



December 2008
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

DCSD



Debt Counsel for Seniors & the Disabled

Low Income Help

Food Stamps Make Your Money Go Further - Food stamps aren't stamps anymore. Now they look like a credit card. People use their food stamps cards at participating stores to buy food (or plants and seeds to grow food.) The cost of your groceries is subtracted from the card's account every time it's used. The government puts the amount of your benefit in the card's account every month.

Are you eligible? There are three main areas of eligibility guidelines. To get food stamps, you must meet the guidelines in all three: Citizenship status, Resource limits [cash, bank accounts and certain property], and Income limits

Citizenship: You must be a citizen – or a non-citizen who meets one of the many exceptions.

Resource limits: Resources include cash, money in the bank, and some things you own. But, not all resources are counted. For example, the program doesn't count your home. The program also does not count \$4,650 of the value of one car. The resource limit depends on age or if you are disabled. Age 60 or older or disabled: Limit of \$3,000, and Under 60: Limit of \$2,000

Income limits: Income is the amount of money you receive each month from a pension, Social Security, and/or work. Until September 30, 2003: a single person is limited to \$739 of counted income, and a couple is limited to \$995 of counted income

But not all income is counted. There are many deductions.

	How much is deducted
All people	\$134 for each household's application
Child or dependent care when needed for a job, training or school	\$200 for children under 2 \$175 for those 2 or older
Medical expenses not paid by insurance	For those who are 60 or older or disabled, all medical expenses over \$35 are deducted
Child support payments	Will vary
Part of a person's housing costs (including rent, mortgage, heating, energy, water, phones)	Part of the costs, limited to \$367 unless one person in the home is at least 60 or disabled
Work income	Part of the work income

How much will you get? The amount you get in food stamps depends on your income, resources, and expenses. It also depends on how many people live in your house. In 2000, a single older person received, on average, \$44 each month. The maximum amount is: \$139 for one person, \$256 for a couple and \$366 for three people. While food stamps may not pay for all of your food, it helps stretch your money. It lets you use your cash to pay for things like prescription drugs and heating bills instead of food.

How do you apply? Apply for food stamps at your local Department of Social or Human Services. The phone number is in the blue pages of your phone book. Or you can call 1-800-221-5689 for the telephone number of your state Food Stamp agency. Since your food stamps start the date you apply you should turn in your application right away, even if the application is not complete. You have a chance to finish the application later. Once it's approved, you get benefits back to the date you applied.

STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS ON DEBTS AND JUDGMENTS

Why You Should Care About The Statute Of Limitations -Every day consumers pay off collection accounts and charge-offs which they do not have to pay because the statute of limitations has already expired on the account and they have not been sued on the account. Consumers pay off these accounts because the accounts still appear on their credit report.

What is the statute of limitations on DEBTS prior to judgment by creditors?

Knowing about the statute of limitations in your state can be a powerful weapon and unburden your old debts as creditors have a limited time in which to sue you under the statute of limitations applying to debts. Remember, the statute of limitations begins to run from the day the debt-or payment of an open-end account (i.e., credit cards) was due. Also, this has nothing to do with how long a negative credit item can remain on your credit report.

Consumers also pay off these accounts when they are not on their credit report. Even though an account was removed from their credit file, the collector watches their credit report for any activity (actually, the computer was watching any credit activities) when the collector spotted the activity, he called the consumer for a payment. All the consumer needed to say to the collector was "I have an absolute defense-the statute of limitations has expired."

The statute of limitations does not cause your debt to go away after it expires even though there has been no judgment against the debtor. If the creditor files a suit, the consumer has an absolute defense. The consumer must offer a new evidence to avoid a judgment on a debt which has been covered by the statute of limitations on debts. The evidence will consist of papers that the consumer files to support his/her claim that the debt is covered by the statute of limitations. If the creditor sues you and you do not prove to the court that the statute of limitations on the debt has expired, you will have a lawsuit and a judgment against you. It is important that you keep track of the last payment on the account so that you can prove there has been no activity for the years covered by the statute of limitations.

When does the statute of limitations start?

You might be asking yourself "It has been such a long time since my 'open-end' account has had any activity. When does my statute of limitations on debts start ticking?" Use your credit report as a reference. Your credit report will tell you the date of the last activity for your account. You will have your credit report with the date of the last activity and a certified letter stating that the statute of limitations was expired as proof. The statute of limitations prohibits collection of a debt where the collector has not sued.

Depending on what state you live in, if you make a partial payment, you could be postponing the statute of limitations taking effect on your collection account or charge-off. A collector might call you one day and say you have waived your rights when you made the deal with the collection agency. Do not take anything a creditor tells you for granted. Make them prove it to you, in or out of court. Where about half of the population live, the statute of limitations started ticking the day they made their last payment on their account.

In summary, even though a debt is an absolute promise to pay, if the statute of limitations expires and is enforced and the creditor tries to force you to pay the debt, you have a right not to fulfill the promise (the debt).

If you want information explaining your state's statute of limitations call **1-800-992-3275 Ext 1501** and we will send you a detailed fact sheet.

New procedure for adding new accounts

Please note that effective **December 2008**, you are only allowed to add **ONE** additional credit card to your existing account with DCSD, with the exception of any existing or future medical bills. There will be a one-time fee of **\$20.00** to add that particular account. If you have any questions, please contact our Client Services Department at 1-800-992-3275 Ext 1300.