

News Release



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Federal action critical to maintaining access to food benefits for Oregonians

SALEM, OR – The Oregon Department of Human Services on Monday submitted a request to the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services to continue the ability to waive eligibility interviews in order to allow the department to have flexibility to meet the needs of Oregonians receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

The department is seeing a surge in SNAP applications as a result of the July 25 expiration of the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program. Nearly 5,800 Oregonians applied for benefits during the first week in August, which is 37 percent higher when compared to the weeks before the supplemental unemployment payments ended.

The department is anticipating continued increases in new applications at the same time the federal waiver expires and requires current SNAP recipients to recertify their information to keep their benefits.

Current SNAP recipients must re-apply to keep their benefits. Beginning in September, approximately 45,000 Oregonians are expected to re-apply to continue their benefits. The waiver would help the department manage this increasing workload as the increase in both new and continuing applications puts additional strain on the workforce.

“In times of crisis, no Oregonian should have to worry about where they can find food for their family. We need the federal government to take immediate action to provide us the with the flexibility we need to get Oregonians benefits to help them through these challenging times,” said Oregon Governor Kate Brown. “Inaction or delay could have an overwhelming effect on our systems for delivering benefits.”

Due to the uncertainty of whether the waiver will continue, the department is taking steps to mitigate these challenges, including redeploying staff from other areas of the agency to process applications and conducting surge hiring to bring additional staff on board.

Since the pandemic, the department has provided nearly \$470 million in food benefits

to over 702,000 Oregonians. Until the recent increase in applications, most Oregonians have received benefits within a few days of their application. The average processing time for applications, except for those with zero income, has increased to about 13 days over the past two weeks because of the higher number of applicants.

“While we are doing everything, we can to maintain a level of customer service that Oregonians expect and depend on, it will be increasingly more challenging absent action from the federal government,” said Fariborz Pakseresht, director of the Department of Human Services. “SNAP and other benefits are designed to help people manage through difficult times – we are committed to looking for creative solutions to ensure these benefits are readily available to Oregonians throughout the pandemic.”

Resources

Search for Oregon Department of Human Services eligibility worker jobs:

https://oregon.wd5.myworkdayjobs.com/SOR_External_Career_Site

Learn how to apply for SNAP and other benefits online or by phone at

<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/COVID-19/Pages/Home.aspx>.

SNAP customers can contact their local Self Sufficiency Program (SSP), Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) or Area Agency on Aging (AAA) office for more information. Find a local office at: [oregon.gov/DHS/Offices/Pages/index.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/Offices/Pages/index.aspx)

Get help identifying Oregon Department of Human Services programs and resources in your community to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, including home-delivered meals: <https://www.adrcoforegon.org/consite/index.php>

For other ways to connect with DHS, contact 211info:

- By calling 2-1-1 from any phone
- Text your zip code to 898211
- By email at help@211info.org
- 211info.org

Find other food resources at needfood.oregon.gov

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