



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

S. Duke Storen
Commissioner

August 7, 2026

Dear Virginia Retailers,

For thousands of Virginia families, SNAP helps put food on the table and supports healthier, more secure futures. Retailers are an essential part of that mission, and I appreciate your continued partnership as we implement an important change to Virginia's SNAP.

Beginning **October 1, 2026**, SNAP benefits can no longer be used to purchase **carbonated beverages with added sugar or artificial sweeteners** (including soda, diet/zero soda, and carbonated energy drinks). All other beverages remain SNAP-eligible.

This change applies to **all SNAP transactions in Virginia**, including online orders you fulfill. Virginia is implementing this update under an approved U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) waiver. (Additional information about the waiver can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/waivers/foodrestriction/virginia).

To prepare for this update:

- Ensure your **point-of-sale system** blocks restricted carbonated, sweetened beverages beginning October 1.
- Train staff on the SNAP eligibility changes.

To support system updates, we will provide a **Universal Product Code (UPC) list** of items impacted by this change. You can expect a separate email from us soon with this list.

I want to ensure you that the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is here to support you and your business.

We will continue providing:

- Clear restricted item criteria
- Signage templates and customer-facing resources
- Technical assistance by email
- Optional webinars with opportunities for you to ask questions

You can find customer-facing communications resources, clear lists of eligible and ineligible beverages, frequently asked questions and additional information at www.dss.virginia.gov/SNAPHealthy.

Questions?

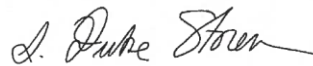
All SNAP-authorized retailers are invited to join our agency for hour-long webinars to learn about SNAP Healthy as well as the transition to chip/EMV cards. VDSS leaders will present and then invite questions from retailers.

Please join us on either:

- Thursday, August 20, 2026, 2 - 3 p.m. – [Click here to register](#)
- Thursday, September 3, 2026, 2 - 3 p.m. – [Click here to register](#)

Thank you for your partnership in supporting a smooth update for customers and staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Duke Storen", with a stylized flourish at the end.

S. Duke Storen