

## Take a Fresh Look: Basic Food Key Messages

Beginning October 1, 2008, the income limits will increase for Basic Food, Washington's food stamp program, allowing more people to access and participate in the program. To inform and educate people about the program changes and benefits, DSHS will incorporate many of the following key messages in a comprehensive marketing and outreach campaign.

### WHAT IS THE BASIC FOOD PROGRAM?

Basic Food is a food and nutrition program for individuals and families who meet income guidelines. Also known as the food stamp program, Basic Food helps people to afford a nutritious diet by providing eligible households an electronic benefits card and monthly benefits to buy food at participating grocery stores.

### THE RULES HAVE CHANGED!

Beginning October 1, 2008, Basic Food will be available to more people in Washington. The gross income limits will increase to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Net income limits and asset limits are also waived under this expansion. If someone applies in September 2008, we will look at eligibility for October at that time.

Household Size	Monthly Income
1	\$1,734
2	\$2,334
3	\$2,934
4	\$3,534

### GETTING BASIC FOOD IS EASIER

- People can apply in person at the local office, by mail, or online at [www.food.wa.gov](http://www.food.wa.gov)
- We can arrange a phone interview anytime an in-office interview is inconvenient and we can help verify any required information
- People can call toll-free at 1-877-514-FOOD (3663) for more information or to request an application
- On average, applications for eligible households are approved in **less than nine days**
- More than half of all applications are approved in **less than six days**
- Fewer reporting requirements and longer eligibility periods make it easier to keep getting Basic Food every month

### WHAT IS THE MONTHLY BENEFIT AMOUNT FOR BASIC FOOD?

Monthly benefits vary by: the number of people in your household, your income, and living expenses you pay for such as: rent, mortgage, utilities, childcare, and child support.

- The **average** monthly benefit families received in 2007 was \$181.18
- The **highest** monthly benefits are:
  - ◇ \$162 for a one person household;
  - ◇ \$298 for a two-person household;
  - ◇ \$426 for a three person household

### THERE ARE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS WHEN YOU RECEIVE BASIC FOOD

Besides monthly benefits to buy food, receiving Basic Food:

- Automatically enrolls school-age children in the free school meal program
- Qualifies you for low-cost local phone service through the Washington Telephone Assistance Program. People getting Basic Food can sign up by calling 1-888-700-8880.
- Shows that your family meets the Women Infants and Children (WIC) income test.

### DO PEOPLE HAVE TO BE U.S. CITIZENS TO GET BASIC FOOD BENEFITS?

No. The federal Food Stamp Program is limited to U.S. citizens and immigrants who meet specific program rules. However, the state pays for Basic Food benefits for *legal immigrants* who do not meet the citizen rules for the federal program.

Undocumented immigrants and non-citizens who are tourists or other non-immigrants are not eligible for Basic Food.