

VERIFICATION

1. WHAT IS VERIFICATION?

Whenever you apply for public assistance (such as OHP, food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, "SNAP", TANF, etc.), the state or county office will ask you for verification.

Verification is the same as proof. You will be asked to prove facts that determine if you are eligible for benefits and what type and how much you can get. You must prove that you qualify for the program(s) you are applying for.

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2. DO I HAVE TO PROVIDE VERIFICATION?

Yes. You have to prove that you qualify. However, you may be asked to prove only the things necessary to qualify. Some pieces of verification may prove more than one thing.

Once you've provided verification for one program (e.g., TANF), your worker should use that same verification for any other program you have applied for such as food stamps. If your situation changes, such as moving to a different address or a change in your income, you will have to give proof of this to the office.

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3. WHO DECIDES WHAT PROPER VERIFICATION IS?

The caseworkers do, but they have to be reasonable about it. If you think they are being unreasonable or asking for too much, ask what it is for. You may be able to provide another type of verification to prove it.

4. WHAT TYPES OF VERIFICATION ARE THERE?

There are three types:

(1) Documentary

- a) This is written proof. It includes things like your driver's license, rent receipt, birth certificate, Social Security card, etc. It also includes written statements that you or someone you know provides

(2) Collateral contact

- a) A "collateral contact" is made when you get a neighbor, friend, or family member to verify something. Sometimes they can go to the office to do that, or your caseworker can talk to them over the phone. But it's usually best to have the person put it in writing

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*For more information on
How to Write an Affidavit download the
brochure at www.oregonlawhelp.org.*

(3) Home visit by someone from the state or county agency

- a) Sometimes your worker will ask you about your household circumstances, such as whether your child's father is living in the home or if you eat separately from others in your household. If you can't give written proof of your living situation, a worker can make a visit to your home to check things out. If the purpose of this visit is

Legal Aid Services of Oregon and Oregon Law Center

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to prove you qualify for food stamps, the time of the visit must be arranged with you in advance. *You can refuse to permit any unscheduled home visit and it cannot be used as a reason to deny benefits.* However, it may delay your benefits.

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- b) If a worker makes a home visit, he or she cannot go through your closets and drawers without your permission.

Remember: *You can prove eligibility requirements with any reliable proof you can provide. If you do not have the type of proof your worker wants, find out what needs to be verified and see if you can prove it some other way.*

Your worker must help you get verification if you cannot get it yourself. For example, you can ask your worker to send for a birth certificate if you do not have to the money required. Also, if you are limited by a physical or mental condition you need only provide information to the extent you can.

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5. WHAT KINDS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CAN I USE TO PROVE THAT I AM, OR HAVE BEEN, INVOLVED IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

There is no verification requirement for domestic violence. *All that is required is your own personal statement.* The worker must accept your statement that you are, or have been, involved in a domestic violence situation.

OAR 461-135-1225(4)

6. WHAT DO I HAVE TO VERIFY SO I CAN GET TANF?

- Social Security Number or an application for a SSN
- Alien status
- Income
- Premium for cost-effective employer-sponsored health insurance
- Pregnancy if it is an eligibility requirement. Your statement that the pregnancy was determined by a medical practitioner is adequate for verification
- Your disability if eligibility for benefits is based on your incapacity as a parent

Family Services Manual TANF B-6

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There will be other information you will have to provide on your application, but you will not have to provide proof unless the worker decides the information is questionable.

7. WHAT KINDS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CAN I USE TO PROVE I'M A U.S. CITIZEN OR LEGAL ALIEN?

Your worker will want to know if you are a legal alien or a U.S. citizen. Sometimes it's hard to prove even if you've lived in the U.S. all your life. Some things you can provide are:

- Birth certificate
- Hospital records
- Passport
- Alien card or permit
- Immigration record
- Statement from a friend or relative who has known you your whole life

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8. WHAT KINDS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CAN I USE TO PROVE I AM RELATED TO THE CHILDREN?

If you don't have a birth certificate, there are other ways to prove you are related to the child. Some of the documents you can use to prove this are:

- Hospital birth records
- Baptismal certificate
- Adoption papers
- Family bible
- Birthday or baby book
- Birth announcement from a newspaper
- Medical records
- Statements from friends or relatives who knew you when the child was born

9. WHAT KINDS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CAN I USE TO PROVE I'M THE "CARETAKER" OF THE KIDS?

You might need to prove you are responsible for the children, especially if you are not the only parent or are not the parent. Records showing this would be:

- Custody papers
- Divorce papers
- Letter or statement from the parent
- Letter or statement from a friend, neighbor or relative

10. WHAT DO I HAVE TO VERIFY TO GET FOOD STAMPS?

- Your identity
- Your residency in Oregon
- That you are a U.S. citizen or, if you are a non-citizen whose eligibility is based on work history, you will have to verify your alien status and work history
- Social Security Number or application for SSN
- Income
- That you had "good cause" if you lost your job or decreased your wages
- Medical expenses if you want to claim them as a deduction
- Your child support order and the actual amount you pay

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If you are adding a newborn baby to the grant and you don't yet have a Social Security card for the baby, you can tell your worker you've applied for one at the hospital and show the form you received when you applied.

If you are a student claiming you cannot work, you will need to prove you have a disability.

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11. WHAT DO I HAVE TO VERIFY FOR EXPEDITED OR EMERGENCY FOOD STAMPS?

- Your identity only

The Food Stamp Office cannot delay your Expedited (Emergency) Food Stamps if you cannot provide other information for them BUT you must give them the information before you can get the next month's food stamps.

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*For more information on **Expedited (Emergency) Food Stamps** download the brochure at www.oregonlawhelp.org.*

12. WHAT IF I LIVED AND RECEIVED FOOD STAMPS IN ANOTHER STATE AND THEN MOVED TO OREGON?

If you were receiving food stamps in another state and then moved to Oregon and applied for food stamps, *you need to verify that you **will not** use the food stamp benefits from Oregon and the other state in the same month.*

You can verify that you will not use food stamps from both states at the same time by signing a statement that either:

- You did not receive food stamps from the other state for the same month you are applying for Oregon food stamps, OR
- If you did receive food stamp benefits from the other state, that you will not use these food stamps and will return them to the Food Stamp office within 5 days.

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13. HOW CAN I PROVE WHERE I LIVE?

The best proof of your residence is a rental agreement. If you don't have one, other things you can use are:

- A statement from your landlord or neighbor
- A library card
- Mail received at the address
- Utility bills
- Rent receipts
- Your driver's license
- Your voter registration card
- School records

If you can't come up with any of these or any similar documents, you can use the "collateral contact" method or ask your worker to do a home visit.

14. WHAT OTHER KINDS OF INFORMATION MAY BE NEEDED?

All kinds. It will vary depending on the type of assistance you are applying for. They must know about your income, if you have any savings or other money, if you have property, and other information about you and your household. There are many ways you can give them proof. Here are some of them:

- (1) To prove your income, you can provide:
 - a) Pay stubs
 - b) Statement from employer
 - c) Employer's wage records
 - d) Unemployment compensation or workers compensation records
 - e) Union records

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You can prove that you have no income by showing unpaid bills or statements from people that loaned you money for living expenses.

- (2) To prove your resources or other assets, you can provide:
 - a) Bank books or statements
 - b) Tax returns
 - c) Mortgage statements
 - d) Credit union records
 - e) Credit applications
 - f) Car title
- (3) To prove that the parent is absent from the home, you can provide:
 - a) Divorce papers
 - b) Restraining orders from the court
 - c) Statement from friends, relatives or neighbors
 - d) Mail which shows the absent parent has an address somewhere else
 - e) Statement of person that absent parent lives with
 - f) Statement from the absent parent
- (4) To prove your disability/incapacity, you must provide:
 - a) A statement from a doctor, osteopath, psychiatrist or psychologist
 - b) The doctor's statement must contain a diagnosis, a prognosis (how long you will be disabled), and test results, medical records, or other evidence which prove your disability. Ask Legal Aid about forms for your doctor to complete.

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REMEMBER: *Your worker has to be reasonable in accepting verification from you and your worker has to help you get verification if you have trouble getting it yourself.*

For more information on Self Advocacy – How to Get Through the Maze of Welfare download the brochure at www.oregonlawhelp.org

15. WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information, call the **Public Benefits Hotline (1-800-520-5292)** or your local Legal Aid Services Office for possible advice or representation. Go to www.oregonlawhelp.org for a directory of legal aid programs.

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