

Food Stamps

OVERVIEW

What is it?

A federal program that provides a monthly Food Stamp allotment that may be used to purchase food. The Food Stamp program is an entitlement program, so all eligible individuals and households can receive assistance.

Who is it for?

Individuals and families who meet financial and other eligibility requirements.

Where are applications taken?

Applications are taken at county Departments of Social Services. Decisions on applications should be made in 30 days.

INTRODUCTION

The Food Stamp program is the primary, government-sponsored program designed to improve the nutrition of low-income individuals and families. The federal government determines virtually all of the program rules and provides almost all of the funding.

**BENEFITS/
SERVICES**

Food Stamp Benefits

Food Stamp benefits consist of a monthly allotment that may be exchanged for food. The maximum allotment is adjusted each October. The maximum coupon allotments for October 1998 through September 1999 are as follows:

Number in Household	Maximum Monthly Allotment
1	\$ 125
2	230
3	329
4	419
5	497
6	597
7	659
8	754

Each additional person add \$94

A Food Stamp unit's allotment is calculated by multiplying the unit's net monthly income by 30 percent. This amount (rounded up) is then subtracted from the maximum food stamp allotment (see above). The difference is the Food Stamp Unit's

monthly food stamp amount. Thus, for example, a family of four with \$800 in net monthly income will have a monthly allotment of \$179. ($\$800 \times .30 = 240$. $\$419$ maximum allotment for a family of four - $\$240 = \179 .) The minimum food stamp allotment that any eligible household will receive is \$10. In the first month, the monthly food stamp allotment will be prorated from the date of application.

Food Stamp benefits may be used to purchase most foods at participating stores. They may not be used to purchase tobacco, pet food, paper products, soap products, cooked foods, or alcoholic beverages. Residents at shelters for battered women may be eligible to use Food Stamp benefits to pay for their meals, and food stamp benefits can be used at a limited number of restaurants to purchase prepared foods for individuals who are homeless.

Issuance

Food Stamps are issued in four different ways, depending on the county in which the recipient lives. In some counties, food stamps are mailed directly to eligible households. In a few counties, an ATP (Authorized to Participate) card is sent in the mail. This card must be taken to an issuance center and exchanged for Food Stamps. The issuance center may be a bank or other designated center. Some counties offer on-line issuance. In these counties, the coupons are obtained from the county Department of Social Services.

Counties are converting to electronic benefit (EBT) cards to issue food stamp benefits. These cards are like ATM bank cards, and can be used at grocery stores. The grocery store will deduct the amount of groceries directly from the card, using an electronic scanning device. Counties will provide training on the cards prior to issuance. All counties will be issuing benefits through the EBT cards by June 1999.

Replacement of Food Stamps

If a household did not receive the Food Stamps or the ATP card in the mail, they can be replaced by the Department of Social Services. Food Stamps or ATP cards that were received but thereafter destroyed in a disaster (such as flood, hurricane, fire, etc.) or mutilated (in the washing machine) can be replaced. Food purchased with Food Stamps but destroyed in a disaster may also be replaced. Stolen ATP cards may also be replaced, but stolen Food Stamps will not be.

APPLICATIONS

Normal Processing Procedures

Applications are taken at county Departments of Social Services. Some counties have Food Stamp outreach offices as well. Persons who live in households consisting only of SSI (Supplemental Security Income) applicants or recipients may apply for Food Stamps at the Social Security Administration Office.

An adult member of the household or an authorized representative of a household may file an application. An applicant must be permitted to apply the day he/she appears at the office. This is important because benefits are prorated from the day of application. (An authorized representative is someone who does not live in the household but agrees to act for the household). Disabled persons may be able to

apply by phone or can request a DSS worker to come to their home to fill out an application.

The Department is required to process the application in 30 days, unless the processing is delayed by the household (i.e., by failing to provide the information needed to process the application). A household that has delayed the application in the first 30 days, but that brings in the needed information within the next 30 days, will have their application approved, but benefits will begin with the second 30 days. If the county is at fault for delaying the application, the benefits must be retroactive to the day of application.

Expedited Processing/Emergency Food Stamp

Some households are entitled to have their applications processed within seven calendar days (called “emergency” food stamps). To be eligible for emergency food stamps, a household must:

- Have liquid resources of not more than \$100 and countable gross monthly income of not more than \$150; or
- Be a migrant or seasonal farm worker with not more than \$100 in liquid assets and without an ongoing source of income (Note: strict eligibility rules apply to immigrants, see Personal Eligibility section below); or
- Have liquid resources and a monthly gross income of less than the household’s monthly rent or mortgage, and utilities.

What to Bring

The applicant should bring as many documents as possible when he/she files an application to help expedite the eligibility determination process. Some of the information likely to be requested includes:

- Proof of identify;
- Past four weeks pay stubs of anyone in the household who is working, or a statement of wages from employers;
- Social Security or SSI award letters;
- Statements of annuity or pension income;
- Statement of income from any other source, such as Veterans benefits, Worker’s Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, child support, alimony, rentals, etc.;
- Rent/mortgage and utility bills or receipts;
- Social Security number or application for each household member; and
- Bank statements.

The household should not delay in applying for food stamps even if they lack the information listed above. Applicants have the primary responsibility to supply the necessary documents, but those who need help gathering the necessary information can request assistance from the Department of Social Services. It is important to start the application process, because when eligibility is finally determined, benefits will be paid back to the date the application was filed.

Certification Period

Food stamps are provided each month throughout a “certification period.” This period can be from three to 12 months, depending on the likelihood that the household’s circumstances will change. The household will be notified prior to the end of the certification period, so that the household may make an appointment and be re-certified. The re-certification process is basically the same as the initial application process, but the department will only need to re-verify items that may have changed (such as income).

Most households with fluctuating income have three-month re-certification periods. Families are mailed a quarterly reporting form, which must be sent back to the Department of Social Services (along with any necessary documentation). Households subject to this quarterly re-certification process will be required to attend a face-to-face interview once a year.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Personal Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Food Stamps, members of the household must be residents of North Carolina, US citizens (or meet some of the specific eligibility criteria for immigrants), and meet certain income, resource and work requirements. Able bodied adults with no children are only eligible for Food Stamps for three months in a 36 month period, unless the person lives in a county that has received a waiver of these requirements or unless they meet work requirements.

Household Definition:

Food stamps are provided to an individual or group of individuals who purchase and prepare meals together. A person who receives Food Stamps or a group of people who receive Food Stamps is called a “Food Stamp Unit.” The composition of a Food Stamp Unit is very important for two reasons: (1) the income and resources of everyone in the unit is counted in determining eligibility, and (2) the amount of benefits allowed varies based on household size, allowing a larger benefit per person in smaller households.

People living under the same roof who do not purchase and prepare food together can be separate Food Stamp Units, except for the situations noted below.

Mandatory Food Stamp Units:

The following people must be in the same Food Stamp Unit if they live together, even if they do not purchase and prepare their food together:

- Children under 18 living with an adult who exercises parental control over the children;
- Children ages 19 through 21 living with a parent who receives Food Stamps (Adult children age 22 and over living with parents can be separate Food Stamp Units if they can prove that they purchase and prepare their food separately and that they are married and living with their spouses or have children);

- Spouses; or
- Siblings, unless one sibling has a minor child or children, or unless both siblings are over age 21.

Other people living under the same roof who do not purchase and prepare food together can be considered a separate Food Stamp household. In addition, under certain circumstances, elderly (60 years of age or older) or disabled persons can be eligible as a separate household even if they purchase and prepare meals with others.

Note: It is almost always better to have multiple households because the combined food stamps of the multiple units is almost always more than for one household.

Non-Unit Members

Non-unit members are individuals who cannot be considered part of the Food Stamp unit. Generally, the income and resources of non-unit members will not be counted in determining the eligibility of the Food Stamp Unit. However, the income and resources of non-unit members who are disqualified from participating will be counted (see Deemed Income, below). These individuals include:

- Individuals who are roomers,
- Individuals who are students (see below),
- Individuals disqualified from participation due to an intentional program violation,
- Individuals who are currently disqualified for work registration requirements or for transferring resources,
- Individuals who are the principal wage earners for the Food Stamp Unit who are disqualified for voluntarily quitting employment,
- Individuals who do not meet citizenship/alien status requirements, and
- Individuals who fail or refuse to cooperate with Social Security number enumeration requirements.

In some cases, non-unit members may be eligible as separate households.

Students

A student is someone who is age 18 through 49 (inclusive) who is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education. A student is generally ineligible for Food Stamps unless he or she is:

- Employed a minimum of 20 hours per week in paid employment;
- Self-employed a minimum of 20 hours per week and earning at least the minimum wage;
- Responsible for the care of a dependent Food Stamp unit member under age six;
- The parent or person exercising parental control over a dependent Food Stamp unit member under age 12 when there is no other parent or person exercising parental control in the home;
- Responsible for the care of a dependent food stamp unit members who is between the ages of 6 and 12 if adequate child care is not available;

- Receiving Work First payments;
- Assigned to an institution of higher education through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or a Food Stamp Employment and Training program;
- Participating in an on-the-job training program; or
- Working in a state or federally financed work-study program during the regular school year.

Residency

A household must live in the county in which it applies. There is no requirement that a person have a mailing address or have lived in the county for any minimum length of time. Homeless individuals and families are eligible, including those who spend time at shelters for the homeless, and those who are staying temporarily with family or friends.

Citizenship/Immigration Status

The welfare reform bill that was signed into law on August 22, 1996 made most immigrants ineligible for Food Stamps benefits. Although there are some exceptions, many noncitizen children with disabilities will no longer be able to receive Food Stamp benefits.

There are several groups who can qualify for Food Stamps. These include:

- Certain children of permanent resident aliens, if the parents have a substantial work history in the US (must have “40 quarters” of qualifying work);
- Unmarried dependent children (under age 21) of US armed forces veterans who were honorably discharged or active duty military personnel;
- Refugees, asylees, those granted withholding of deportation, Cuban/Haitain entrants and Amerasians for their first 7 years after admission to the US;
- American Indians born in Canada and other tribal members born outside the US Members of Hmong/Laotian tribes, their spouses, widows and unmarried dependent children are also eligible; or
- Qualified immigrants (including legal permanent residents) who were in the US on August 22, 1996 and who were either disabled or who become disabled at a later date, who are younger than 18 or who are older than 65. Although these individuals were initially cut off by the welfare reform bill, they were later made eligible by the Balanced Budget Act which was passed in August 1997.

While the immigrant requirements prevent certain immigrants from receiving Food Stamps, it does not prevent others living with an ineligible alien from receiving Food Stamps.

Able-Bodied Adults

Able-bodied adults who are between the ages of 18 and 49 may only receive Food Stamps for three months out of a 36-month period. This restriction does not apply if the adult:

- Is working 20 hours a week (or 80 hours a month), or is engaging in a variety of allowable work-related activities for the same amount of time (such as employment and training, workfare, Job Training Partnership Act, community-service, etc.);
- Is pregnant or disabled; or
- Cares for a dependent child under the age of 18 who is a member of the Food Stamp Unit.

In addition, able-bodied adults in certain economically distressed counties are exempt from this restriction. The following counties are exempt from the able-bodied adults work requirements:

Bertie	Jones
Camden	Northampton
Caswell	Pamlico
Currituck	Perquimans
Gates	Polk
Graham	Swain
Greene	Tyrrell
Halifax	Warren
Hyde	

Income Eligibility

Food Stamp households without a member age 60 or older must meet both a “gross monthly income” test and a “net monthly income” test to be eligible for benefits. Those households with a member age 60 or older need only meet the net monthly income test. The income limits usually change each October.

The figures in effect from October 1998 through September 1999 are as follows:

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Gross Income	Maximum Monthly Net Income
1	\$ 873	\$ 671
2	1,176	905
3	1,479	1,138
4	1,783	1,371
5	2,086	1,605
6	2,389	1,838
7	2,693	2,071
8	2,996	2,305
Each additional person	add \$304	add \$234

Countable Income

The following are the major types of income that are counted to determine Food Stamp eligibility:

- Wages from any type of work;
- Income from self-employment, minus operating expenses;
- Rent from tenants or boarders;
- Work First payments;
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Social Security benefits;
- Veterans benefits;
- Any type of public or private disability benefit;
- Any type of public or private retirement benefit;
- Unemployment Insurance;
- Workers' Compensation;
- Cash contributions;
- Income from investments;
- Child support or alimony; and
- Income from an immigrant's sponsor (see below).

Excluded Income

The following are the major types of income that are not counted:

- Non-cash benefits (such as Medicaid or housing subsidies);
- Emergency Assistance payments;
- Vendor payments (i.e., payments made directly to a landlord or utility company by some third party);
- Earned Income Tax Credit;
- Federal income tax refunds;
- Section 8 or HUD housing utility allowances;
- Irregular or infrequent income (no more than \$30 per calendar quarter);
- Non-recurring lump sum payments (which are treated as reserve);
- Loans, except for student loans and grants which are exempt only to the extent that they are used to pay for tuition, mandatory fees, and other educational expenses;
- Reimbursements for expenses other than regular living expenses, such as transportation and child care;
- Money received by a representative payee for a non-household member;
- Earnings of children, provided the child attends school at least half-time or is involved in job training through JTPA;
- Non-recurring lump sum payments (which are treated as reserve);
- Other income excluded by law, such as relocation assistance or energy assistance; or
- Work First Benefit Diversion Payments.

Deemed Income

Income from certain individuals is counted as available to the family, even though they are not considered part of the Food Stamp Unit. Different rules apply, depending on the reason the person is not included in the Food Stamp Unit.

- *Individuals who have been disqualified for an intentional program violation.* The person's countable gross income is counted in determining the Food Stamp Unit's income eligibility and amount of benefits.
- *Individuals who have been disqualified for failing to comply with Employment and Training requirements.* The person's countable gross income is counted in determining the Food Stamp Unit's income eligibility and amount of benefits.
- *Individuals who fail to meet the Social Security number enumeration requirements.* All of this person's gross income, minus a pro-rated amount for him or herself, is counted in determining the Food Stamp Unit's income eligibility and amount of benefits.
- *Individuals who fail to meet the citizenship/alien status requirements.* All of this person's gross income, minus a pro-rated amount for him or herself, is counted in determining the Food Stamp Unit's income eligibility and amount of benefits.
- *Immigrant's sponsor.* The full amount of income of a sponsor and his or her spouse (if living together) is countable income for the eligible immigrant's Food Stamp Unit, unless the immigrant becomes a citizen or the immigrant works 40 qualifying quarters.

Net Income Test

The net income of a household is determined by calculating the combined gross income and subtracting certain deductions. The deductions are:

- Standard deduction of \$134 per household;
- 20% of earned income;
- Medical expenses over \$35 per month for individuals who are elderly or disabled;
- Dependent care costs up to \$200 per month per dependent under age 2 and \$175 per month per dependent age 2 and older;
- Shelter and utility costs that exceed 50% of the household's remaining income after the deductions listed above, up to a maximum of \$275 (up until September 30, 2000). Household with elderly or disabled members are not limited by the cap; and
- Child support paid to children outside the household.

Resource Eligibility

Resources are cash or assets available to the household to meet its needs. A household's resources may not exceed \$3,000 for households with at least one member who is 60 years or older, or \$2,000 for other households. If all the members of the Food Stamp Unit receive either SSI or Work First money, they automatically meet the resource test.

The resources of all household members, even those who are disqualified, must be counted.

Countable Resources

The following are the major types of assets that are counted:

- Cash on hand;
- Money in savings or checking accounts, except the amount that represents monthly income;
- Savings bonds, certificates of deposit, stocks, bonds, and the like;
- Accessible retirement accounts (regardless of whether there is a penalty for early withdrawal);
- Lump sum payments;
- The value of real property and certain interest in real property not otherwise excluded;
- The equity value of unlicensed motor vehicles (the value after any loans are subtracted);
- The value in excess of \$4,650 of any vehicle not otherwise excluded;
- The value of revocable burial plans; and
- The value of promissory notes.

Excluded Resources

The following items are the major types of assets that are not counted:

- The home and surrounding property;
- Household goods and personal effects;
- One licensed vehicle, up to a fair market value of \$4,650, regardless of liens;
- Any income-producing vehicle, property or tools;
- Any vehicle used to transport a disabled household member;
- Any vehicle used for long distance travel necessary for a household member's employment;
- Any vehicle used to carry fuel or water if the household lacks piped-in heating fuel or water;
- Cash value of life insurance;
- Inaccessible retirement accounts, pension plans, and the like;
- Nonsalable interests in real property;
- Real property that the owner is attempting to sell;
- Federal disaster assistance, relocation assistance or reparation payments; and
- The resources of an incorporated business.

If the countable resources of all the household members exceeds the limits, the household is not eligible.

Evaluation of Resources

The Department of Social Services will assign a value to the resources, using standard methods, such as the tax value for real property or the value in the "blue book" for cars. If the Food Stamp applicant does not think the value assigned accurately represents the

value of his/her asset, he/she can rebut the value by producing other evidence of value. For example, a used car salesman might be able to provide an opinion that a car is worth less than the book value because of its poor condition. A real estate agent may be able to offer an opinion that real property is not worth the tax value because of the interest of co-owners who are unwilling to sell or other impediments to sale. The applicant or his/her advocate can present written documents rebutting the value, and if they are not accepted, ask for a hearing.

Jointly-owned Resources

If a resource is owned jointly with one or more other individuals, an assessment will be done to determine how much of the resource will be counted to the Food Stamp Unit. If all of the joint owners are in the same Food Stamp Unit, the entire value counts. If any-one outside the unit owns a portion, the portion of the resource owned by the Food Stamp recipient is counted. Usually, a jointly-owned resource is divided equally among all the owners. If a legally binding agreement specifies a different division, that agreement is honored. If the Food Stamp recipient cannot sell his or her share of the resource without the consent of the other owners, and the owners will not give their consent, the resource is not counted.

Transfer of Resource Penalties

A Food Stamp Unit will suffer a penalty if a member gave away resources in the three months prior to the application for the purpose of establishing eligibility for Food Stamps. The penalty is a period of time during which the unit may not receive Food Stamps. The length of the penalty varies from one to twelve months, depending on the value of the transferred resource. The twelve-month penalty is imposed for transfers of assets worth \$5,000 or more.

No penalty will be imposed if the unit can show:

- The transfer was for a purpose other than establishing Food Stamp eligibility;
- The transfer was of an excluded resource;
- The transfer was to another member of the Food Stamp Unit;
- The transfer was for fair market value; or
- The resource, if retained, would not have made the unit ineligible.

WORK REQUIREMENTS

Employment and Training

Persons age 60 or older are not required to register for work. Other persons in a Food Stamp household age 16 through 59 must register for the Employment and Training Program (E&T) and accept any suitable job referred by the Employment Security Commission, unless the household member is exempt. The Employment and Training program operates in the 79 counties not covered by Workfare (4 counties) or under the county-wide exemption from the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents work requirements (17 counties). In addition to job search and job placement activities, participants in E&T can participate in education and training activities through community colleges and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

Exemptions

The following people are exempt from work registration:

- Those who are physically or mentally incapable of holding a job;
- Work First (formerly AFDC) applicants and recipients;
- Unemployment insurance applicants and recipients;
- Those who must provide care to a dependent child under the age of six or to an incapacitated household member;
- Those who are already working and receiving earnings equal to at least the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours per week;
- Participants in a drug or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation program;
- Students enrolled in school at least on a half-time basis;
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers (this exemption does not apply to able bodied adults without dependents);
- Those who lack access to transportation (this exemption does not apply to able bodied adults without dependents);
- Homeless individuals (this exemption does not apply to able bodied adults without dependents);
- Household members experiencing an emergency (this exemption does not apply to able bodied adults without dependents); and
- Those who are not “job ready” as determined by the Employment Security Commission interviewer (this exemption does not apply to able bodied adults without dependents).

Geographically Remote Counties

Individuals in geographically remote counties are not required to register with the Employment Security Commission for work. The same 17 counties excluded from the Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents work requirements are considered geographically remote.

Workfare

In some counties, certain Food Stamp recipients must participate in Workfare in order to receive Food Stamps. Non-exempt recipients are required to work in unpaid employment. The maximum number of hours which the Food Stamp recipient is required to work is determined by dividing the family’s coupon allotment by the federal minimum wage. The Workfare program operates in four counties: Alamance, Davie, Mitchell and Surry.

GROUNDS FOR DISQUALIFI- CATION

Food Stamp Units may be subject to sanctions and a loss of Food Stamps for failing to meet certain program rules. Sometimes the whole household will be sanctioned, and at other times, only the individual that failed to comply is sanctioned.

The *whole household* may be disqualified if:

- A household member is on strike, unless the household was eligible prior to the strike;

- A unit member gave away a resource within three months prior to the application for purpose of becoming eligible for Food Stamps. Disqualification is from one to twelve months, depending on the value of the gift; or
- The household fails to complete the recertification process when required by the county Department of Social Services.

Individuals in an eligible Food Stamp Unit may be disqualified for the following reasons:

- The individual has been found to have committed an intentional program violation (which generally means the person committed fraud in order to obtain more Food Stamps than he or she was entitled to receive). This will disqualify the violator only, not the whole household, although the whole household may be required to pay back the extra Food Stamps. An individual disqualified for an intentional program violation will lose benefits for one year for the first offense, two years for a second offense, and permanently for any offenses thereafter.
- The individual fails to provide or verify his/her Social Security number without good cause.
- The individual is an ineligible immigrant.
- Failure to meet work requirements.
 - Individuals who fail to meet work requirements listed below may be subject to a disqualification period.
 - Anyone in the household, ages 18-59 who voluntarily quits a job of more than 20 hours a week without good cause. Good cause includes loss of child care, the loss of transportation, etc.
 - Anyone in the household who is required to register for work, or refuses to cooperate to get a job.
 - Non-exempt recipient fails or refuses to comply with Workfare registration or work requirements.

A Food Stamp recipient will be disqualified for one month, or until he or she “cures” the non-compliance, whichever is later, for the first work-related program violation. The second violation carries a three month penalty, and the third and subsequent violation carries a six month penalty (or until the problem is fixed, whichever is longer).

When an individual is disqualified, his or her income and resources continue to count in determining whether the other household members are eligible and the amount of Food Stamps they will receive.

APPEALS

Any Department of Social Services’ decision regarding a unit’s Food Stamps may be appealed. A family may, for example, appeal a denial, reduction or termination of benefits, the amount of benefits awarded, or the imposition of a sanction. An appeal gives the Food Stamp unit an opportunity to show that the DSS worker misunderstood the facts or incorrectly applied the rules or law to the facts.

A Food Stamp Unit may request an appeal within 90 days of the disputed decision. A Food Stamp unit whose benefits were terminated may have those benefits continued pending the hearing by requesting an appeal within ten days. An appeal may be requested either orally or in writing and should be directed to the county Department of Social Services.

The person appealing has the option of initially requesting an informal local conference. This would be helpful if there was a misunderstanding that could be cleared up easily. If the appellant does not request an informal conference, then the first appeal will be a state level hearing.

State Level Hearing

A state level hearing will be conducted by a hearing officer employed by the NC Department of Health and Human Services. The person appealing will be given written notice of the time, date and place of the hearing. It will be held at the county DSS office, probably within three to six weeks of the request. The hearing officer will not have been involved previously in the case.

The person appealing has the right to be represented, either by an attorney or another representative. Either the person appealing or the representative has the right to see the DSS file prior to the hearing. The person appealing will have an opportunity to question the DSS witnesses, produce evidence (both documents and witnesses) and testify in his or her own behalf. In addition, the appellant may be required to answer questions by the county worker or hearing officer. The hearing officer may, upon request, leave the case open to receive additional documentary evidence if a good reason is presented as to why it could not be made available during the hearing.

The state level hearing is, for all practical purposes, the last opportunity the person has to present evidence. Generally, no additional testimony will be taken. Therefore, it is very important to establish all necessary facts at this level.

The hearing officer has 60 days from the date of the request for an appeal to issue a written decision. Appellants who are dissatisfied with the hearing officer's decision can appeal to the Chief Hearing Officer within ten days, or may skip this level and file a petition for judicial review in Superior Court. The petition for judicial review must be filed within 30 days of the time the individual receives the notice of the DHHS decision.

Note: Anyone wishing to file such a petition would be wise to seek the services of an attorney before engaging in such a process. Free legal representation may be available for low income families. See Chapter 32.

NUMBERS SERVED

The average number of people each month who received Food Stamps in North Carolina in FY 1998 was approximately 540,933.

PRIORITIZATION SYSTEM

The Food Stamp program is an entitlement program, so all eligible individuals and families are served.

FINANCING

Food Stamps are financed primarily by the federal government. The federal government pays 100% of the program (Food Stamp) costs, and 50% of the administrative costs. The remaining 50% of the administrative costs are paid by the state/county (depending on whether the state or county incurs the costs).

In FY 1998, the federal government paid \$403,707,792 in food stamp coupons. The total costs for administering the program were \$77,035,471.

ADMINISTRATION The program is administered on the national level by the Food and Nutrition Service of the US Department of Agriculture. The program is administered on the state level by Economic Independence Section, Division of Social Services, NC Department of Health and Human Services and at the local level by county Departments of Social Services.

SOURCES OF LAW

Federal statute:	7 USC 2000 et. seq.
Federal regulations:	7 CFR 271-285
State statute:	NCGS 108A-51 et. seq.
State regulations:	10 NCAC Chapter 30 et. seq.
State policy:	Food Stamp Manual

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Division of Social Services
Economic Independence Section
NC Department of Health and Human Services
325 N. Salisbury St.
Raleigh, NC 27603
919-733-4570

CARELINE: 1-800-662-7030

