

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS – WHEN APPLYING FOR SNAP



SCENARIO #1

Jane is a 55-year-old single grandmother raising her three grandchildren, ages 5, 9, and 14, after gaining legal guardianship when her daughter became incarcerated. Jane recently lost her part-time job at a local diner due to health issues and now relies on a small Social Security disability check as her only income. She applied for SNAP benefits to help feed her family but ran into several challenges.

1. Jane was asked to come to the SNAP office, but does not have reliable transportation.
2. Jane was not offered language assistance, even though English is her second language she had trouble understanding the documents.
3. Her application was denied because she didn't submit all of the required paper work on time, she didn't understand what documents were needed.

Jane Rights & What Can She Do:

1. Right to a Telephone or Home-Visit Interview. Because Jane has transportation and health related barriers, she has the right to request a telephone interview or home visit instead of going to the office.
2. Right to Free Language Assistance. As someone with limited English proficiency, Jane has the right to free language services, including translated documents and interpreters, during any part of the SNAP process.
3. Right to Application Assistance. Jane did not fully understand which documents to submit, and her application was denied. However, MDHS is required to help applicants gather verification documents if they're unable to obtain them on their own.



SCENARIO #2

John is a single father of two children, applying for SNAP after a divorce and job loss. During his SNAP interview, he was asked questions that felt personal and confusing, particularly about his assets and financial resources.

The caseworker asked:

- How much money do you have in your child's savings account?
- Do you have any retirement accounts?
- Do you own any jewelry?

John didn't know how to answer, and he was unsure which resources he had to report and which were protected. MDHS is allowed to ask about countable resources when determining SNAP eligibility, but many resources are excludable and questions about those should not be used to deny eligibility.

Under SNAP policy, John has the right to:

- Be informed clearly about what financial resources he needs to report and what does not count against him.
- Exclude certain resources from eligibility decisions, such as:
 - Children's savings accounts
 - Retirement accounts
 - Personal belongings or household items like basic jewelry
- Receive fair treatment, MDHS cannot deny his SNAP application based on assets that are not countable under federal rules.
- Ask for clarification during the interview if questions are unclear or seem irrelevant.
- Request a supervisor if he feels uncomfortable or unsure.
- Appeal a denial or incorrect determination by requesting a fair hearing within 90 days.



SCENARIO #3

Sara is a 26-year-old single mother of two children, ages 3 and 6. She was recently laid off from her retail job and hasn't received her final paycheck. Sara and her children just moved in with a friend temporarily after losing their apartment because she couldn't pay rent.

At the time of applying for SNAP, Sara had:

- No income
- Less than \$50 in cash
- No permanent address
- No food for her kids.

Sara told the MDHS worker she had no money and no food. But the caseworker told her "it usually takes 30 days, you'll need to wait until we verify everything." Sarah left confused and worried that she wouldn't be able to feed her children for days.

When applying for SNAP, Sara has the right to:

- Be screened for expedited SNAP (7-day processing) if she has no income and little or no resources.
- Apply and receive benefits without delay if she qualifies, within 7 days.
- Be treated with dignity and respect by MDHS staff.
- Receive clear and accurate information about her application and next steps.
- Request a supervisor if her concerns are not addressed.
- File a complaint or request a fair hearing if she feels she was unfairly treated or wrongfully denied.