



627 North 4th Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

(O) 225.342.0286  
(F) 225.342.8636  
[www.dcfcs.la.gov](http://www.dcfcs.la.gov)

John Bel Edwards, Governor  
Marketa Garner Walters, Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Catherine Heitman  
(225) 342-9640 (o)  
(225) 335-0551 (c)

## Louisiana Residents Encouraged to Pre-Register for Disaster SNAP Benefits

BATON ROUGE -The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is encouraging those who have experienced loss or damage in the severe storms and flooding to pre-register for benefits under the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP).

DCFS is preparing a DSNAP application for the seven parishes included in the initial federal disaster declaration for the State of Louisiana. Those parishes are Bossier, Claiborne, Grant, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, and Webster - although the list is expected to grow rapidly.

DSNAP, formerly called Disaster Food Stamps, provides food assistance to eligible households who do not receive regular SNAP benefits and who need help buying groceries due to lost income or damages following a disaster. The state must request that the federal government initiate DSNAP, but can only make the request after the president activates the Stafford Act and approves the parish for Individual Assistance (IA).

After the state makes its request, it is expected that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will respond quickly. In the meantime, DCFS is preparing potential DSNAP application sites and encouraging impacted residents, especially in those seven parishes, to pre-register for benefits either online or by phone.

"Although individuals will still need to visit a DSNAP issuance site to determine final eligibility, pre-registering can significantly reduce the time it takes to get these much needed resources," said DCFS Secretary Marketa Garner Walters.

The best way to pre-register is online at [www.dcfcs.la.gov/dsnap](http://www.dcfcs.la.gov/dsnap). However, residents can also pre-register by phone beginning tomorrow, March 15, at 1-888-LA-HELP-U (1-888-524-3578) daily between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Callers will select the appropriate language and then select options 3 and 3. All pre-registrants will have to provide the following information:

- Name, Social Security Number and Date of Birth for each household member
- Current address and parish of household
- Monthly income for each household member
- All liquid assets for each household member (cash on hand, checking, savings and money market account balances and certificates of deposit)

The information will be kept securely on file and will be confidential.

The pre-registration process does not guarantee benefits, but is designed to save time, minimize long waits and prevent applicants from coming to the site, only to find out that they do not have the right information



needed to apply.

If the state's DSNAP request is approved, residents who live in an eligible parish and have pre-registered must still visit a DSNAP issuance site to verify their information and identity to determine final eligibility and receive benefit cards, if eligible.

Households that receive regular SNAP benefits and live in parishes where DSNAP is activated will automatically have additional SNAP benefits added to their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards if they are not already receiving the maximum allotment for their household size. Regular SNAP households DO NOT have to visit a DSNAP site to receive the additional benefits.

As with all programs, DCFS works to ensure this program and others are available for eligible applicants by aggressively protecting against fraud in benefits programs year round. Strong safeguards are in place to ensure that only eligible citizens receive DSNAP benefits, to identify those who are dishonest about their eligibility and to pursue recoupment and/or prosecution.

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