

Common SNAP Myths

Four Common SNAP Myths Heard From Potential Applicants

MYTH: "SNAP is a welfare program."

TRUTH: SNAP is a nutrition assistance program designed to help individuals and families buy nutritious food when money's tight.

MYTH: "Some people receive only \$10 a month in SNAP benefits."

TRUTH: While some receive \$10, the average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data).

MYTH: "You cannot get SNAP benefits if you have a job."

TRUTH: Individuals may work and still have income low enough to receive SNAP benefits. In fact, nearly 40 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008.

MYTH: "Other people need SNAP benefits more than I do."

TRUTH: By receiving SNAP benefits, you are not taking benefits away from another person. Everyone who applies and is determined to be eligible by the State/local eligibility worker will get SNAP benefits.

Four Common SNAP Myths Heard From Eligibility Workers

MYTH: "Outreach could mean more quality control errors."

TRUTH: The number of low-income people participating in SNAP is growing; however, the error rate is at an all-time low.

MYTH: "Community workers cannot prescreen for eligibility or help gather verification documents."

TRUTH: Community groups can prescreen clients using the FNS prescreening tool known as "Step 1" (or the State prescreening tool, if one exists). Additionally, they can help fill out application forms, gather verification information, etc. However, the responsibility for the actual certification of households for program benefits remains with SNAP staff.

MYTH: "Certification interviews must be held at local SNAP offices."

TRUTH: Local SNAP offices can take applications or certify households for benefits at remote locations such as food bank and grocery stores. Local offices may offer telephone interviews when appropriate.

MYTH: "Outreach will increase my workload."

TRUTH: Community workers help potential applicants gather appropriate verification documents so that clients are better prepared for the interview and bring the proper paperwork.

Overview of SNAP Program

Nutrition Assistance

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, serving as the first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides much-needed nutrition support to millions of low-income people. Nearly half of them are children.

Economic Benefits

Not only does SNAP help individuals and families when money's tight, but your State and local community also benefit. The average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data), which is spent in local grocery stores. In fact, every \$5 in new Federal SNAP benefits generates almost double the amount in local economic activity. Also, every additional dollar in SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.

Electronic Issuance

In June 2004, SNAP completed a transformation from paper coupons to an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. Participants receive a plastic EBT card (similar to a bank debit card) with the dollar amount for which they are eligible each month. There is evidence that EBT also decreases fraudulent use of SNAP benefits.

Underserved Population

Millions of low-income people are not accessing the nutrition benefits for which they qualify. To be effective, it is important that our national and local outreach efforts counter myths about SNAP among those who think they are not eligible or have beliefs that discourage them from enrolling.