

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Food Stamp Benefits For February Now Available, Human Services Says

VIC News / **Published On January 17, 2019 10:58 AM /**

Staff **January 17, 2019**



The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (D.H.S.) has announced that on Wednesday that after 11:00 p.m. the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) February 2019 benefits will be available on the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. All ongoing households to include completed periodic reports, and recertification application approved by January 15 are included in this early issuance, the release said.

SNAP, also called Food Stamp, is among the programs impacted by the partial federal government shutdown.

The early issuance of SNAP benefits pertains to February's allotment and recipients are cautioned that this is not a bonus. As such, the D.H.S. said it will not issue additional benefits in February, and the department urged households budget their benefits responsibly.

D.H.S. said it was otherwise operating normally and continues to process all applications. Clients are therefore encouraged to keep scheduled appointments. Also, anyone who wishes to apply for SNAP benefits are welcomed to visit the D.H.S. offices. In light of the uncertainty of the status of this federal shutdown, the department emphasized caution to SNAP clients and offer the following tips.

- Prepare and eat first the food that already exists in your home.
- Know the amount of SNAP benefits that's available to purchase food.
- Plan meals that will provide the most economical value while meeting basic nutritional needs for the household.
- Make a shopping list and purchase groceries according to plan

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, and the school lunch program that feeds students in the territory's public schools, will be funded through February even as the longest government shutdown in U.S. history continues.

That's according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.), through which SNAP and the school lunch program are funded. There were fears that the programs would run out of money because of the shutdown. However, the Trump administration announced recently that it had come up with a way to fund the more than \$4.8 billion in benefits through February, with the benefits being paid out in mid January — weeks earlier than usually issued.

Acting Deputy Undersecretary at U.S.D.A., Brandon Lipps, said other U.S.D.A. programs will also be funded through February, including food distribution programs on Indian reservations and child nutrition programs, the latter of which includes WIC, which provides nutritional assistance to pregnant women, mothers and babies.

Under the provision, the SNAP program will operate as it normally does and without any lapse in service, but with the earlier Jan. 20 deadline for states to request benefits through a process called early issuance. That process is typically used during natural disasters, Mr. Lipps said, enabling states anticipating hurricanes or other weather events to distribute monthly benefits ahead of time, according to The Times.

Mr. Lipps said the U.S.D.A. is sending letters to all state agencies to explain the process and will issue a blanket waiver of department regulations to allow for the early issuance.

"We don't know of any time this has ever happened," said Hannah Walker speaking to Politico. Ms. Hannah is the senior director of technology and nutrition policy at the Food Marketing Institute, which represents retailers like Kroger, Walmart and Safeway.

According to Politico, grocery retailers across the country are preparing for a potential onslaught of SNAP shoppers beginning next week, and making sure they have enough food stocked and employees on hand to handle the volume. SNAP purchases account for nearly 10 percent of all grocery business in the U.S. each year, according to recent

estimates.

© Viconsortium 2026