

Handout #9 » State and Federal Assistance Programs

Food & Nutrition

- » **FoodShare Wisconsin (SNAP)** provides money to help individuals or families to buy food. Participants are given a Quest Card, which transfers money to the store to help cover the costs of food purchases.
- » **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides monthly vouchers to help mothers and their children eat healthy. Mothers also receive nutrition education, support to help breastfeed their babies, and information on healthcare and other services.
- » **School Nutrition Programs.** Schools may provide a variety of meals and snacks. In the National School Lunch Program, children can get free or lower price lunches at school. Some schools may also serve breakfast, milk programs, fresh fruit and vegetable snacks, after-school snacks, suppers, and summer meals.
- » **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** provides free breakfast, lunch, and snacks to children during the summer in some communities. Meals are in central locations, such as schools or community centers and are often hosted by summer camps and non-profit agencies.
- » **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** is also known as a “Stockbox” or “Cupboard Bound.” CSFP provides food to income-eligible elderly in participating counties.
- » **Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP)** provides seniors with an affordable, nutritious meal while encouraging socialization and volunteer opportunities.
- » **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** provides food assistance in the form of food baskets or prepared meals to individuals with limited income. Food assistance is delivered via food pantries or meal sites.
- » **The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)** offers low-income older citizens an opportunity to purchase locally-grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from local farmers. SFMNP checks can be used from June 1 through October 31.

Health Care

- » **The Health Insurance Marketplace** enables people to obtain health insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) during Open Enrollment periods (and outside those periods for those in special circumstances). Refer to [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) for more information on ACA and enrolling in health coverage through the marketplace.
- » **BadgerCare+** provides free or low-cost health coverage to uninsured working families with children. A family may be eligible if it meets income limits, has no health insurance, and doesn't have access to insurance through an employer or if the employer's health plan does not meet the state standard. Over 114,000 people participate in BadgerCare.
- » **Medicaid** provides low- or no-cost health care coverage to individuals who are elderly, visually impaired, and/or identify as having a disability. Medicaid is also known as Medical Assistance.
- » **Medicare** is the nation's health insurance program for people age 65 or older, for some people with disabilities under 65, and for people with End-Stage Renal Disease. Medicare provides coverage for inpatient and outpatient care, doctors' services, diagnostic tests, medical transportation and other services. Over 750,000 people in Wisconsin receive Medicare coverage.

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Child Care and Child Support

- » **Home Energy Plus Program.** Wisconsin helps qualifying households pay their energy bills and reduce the amount of energy they use through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance. They pay some energy costs, weatherize homes, and help in a heating or energy crisis. Over 100,000 households receive energy assistance each year. Bill payment assistance averaged over \$413 per household.

Child Care

- » **Wisconsin Shares Child Care** pays a portion of childcare costs for working families with limited income. Families choose their own child care providers.
- » **Child Support.** If children live with one parent most of the time and the other parent lives elsewhere, that other parent may be required to pay child support.

Home & Energy

- » **Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP)** and **Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program (WisWAP)** can pay some of a household's energy costs, weatherize a home, and provide help in a heating or energy crisis.
- » **Lifeline** is a federal assistance program that provides discounts on monthly telephone service for eligible low-income households. It helps ensure people have the opportunities to connect to jobs, family, and 911 services.

Cash Assistance & Tax Credits

- » **Unemployment Insurance (UI)** provides temporary cash assistance to qualified unemployed workers looking for a job. Benefits are based on past earnings, not on current income.
- » **Wisconsin Works (W-2)** is a program for limited income families that provides financial help and employment and training services. Participants receive monthly cash payments for working in eligible job positions.
- » **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** can lower taxes and provide cash back to low and moderate-income workers. There are two related programs—the federal EITC and the Wisconsin Earned Income Credit (EIC). Both programs aim to reduce taxes and supplement wages.
- » **Homestead Credit** is a Wisconsin tax benefit for low and moderate-income renters and homeowners. It can lower a person's state income taxes, and may provide cash back if a person's income is too low to pay taxes.
- » **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** provides cash assistance to individuals with limited incomes who are elderly, or of any age and are blind or disabled.

Adapted From:

"Wisconsin Connections," University of Wisconsin -Extension. Additional information about the programs and how to apply, as well as links to further resources, are at: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/wisconsinconnections/>