

One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) Frequently Asked Questions on SNAP

January 2026

What is the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA)?

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA), a large budget reconciliation bill, into law.

The OBBBA makes sweeping changes across the U.S. immigration system on enforcement, work authorization, fees, and access to services like Medicaid and SNAP.

What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)?

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), formerly called food stamps, helps low-income households purchase food and groceries. Eligible recipients are issued a debit card that they can use to make food purchases for their household.

Who was eligible for SNAP prior to the enactment of the OBBBA?

Prior to the enactment of the OBBBA, U.S. citizens and certain lawfully present non-citizens were eligible for SNAP benefits if they met other income and non-financial requirements for the program. Lawfully present non-citizen groups eligible for SNAP included **refugees, asylees, victims of trafficking, Amerasians, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant visa (SIV) holders, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens from the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau**.

Undocumented noncitizens were ineligible for SNAP and remain ineligible for SNAP under the OBBBA.

How was SNAP eligibility changed for immigrants under the OBBBA?

The OBBBA amends federal law to shorten the list of eligible populations for SNAP. Under Section 10108 titled “Alien SNAP eligibility,” the only groups who remain eligible for SNAP are:

- U.S. citizens
- Certain U.S. lawful permanent residents
- Cuban and Haitian entrants
- Compact of Free Association citizens from the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau

Section 10108 eliminates text in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that made refugees eligible for SNAP, thus rendering refugees now ineligible for SNAP upon arrival. The rewritten text also excludes other immigrant groups from SNAP eligibility, such as asylees, victims of trafficking, people granted a withholding of removal, survivors of domestic violence who have filed a self-petition under the Violence Against Women Act, and persons granted humanitarian parole for a period of at least one year.

It’s important to note that the OBBBA did not amend a separate law called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)—which establishes which noncitizen groups have a five-year waiting period for accessing benefits.

Last updated:
January 6, 2026

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Are refugees and asylees with lawful permanent residency (a green card) eligible for SNAP?

Yes. Lawful permanent residents (LPRs) or green card holders remain a SNAP-eligible population—and refugees and asylees regularly apply to adjust their status to LPR or green card status. Refugees are required to apply for a green card within one year of arrival.

Guidance released from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on [October 31, 2025](#), created confusion among clients and service providers. The guidance noted exceptions to the five-year waiting period in PRWORA remain the same. At the same time, the guidance incorrectly implied that refugees and asylees who adjust to LPR status are subject to the five-year waiting period. Attorneys general from [New York](#) and [Oregon](#) led a multi-state coalition to push for clarified guidance.

On December 9, 2025, USDA/FNS released [additional information](#) on SNAP implementation. The [memo](#) clarifies that the OBBBA did not change federal law on the five-year waiting period and its exceptions. A [chart with the memo](#) also notes that refugees, asylees, Afghan Special Immigrant Visas, and other groups are not subject to the five-year waiting period. In other words, as those groups are granted green cards, they become immediately eligible for SNAP if they meet other requirements.

This clarification comes at a critical time as states were already updating their own policies that affect whether households can remain certified for SNAP.

What is the expected impact of SNAP eligibility changes?

Even with the favorable guidance issued on December 9, 2025, the SNAP provisions of the OBBBA will increase food and economic insecurity among refugees and other humanitarian entrants.

The OBBBA provision on SNAP eligibility did not occur in isolation. Assistance to lawfully admitted refugees in their initial months and years in the United States is under threat by recent policy changes, such as reduced [Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance \(RCA/RMA\) eligibility](#) or proposals to curtail federal funding for Refugee Support Services (RSS) and Transitional and Medical Services (TAMS) in the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

Furthermore, other sections of the OBBBA make [similar eligibility changes](#) to Medicaid in October 2026 and Medicare in January 2027.

What are ways I can support those impacted?

Donate to food pantries and other mutual aid groups that will need to meet rising community needs. Support [Global Refuge's](#) refugee resettlement and [legal services](#) programs to support the long welcome so that refugees and asylees can reach permanent status and have improved access to services.

Join Global Refuge's advocacy by learning more about [the appropriations developments](#) that affect the work of welcome.