Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)  
Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Fact Sheet  
for New Retailers

How do people use SNAP benefits to buy food in my store?  
SNAP households get an EBT card, which operates like a debit card, to buy eligible food at stores  
authorized to take SNAP benefits.

The customer swipes the card in a Point of Sale device (POS) at the store and enters a four-digit Personal  
Identification Number (PIN). The clerk enters the exact amount of the food purchase on the POS. This  
amount is deducted from the household’s EBT SNAP account and credited within two banking days to the  
retailer’s bank account.

All transactions are electronically processed and recorded. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
has access to records of all transactions, including the date, time, and dollar amount, on all terminals.

How do I get POS equipment for my store?  
First, you (the retailer) must be authorized by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to take SNAP  
benefits. Once your location is authorized under your ownership, you may:

   Use existing or commercially available credit/debit card POS equipment that allows stores to  
   process both EBT and commercial debit/credit transactions on the same device. The EBT  
   Processor for your State can provide more information on where to obtain equipment and  
   services. If you already have equipment, talk to your current processor about programming  
   your current equipment and to obtain cost information.

OR

   Use a special POS device that only processes EBT transactions. The EBT Processor for your  
   State will let you know whether they offer such equipment to all types of retailers. Be aware  
   that most retailers are required to pay for their EBT equipment and services, whether they  
   obtain it from their State Processor or a third party. Some stores are exempt from this  
   requirement and are eligible for free State-supplied POS equipment. Exempt retailers  
   include farmers’ markets, direct marketing farmers, military commissaries, non-profit  
   food buying cooperatives and community meal services and programs. You must sign  
   an agreement to cover the use of the equipment and supply banking information to the  
   company that handles the processing for this equipment before you can receive the device.

If I am eligible and choose the State-supplied POS device, when will I get my equipment?  
Usually within two weeks after you get your SNAP Permit from FNS and sign and return the completed  
agreement to the processor. The FNS office that approved your application or the processor will give you  
more information about this.

Who can I call if I have other questions?  
For questions about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, contact us at 1-877-823-4369 or  
visit our website at www.fns.usda.gov/snap and click on “Additional Information” in the Retailers section.

For questions about using the POS and processing transactions, call the Retailer Help line number  
provided by your processor.