



## Colorado Food Assistance and COVID-19 information

### How do I apply for Food Assistance benefits?

There are many options available to you to apply for Food Assistance benefits. Try to provide as much information as you can on the application to make the process faster.

- By Phone
  - Outreach partners can help you apply for Food Assistance by phone
    - Call Hunger Free Colorado (HFC) Hotline at 1-855-855-4626  
\*Important Note: HFC only helps with food.\*
    - Call Mile High United Way (MHUW) at 2-1-1  
\*Important Note: MHUW is able to help with food, shelter, rental, & child care\*
- Online
  - Visit the Colorado PEAK website at <https://colorado.gov/PEAK> from a computer or tablet to complete an application online.
- Mobile App
  - Download the MyCOBenefits app to apply from a smartphone
    - If you are approved, you will be able to see benefit amounts.
- Paper
  - Paper applications are still available at your county office, even if it is closed.
  - Once you complete your paper application, you can drop it off at the county office or send it in by mail, fax, or email.

### How do I qualify for other benefits such as Adult Financial, Colorado Works, and/or Medicaid?

- If you are interested in applying for other assistance programs, you can select the programs that you are interested in when you complete the application.
  - If you apply by phone for Food Assistance:
    - You will need a separate paper, PEAK, or MyCOBenefits mobile app application to apply for other assistance programs.

### What if I am a student and need Food Assistance?

- Students can apply and may be eligible for Food Assistance.
- If you are a student and have recently lost work or work-study, you could be eligible for Food Assistance.

### What do I do after I send in my application?

- After you submit an application, the county will review your information.



- If the county has questions, they may be calling the phone number from your application to contact you to make sure you get the correct benefits.
- To check the status of your application, you can log into your PEAK account at <https://colorado.gov/PEAK> or on the MyCOBenefits mobile app.

**What happens if I missed my interview?**

- Counties are trying to make food benefits easier for you to access, so interviews may not be necessary but they still may need to contact you for other information.
- If the county does need to contact you for more information, the county will try to call you at the phone number you provided on your application.

**What should do if I have an interview scheduled for the future?**

- The county will reach out to you to reschedule if an interview still needed.

**I lost my job. Can I get Food Assistance faster?**

- If you lost your job or have been laid off, you should apply for Food Assistance immediately.
  - Please provide as much information as you can about your layoff.
- Your application and information will be reviewed by the county to determine if you are eligible to receive benefits within 7 days.

**What happens if I do not have all the paperwork the county needs?**

- Counties are trying to make the application process easier by allowing for more flexibility in what you need to provide.
- The county will try to get all of the information they need for you but may still need to call you at the phone number from your application if they have questions.

**Is the county office processing verifications? Have the due dates changed now?**

- County offices are working quickly to update your case with any information that you have provided them.
- Due dates for the information the county office requested have not changed.

**How long will it take to get Food Assistance benefits after I apply?**

- County offices are working as quickly as they can to process applications.
- Normal processing can take from 7 days to 30 days but counties are trying to shorten all processing times.

**How can I check the status of my application?**

- Go to the PEAK website <https://colorado.gov/PEAK>
  - Click on “Sign In”



## **COLORADO**

**Office of Economic Security**

Division of Food & Energy Assistance

- Note: If you have a temporary password, use the “Sign In” option in the upper right-hand corner of the PEAK home page.
- Click on “Manage My Account”
  - Click on “Benefits” on the left-hand side of the screen to see the active status for each member in your household under “Benefit Summary.”
- Download the MyCOBenefits app onto your phone

### **How do I access my benefits once I am approved?**

- Your benefits are loading onto Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards which work a lot like a debit card in stores where you can buy food.
- Your EBT card can be mailed to you once you are approved.
- An EBT card getting mailed to you can take 7-10 days to reach you.
- If you do not have a home address, your EBT card can be mailed to an address that you choose such as a shelter or a place where you can pick up mail.
- You will receive a brochure with your EBT card that will explain more information about using your EBT card.
- If you had an EBT card before but need another one, you can call 1-888-328-2656.

### **What do I do if my address is wrong and I can't get an EBT card mailed to me until it is fixed?**

- If you have called 1-888-328-2656 and they have told you that your address is not correct, your address will need to be updated.
- Normally, this would be done through your county office but because of COVID-19 and the increased calls to county offices, please call 1-800-536-5298.
  - This is a secured line, so if you leave a voicemail, please leave your name, SSN, CBMS Case # and updated address to help your information getting updated faster.
- An EBT card getting mailed to you can take 7-10 days to reach you.

### **I already receive Food Assistance. Will there be any changes to my benefits?**

- If you do not already receive the maximum benefit for your eligible household members, you will receive extra Food Assistance benefits.
- If you are already receiving Food Assistance, you will continue to receive benefits and may be automatically re-enrolled in the program without extra work.
  - If you were automatically re-enrolled, you will receive a letter from us telling you about the next steps.
- You can track your benefit amount on the MYCOBenefits app or on your PEAK account.



**What if I have questions or changes to report?**

- A lot of county offices are closed to the public due to the public health crisis.
- County offices that are closed to the public are open remotely and will still process applications and changes.
- There may be longer wait and hold times over the phone due to the number of calls the counties are receiving.
- County websites may provide email addresses to get in touch with someone in your county office to answer your questions or report changes.
- You may be able to answer a lot of your questions and report changes by logging into your PEAK account or the MyCOBenefits mobile app.
- You can also submit changes in writing at the dropbox for your county office.

**How do I make sure I get the economic stimulus payment?**

- If you have not already, you need to file your 2018 and/or 2019 taxes.



## **COVID-19 Public-Facing Messaging Food Distribution**

### **What is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)?**

- TEFAP provides a monthly food package to eligible households and is available in every county in Colorado.
- Please call 211 or visit <https://www.211colorado.org/> to find the nearest distribution site or the Food Resource Hotline at (855)855-4626.

### **Do I have to provide proof of income for TEFAP?**

- No. You will self-declare how you are eligible to receive TEFAP.
- See the current requirements for eligibility here: [bit.ly/FDP-TEFAP](http://bit.ly/FDP-TEFAP)

### **What else do I need to know about TEFAP?**

- You will be asked to provide your name, address, number of people in your household, and how you are eligible.
  - You may also be asked to provide some form of ID.
- Most distribution sites are food pantries that offer additional food items and other resources.

### **What is The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)?**

- CSFP provides a monthly food package to adults that are 60 years of age or older and meet income guidelines. CSFP is offered in every county in Colorado.
- Please call 211 or visit <https://www.211colorado.org/> to find the nearest distribution site.

### **Do I have to provide proof of income for CSFP?**

- No. You will self-declare how you are eligible to receive CSFP.
- See the current requirements for eligibility here: [bit.ly/CO-CSFP](http://bit.ly/CO-CSFP)

### **What else do I need to know about CSFP?**

- You will need to complete a CSFP application and provide some form of ID.
- Once you are approved (which will happen at the time of application in most cases) you are certified for one-year.
- You can recertify each year by simply indicating your interest in continuing participation in the program and self-declaring that you qualify.



**How can I access these programs while maintaining “social distance”?**

- Many TEFAP sites have drive-thru distribution so there is no 1:1 contact.
- Some CSFP agencies are providing home delivery services or distributing food in other ways which keep everyone safe.

**Can I receive both CSFP and TEFAP at the same time?**

- Absolutely. Many of the distribution sites provide both CSFP and TEFAP.
- If you qualify for CSFP, you are automatically qualified to receive TEFAP.



## COVID-19 Public-Facing Messaging Other Information and Resources

### **Coronavirus or COVID-19**

- Stay informed about COVID-19 at <https://covid19.colorado.gov/>
- CDC Tips for Handling Stress, Anxiety, and Coping:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

### **Economic Stimulus Payments**

- <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>

### **Energy Assistance**

- Apply for or find out information about the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) by calling the HEAT HELP Line (available 24/7) at 866-432-8435
  - Applications can take 30 days to process but can be quicker for emergencies like a shutoff notice.

### **Food Assistance**

- If you need food immediately, please visit a food bank or food pantry.
  - You can find food banks and pantries during the COVID-19 Outbreak visit at <https://www.hungerfreecolorado.org/covid-19/>
- If you have children under 18, some public schools are offering “grab and go” break snacks and lunches that you can pick up at any school that is near you
  - See this list for locations:  
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/nutriemergencyfeeding>

### **Medicaid**

- Medicaid Call Center: 1-800-221-3943
- Medicaid Advocate Line: 303-866-2868

### **Rental Assistance**

- Call 2-1-1 or visit <http://211.org/>

### **Tax Filing Assistance**

- Go to <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus> and scroll down to “Tax Help”

### **Unemployment**

- To file or check on a claim for unemployment, please visit <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/file-claim>