



## Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

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### **The Minnesota Food Assistance Program**

The Minnesota Food Assistance Program (MFAP) was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1998 in response to federal law changes which made certain noncitizens ineligible for federally funded food support. The Minnesota Food Assistance Program provides state-funded food assistance to legal noncitizens age 50 or older who do not qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps or Food Support) because of their citizenship status. Funding the deficiency request will assist approximately 500 cases.

#### **Eligibility**

To qualify, **all** of the following requirements must be met:

- Be eligible based on all SNAP criteria, except for the U.S. citizenship requirement
- Be a qualified noncitizen or a noncitizen lawfully residing in the United States
- Live in Minnesota
- Not be enrolled in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Have household income at or below 165 percent of the federal poverty guideline (\$19,421 for a household of 1, 2015 Federal Poverty Guidelines)

The program follows all of the policies and procedures of SNAP except for rules that make noncitizens ineligible. Income limits and deductions are the same as those used in SNAP.

#### **Benefits**

Benefits for the Minnesota Food Assistance Program are the same as SNAP. The amount of monthly benefits a household can get is based on the income, expenses and number of people in the household. The amount is the same that people receive if they were eligible for federal SNAP. Cost-of-living adjustments are made to SNAP benefits every October. The most recent cost of living adjustment was 2.7 percent. Benefits are issued through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

- Benefits for a household of one can range from \$16 to \$194.
- Average monthly benefit per case in 2014 was \$174.
- Average age of person on the program is 64
- Most recipients have been in the country less than five years.
- In November, about 40 percent of people were from African countries (Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia), the remaining are from other countries.

#### **Funding**

Current base funding for the program is \$816,000 per year. Expenditure projections for 2015 are expected to be \$246,000 above the base funding. Current funding is expected to run out in March, with not enough to cover costs beginning in April, 2015. The increase requested is based on historical data that shows an increase in the caseload and in the average monthly payment.