

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Human Services Rolls Out DSNAP: Here's What You Need To Know

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The Department of Human Services, with help from federal government officials, rolled out the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Program on Monday, with D.H.S. Commissioner Felicia Blyden announcing that the department served 2,228 individuals territory-wide on the first day.

The Consortium visited two locations (the Cardiac Center at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, and the Seniors Center in Richmond), with reporters noting that while the process was slow during the in-line waiting period, once on the inside, it moved quickly.

The main takeaway was how easy it is to qualify. Once you present a D.H.S. rep with an I.D., you're given a number and a form which must be filled out with responses to the following questions:

- Does your household currently receive SNAP benefits? (If yes, there is no need to apply, as your EBT card will be replenished with your DSNAP funds minus your regular SNAP allotment. For example, if you receive \$100 of regular SNAP and you were to receive \$300 DSNAP, your total DSNAP would be \$200.)
- Was your household living in the disaster area at the time of the disaster?
- Did the disaster damage or destroy your home or self-employment property, delay or reduce or stop your income, cause you to lose food or create any additional expenses for your household?
- Does your household plan to buy food during the disaster benefit period?

You will also be asked about storm preparation expenses, to include protection initiatives and food supplies (you can choose either Irma or Maria); the value of what was lost during the storm (this question is not limited to only food items, but also furniture, clothing, or whatever was lost during the storms); how much cash on hand the household had during the storm; how much money you had access to in your savings or checking account during the storm (most people had no access to their accounts since the banks were shuttered, so be sure to say zero); and how much you think will be the cost to replace your damaged items, among other questions.

You don't have to show proof for none of your claims, although honesty is encouraged (one could serve jail time for lying).

Once approved, you will be given an EBT card on which the funds will be electronically deposited in 72 hours. You are to then call a toll free number (866-884-2868) to activate the card.

Go early. The locations open at 7:00 a.m. and run until 3:00 p.m. weekdays until November 15, although Ms. Blyden said on Monday that the times may be altered to ensure that D.H.S. employees get home by 6:00 p.m.

The locations are:

St. Croix:

Dept. of Human Services Mars Hill Headquarters in Frederiksted

The Cardiac Center at the Juan F. Luis Hospital

The Richmond Senior Center

St. Thomas:

Knud Hansen Complex

The University of the Virgin Islands

Frenchtown Evangelical Church

Tutu Park Mall

St. John:

Dept. of Human Services Multipurpose Building

Feature Image: DSNAP applicants lineup outside the Juan F. Luis Hospital. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

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