be issued on October 11. November benefit issuance dates will not be affected.

## **9. My EBT card is showing a different balance than I was expecting. Can I use it?**

- SNAP benefits were issued early for clients in counties affected by Hurricane Harvey. If you live in any of the 58 counties declared a state of disaster by the governor, you received your September benefits on September 1, even if that is not when you normally receive your benefits.



- You also may have had a percentage of your August benefits replaced if your August SNAP benefits were issued on or before August 25, 2017.
  - ◊ Replacement benefits were automatically added to your EBT card on September 2, 2017.
- You can use these benefits once they are loaded on your EBT (Lone Star) card at any SNAP retailer (such as grocery stores or convenience stores) in Texas.
- To check your benefits, you can visit [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) or call the Lone Star Help Desk at 1-800-777-7EBT (1-800-777-7328).

### **10. What if I need to renew my SNAP benefits?**

- If you are living in one of the 58 counties affected and were supposed to renew your SNAP benefits in August, September or October, you will have your certification periods automatically extended for six months.
- You do not need to take any action at this time to receive this extension.
- You will receive a notice when it is time to renew your benefits.
- You can use [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) or the Your Texas Benefits mobile app to manage your benefits case and to update HHS of any address changes. You can sign up for electronic notices to stay informed about your case so you do not miss information while mail delivery is disrupted or you are not able to receive mail.

### **11. How will the mail to and from HHS be affected by the hurricane?**

- Disruptions to mail service will affect incoming and outgoing mail in the coming weeks in the Houston area and East Texas.
- When possible, you should submit documents using the Your Texas Benefits mobile app or [YourTexasBenefits.com](http://YourTexasBenefits.com) to avoid potential delays. They can also be faxed to 1-877-447-2839.
- Mail that was sent to HHSC but not received before the storm may not be delivered until the week of September 11.
- Outgoing mail from HHS will also experience delays.