

3 Things You Need To Know About Photo EBT Cards

Massachusetts state law requires that some SNAP or cash-benefit recipients receive a Photo EBT Card with their picture on it. Many recipients are exempt from this law.

1. About 1/4 of MA SNAP households now have a Photo EBT Card.

Under state law, you do not need a Photo EBT Card if you are the head of household and are:

- Age 60 or older,
- Disabled or blind,
- Homeless,
- Under age 19,
- A victim of domestic violence,
- An authorized representative for a recipient who needs help buying food,
- Some adults caring for eligible children (but not receiving SNAP for themselves), or
- You have a sincere religious objection to being photographed.

If you have a photo EBT card but you meet one of the above categories, you can call your DTA worker and ask for a new card without a photo. You should be exempt from the law, unless you want a card with a photo. If you are exempt, you can keep using your blue “Bay State Access” card or DTA can give you a “Valid Without Photo” card.

2. Every SNAP household member has the right to use the EBT card.^{*i}

Stores cannot refuse to accept the EBT card from household members, such as spouses or older children. This is true even if their name or photo is not on the card. In addition, caregivers you authorize can also use your EBT card to food shop for you.

Just like a debit card, your PIN is what keeps your benefits safe and is your electronic signature. If the proper PIN is used, the shopper should be able to use the card.

3. Stores cannot treat SNAP recipients differently from other shoppers.^{*}

A store clerk cannot ask to see your photo EBT card unless the store routinely asks **everyone** using credit or debit cards to show a photo ID. Also, stores that accept EBT cards cannot set up “SNAP-only” checkout lines or discriminate against SNAP households in any way.

If a SNAP household member is not allowed to use the EBT card, or if you are being hassled or treated different from others shoppers, call your local Legal Services office. Go to www.masslegalhelp.org for more information.

*Federal rules protect the right of all authorized members to use the EBT card and to not be discriminated against. 7 CFR 274.7(A), 7 CFR 274.8(b)(5)(iv), 7 CFR. 278.2(b) and (h). Extensive federal photo EBT regulations went into effect Jan 12, 2017.