



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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Gov. Whitmer announces expansion of food assistance to many low-income students who are attending college

As state recovers from pandemic, temporary measure allows Michiganders to stay in school while also getting help buying food

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan will expand eligibility for food assistance benefits on Thursday, April 1 so that college students struggling financially during the pandemic can get help buying food and stay in school, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced.

“College students should not have to choose between furthering their education and putting food on the table – especially during a pandemic,” Gov. Whitmer said. “I am pleased that we are able to work with the Biden administration to help college students in Michigan who are working hard to pursue their dreams.”

Under a temporary change approved by the federal government, college students may be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits if their families are estimated to be unable to contribute to their college costs or if their college or university considers them eligible for a federal or state work study program – regardless of whether they are enrolled in such a program. This could make approximately 200,000 more Michigan college students eligible.

Students are considered to have no family contribution to their college expenses if they have an estimated family contribution of \$0 on their federal student aid determination through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students also must attend college at least half-time and meet income and other requirements for food assistance. Prior to the change, college students would not be eligible for food assistance unless they were working 20 hours a week or meet certain exemptions.

“Many Michigan college students lost their jobs due to no fault of their own as a result of the pandemic,” said MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel. “Expanding access to food and making it easier for our residents who are in need to apply for help are priorities of the department. Even before the pandemic, many students struggled to afford enough food while paying for college. These new changes will help students complete their education and reduce their food insecurity.”

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Expanded eligibility will last until 30 days after the expiration of the federal public health emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Benefits could be as much as \$234 per month for college students who buy and prepare their food alone.

Under the federal rules that are temporarily being set aside, college students ages 18-49 who are enrolled in college at least half time are not eligible for SNAP unless they meet certain exemptions, including working an average of 20 hours or more per week, participating in a state or federal work study program, having a disability, or being a parent of a child under age 6. Even if students live at home with parents who qualify for and receive food assistance, they are not counted in the household unless they meet one of the exemptions.

Eligible students will receive Bridge Cards, which are Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards that are similar to debit cards and can be used to buy food at stores, farmers markets and online from Amazon, Walmart and Aldi. A list of participating retailers is available on the [retailer locator website](#).

To be eligible, students must have filed a FAFSA and have documentation of an estimated family contribution of \$0 on their federal student aid determination or eligibility for work study.

College students and others can determine if they are eligible and apply for food assistance at www.michigan.gov/MiBridges.

This is the second action taken by MDHHS during the pandemic to help college students buy food. Working with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, MDHHS last year [expanded food assistance eligibility to many college students enrolled in career and technical education programs](#).

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