

# Disaster Nutrition Assistance Programs

## Child Nutrition Programs During Disaster

Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, can be devastating to communities and require a quick response. Schools, child care centers, and summer sites that operate the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), or the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) can help minimize disruptions to families.

Children in households receiving D-SNAP benefits are eligible for free meals regardless of income. Children identified as homeless by a school or emergency shelter official are also eligible for free meals regardless of income. Eligibility for free meals will continue for the rest of the school year under the NSLP and SBP or for a full year through CACFP or SFSP.

Contact information for State Child Nutrition Programs can be found at:  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm)

## Food Banks and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Food banks are an important resource to help meet the food needs of those affected by emergencies and disasters. For food banks that participate in TEFAP, one effective way to address disaster food needs is to enroll affected individuals and families in this program. Under certain conditions, food banks may also work through their State agency to request approval from FNS to operate a household disaster food distribution program using USDA Foods.

TEFAP and household disaster feeding are two separate and distinct programs that can be used to respond to emergencies and disasters.

Contact information for TEFAP in your State can be found at:  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm)

## Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) During Disaster

While WIC is not designed to be a disaster assistance program or first-response option for disaster survivors, WIC policies allow State agencies flexibility in program design and administration to support continuation of benefits to participants during times of natural or other disasters. WIC State agencies are encouraged to work with FEMA as well as their own State and local emergency services offices to assist participants during a disaster.

Disaster-related participants/evacuees who seek WIC benefits should receive expedited certification processing. Participants/evacuees may be able to use their original WIC checks or vouchers in the State to which they have relocated. The WIC State agency will inform participants if this is the case, usually through a toll-free telephone number and/or other public announcement.

Contact information for State WIC agencies can be found at:  
[www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/statealpha.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/statealpha.htm)

Buying, selling, or otherwise misusing benefits from USDA's nutrition assistance programs is a crime. To report suspected abuse call (800) 424-9121, email: [usda\\_hotline@oig.usda.gov](mailto:usda_hotline@oig.usda.gov), or write the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Inspector General, PO Box 23399, Washington, DC, 20026-3399.

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Food is essential when people find themselves suddenly, and often critically, in need following a storm, earthquake, flood, or other disaster emergency.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) ensures that people have enough nutritious food to eat. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) coordinates with State, local, and voluntary organizations to:

- Provide food for shelters and other mass feeding sites.
- Distribute food packages directly to households in need in limited situations.
- Approve operation of the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP).

As part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Response Framework, FNS provides nutrition assistance to those most affected by a disaster or emergency.

When State agencies that run USDA's nutrition assistance programs notify USDA of the types and quantities of food that relief organizations need for emergency feeding operations, FNS supplies food to organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army for mass feeding or household distribution.

## ● Using USDA Foods During Disasters

- USDA Foods include a variety of canned, fresh, frozen, and dry products including fruits, vegetables, meats, and whole grains.
- Disaster organizations request food through State agencies. States, in turn, notify USDA of the types and quantities of food that relief organizations need.
- USDA does not set aside food specifically for disasters.
- In an emergency, disaster organizations may use existing inventories of USDA Foods stored at State, local, and school warehouses.



## ● Disaster Foods for Mass Feeding Sites

- States have authority to release USDA Foods to disaster relief agencies for mass feeding when the President of the United States issues a major disaster declaration, and in certain other types of emergencies.
- USDA Foods intended for the USDA National School Lunch Program are most often used for mass feeding. Under special circumstances, FNS may provide supplemental infant formula and baby food following a major disaster, in coordination with FEMA and disaster relief organizations, to support the care of children in mass care shelters and emergency congregate care facilities.

## ● Disaster Foods for Direct Distribution to Households

Disaster relief organizations sometimes make USDA Foods available in smaller sizes to individual households for preparation and consumption at home. These are most often obtained from State and recipient agency inventory intended for The Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. States must always get prior approval from FNS to distribute USDA Foods from these programs to disaster survivors.

It is also important to note that a household cannot receive both disaster distribution of USDA Foods and Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits at the same time. States must take reasonable steps to prevent households from participating in both programs.

**Contact information for State food distribution programs can be found at:**  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm)



## ● D-SNAP

Through D-SNAP, FNS is able to quickly offer short-term food assistance benefits to families suffering in the wake of a disaster. Here are some important points to consider about D-SNAP:

- Eligible households receive 1 month of benefits, equivalent to the maximum amount of benefits normally issued to a SNAP household of their size. Benefits are issued via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card, which can be used to purchase food at most grocery stores.
- Through D-SNAP, affected households use a simplified application. Benefits are issued to eligible applicants within 72 hours, speeding assistance to disaster survivors and reducing the administrative burden on State agencies operating in post-disaster conditions.
- FNS approves D-SNAP operations in an affected area under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act when the area has received a Presidential disaster declaration of individual assistance (IA) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- State agencies request FNS approval to operate a D-SNAP within the disaster area. FNS approves program operations for a limited period of time (typically 7 days), during which the State agency may accept D-SNAP applications.

**Contact information for State SNAP Hotlines can be found at:**  
[www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact\\_info/hotlines.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm)