

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

**SNAP** is the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps. SNAP provides a monthly benefit to help low-income households that meet eligibility requirements purchase healthy food—an average of \$115.21 per person per month in 2017. Under current rules, Mississippians are not eligible to receive or apply for SNAP while incarcerated. You can apply or reapply for SNAP benefits after your release at <http://www.mdhs.ms.gov/>.

**TANF** provides benefits to low-income families with children under age 18, including employment and training activities and supportive services such as assistance with child care and transportation expenses. Individuals who are expected to be incarcerated for a month or longer are not eligible for TANF money payments. If you were a TANF recipient when arrested, a member of your family should apply to have the TANF funds sent to your child's caretaker while you are incarcerated. After your release, you can restart your benefits or apply for the first time at <http://www.mdhs.ms.gov/>.

### Special SNAP and TANF Rules for Individuals With a Drug Felony Conviction

Individuals with a **drug felony conviction** are prohibited from receiving SNAP or TANF in Mississippi. Individuals with other felony convictions may be eligible.

## Voting Rights

Unless you have been convicted of one of the following 22 felonies, you can vote during and after incarceration in Mississippi:

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|--|---|
| 1. Armed Robbery                                   | 13. Perjury                                 |
| 2. Arson   | 14. Rape                                    |
| 3. Bigamy  | 15. Receiving Stolen Property               |
| 4. Bribery   | 16. Robbery                                 |
| 5. Embezzlement                                    | 17. Theft                                   |
| 6. Extortion                                       | 18. Timber Larceny                          |
| 7. Felony Bad Check                                | 19. Unlawful Taking of Motor Vehicle        |
| 8. Felony Shoplifting                              | 20. Statutory Rape                          |
| 9. Forgery   | 21. Carjacking                              |
| 10. Larceny  | 22. Larceny Under Lease or Rental Agreement |
| 11. Murder   |   |
| 12. Obtaining Money or Goods under False Pretenses |   |

### About This Resource

This resource was created by the **Mississippi Center for Justice**, a public interest law firm that advances racial and economic justice through legal services, policy advocacy, community engagement, and media advocacy. The Center's areas of practice include public benefits, health care access, healthy food access, educational opportunity, affordable housing, consumer protection, and community development. The Center does not provide representation on criminal law matters.

For more information, call 601.352.2269 or visit [www.mscenterforjustice.org](http://www.mscenterforjustice.org).

# Know Your Rights

# Public Benefits After Incarceration

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## Public Benefits After Incarceration

**Public benefits can help you successfully reenter society after incarceration, providing access to critical health insurance, healthy food, cash and supplemental income, and other benefits. This resource provides an overview of public benefit eligibility and enrollment after incarceration, as well as supplemental information on voting rights.**

### Social Security Benefits

Individuals with disabilities including severe mental illness may be eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (**SSDI**) and/or Supplemental Security Income (**SSI**). SSI provides supplemental income to help low-income elderly or disabled individuals meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. SSDI provides benefits to individuals who cannot work because of a medical condition expected to last at least one year or result in death. If you received SSI and/or SSDI before incarceration, you can restart them after your release. Depending on the benefit and how long you are incarcerated, there may be steps that you can take before your release to avoid delays. For more information on eligibility, enrollment, and reinstatement, visit the U.S. Social Security Administration's guide to Social Security benefits after incarceration at <https://www.ssa.gov/reentry/benefits.htm> or call 1-800-722-1213.

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### Medicaid

Medicaid provides health care coverage to eligible low-income adults, children, and people with disabilities. Justice-involved individuals classified as inmates of a public institution are generally ineligible for Medicaid until they are discharged, paroled, or permanently released. You can learn more about Medicaid eligibility and apply for benefits after incarceration at [medicaid.ms.gov](https://www.medicaid.ms.gov) or [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov).

### Medicare

Medicare is a federal health care insurance program for people over 65, some younger people with disabilities, and dialysis patients. **If you are turning 65 while incarcerated**, you can apply during your Initial Enrollment Period starting 3 months before your 65th birthday and ending 3 months after your birthday. **If you were enrolled in Medicare before you were arrested**, Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) continues during incarceration. Medicare Part B (medical insurance) will terminate if you do not pay your monthly premiums.

If your Part B coverage ends while you are incarcerated because of nonpayment, or if you miss your Initial Enrollment Period, you will have to reenroll during the General Enrollment Period between January 1 - March 31 each year and may be subject to a late enrollment penalty. Learn more about Medicare eligibility and enrollment at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/>.

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### Veterans Benefits

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides benefits such as a pension, education, health care, and rehabilitation services to eligible veterans, dependents, and survivors. For information on eligibility, reinstatement, and resources for justice-involved veterans, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-incarcerated.asp>. For additional information, go to [www.va.gov](https://www.va.gov) or call 1-800-827-1000.

### Other Health Care Options

For additional information on health care options after incarceration, visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/incarcerated-people/>.

### Federal Housing Assistance

Many justice-involved individuals are eligible for public housing or Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), but public housing authorities (PHAs) have the power to deny applicants based on their criminal history. Federal law permanently bans individuals subject to lifetime sex offender registration or those convicted of producing methamphetamine on public housing grounds from public housing and Section 8, and PHAs can set more restrictive rules.

If a PHA denies your housing application, it **must** provide a written notice stating the reason and provide a deadline for you to appeal the denial. **You have a legal right to appeal** and present evidence of a positive change since your arrest. You must request an appeal in writing within the time frame stated in the denial notice.