

Food Stamp Outreach Messages

The Origins and Purpose of the Food Stamp Messages

Only about one half of Vermonters eligible for food stamps participate in the program. In order to ensure that everyone who is eligible for food stamps receives benefits, it is important to address the barriers that discourage participation. Vermont's Food Stamp Work Group created these food stamp messages to make it easier to deliver consistent, effective messages about food stamps to potentially eligible Vermonters. The Work Group first identified target audiences and the barriers to food stamp participation and then crafted responses to the barriers, addressing particular groups of people when appropriate. In addition to the Food Stamp Work Group, about 40 food stamp outreach workers and PATH employees had input in the process.

How to Use The Food Stamp Messages

Use these messages when you are:

- ♦ Talking about food stamps
- ♦ Writing articles
- ♦ Creating brochures, posters and other outreach materials

You can let the messages and slogans stand alone, string several of them together, or use them as a starting point for providing additional information. As much as possible, use the messages exactly as they are written. The words were chosen carefully. Substituting other words can change the meaning or clarity of a message.

Examples:

- Times have changed, so have food stamps. Food stamps now come on a plastic card that looks and works like other debit cards used in grocery stores. And, the new application makes it easier to apply.
- You are not taking away from someone else when you apply for food stamps. In fact, using food stamps is good for Vermont. When you use food stamps in Vermont you bring money into the state. If you use food stamps to

shop locally or to buy local products, you can support jobs in your community, neighborhood businesses, and farmers.

- Food stamps help make ends meet. Using food stamps to help with food costs can free up money to pay bills. What's more, eligibility for food stamps means you can get free school meals, Lifeline (monthly credit of at least \$13 to help pay for phone service), and Link Up (credit up to \$30 to pay half the cost of installing a phone line).
- If you are working, new rules may make it easier for you to get food stamps and stay on the program. If you haven't applied because you can't get time off work to go to the food stamp office when it is open, you can mail in your application and ask to have your personal interview over the phone. Once you are getting food stamps, even if your income changes every month, you may only have to report these changes to the food stamp office every 6 months.

For more information, contact:
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger
180 Flynn Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401
www.vtnohunger.org
802-865-0255

Barrier	Message	Audience
Don't want charity	When you use food stamps in Vermont you bring money into the state.	General
	If you use food stamps to shop locally or to buy local products, you can support jobs in your community, neighborhood businesses, and farmers.	General
It's too hard to apply	The new application makes it easier to apply. If you have questions, we can help.	General
	Community Action Agencies across the state will help you with the application form and process.	General
	Area Agencies on Aging across the state will help you with the application form and process.	60 and over
I'm probably not eligible.	A change in your household circumstances could help you get food stamps now, even if you couldn't before. For example, if someone in your household has turned 60, if you have less income, if you have more bills every month (including medical bills), or if there is a change in the number of people living in your household, apply for food stamps again.	General
	There are new rules that make it possible for many legal immigrants to get food stamps.	Immigrants
	If you are 65 or older or have a disability, you may be able to get food stamp benefits. If you also have health care costs, you may be able to get even more.	65 and older; People with disabilities
Others need it more	You are not taking away from someone else when you apply for food stamps.	60 and over
My income changes every month	You may only have to report changes in your income every 6 months. See if the new rule applies to you.	Working adults

Barrier	Message	Audience
Office hours not convenient	If you can't get to the food stamp office when it is open, you can mail in your application and ask to have your personal interview over the phone.	Working adults
Pride, social stigma, and embarrassment	Many Vermonters who are 65 and over or disabled do not have to use the food stamp card. Instead, you can get food stamps in the form of cash deposited right into your bank account. You can use cash or a check to buy food.	65 and older; People with disabilities
	You're not alone. Over 40,000 Vermonters use food stamps every month.	General
	You're not alone. Over 5,000 Vermont seniors use food stamps every month.	60 and over
	If you have kids and are thinking about applying for food stamps, you are not alone. Over 15,000 children live in families that use food stamps every month.	Families with children
	Food stamps now come on a plastic card that looks and works like other debit cards used in grocery stores.	General
Misinformation about eligibility requirements	You can now own a car and get food stamps.	General
	Working parents who get the Vermont Earned Income Tax Credit may be able to get food stamps and are encouraged to apply.	Working parents
	Times have changed, so have food stamps.	General; 60 and over
	You can get food stamps if you are homeless or living with friends.	Homeless
I'd rather go to the food shelf	Food stamps let you choose the foods you like.	General
	With food stamps, you can buy the foods you know your kids will eat.	Families with children

Barrier	Message	Audience
Not worth the hassle	Food stamps help you stay healthy by adding money to your food budget.	Nutrition Education
	Eat better, feel better with food stamps.	General
	Many foods you can buy with food stamps are ready to eat.	Homeless; 60 and over
	New rules make it easier because you don't have to check in with the food stamp office as often as before. Find out if the new rules apply to you.	Working; fluctuating income
	The new application makes it easier to apply. If you have questions, we can help.	General
	Using food stamps to help with food costs can free up money to pay bills.	General
	Eligibility for food stamps makes you eligible for free school meals, Lifeline (monthly credit of at least \$13 to help pay for phone service), and Link Up (credit up to \$30 to pay half the cost of installing a phone line).	Families with kids; general
Language barrier	If you need an interpreter, the food stamp office will provide one for you.	Immigrants
No Transportation	You can get food stamps even if you can't get to the office. You can mail in your application and ask to have your personal interview by phone.	General
	If you are 60 or older or have a disability, you can get food stamps without going to the food stamp office.	60 and over; People with disabilities
My income changes every month	You may only have to report changes in your income every 6 months. See if the new rule applies to you.	Working adults

Slogans
Think you're not eligible? Take a fresh look.
Food stamps—Good for You. Good for Vermont.
Discover the buying power of food stamps.
Food stamps help make ends meet.
Times have changed, so have food stamps.
Did you know...(insert any message)

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