

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Description

For more than 40 years, SNAP has served as the foundation of America's national nutrition safety net. It is the first line of defense against hunger and is a powerful tool for improving nutrition among low-income people.

Benefits come to the household via electronic debit cards, known as Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards which can be used in more than 246,000 approved retail stores nationwide to purchase food.

Eligibility is based on financial factors such as income and expenses available to the household, as well as immigrant status.

Participation

In fiscal year 2012, SNAP, the Nation's largest nutrition assistance program, served over 46 million low-income people in an average month.

The Program requires able-bodied adults between 16 and 60 (with some exceptions) to register for work, to take part in employment/training programs referred by the SNAP office, and to accept or continue suitable employment.

Only U.S. citizens and many lawfully present non-citizens are eligible for program benefits, most of whom must have 5 years of residence in the U.S. in a qualified alien status before qualifying for benefits.

Budget

In FY 2012 \$86.5 billion was appropriated to SNAP (benefits and administration), including a \$3 billion contingency fund.

Contact Information

For more information about this program, we suggest that you visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap> or call the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-348-6479.

Benefitting People

In addition to improving health and nutrition, the FSP provides crucial support to needy households and to those making the transition from welfare to work. In fact, nearly 30 percent of participating food stamp households have earnings.

Households with children receive about 75 percent of all food stamp benefits.

23 percent of households include a disabled person and 18 percent of households include an elderly person.

The FSP increases household food spending, and the increase is greater than what would occur with an equal benefit in cash.

Benefitting Communities

The FSP supports State and local communities by boosting their economies.

Every \$5 in new food stamp benefits generates almost twice as much (\$9.20) in total community spending.

If the national participation rate rose just 5 percent, 1.9 million more low-income people would be able to spend an additional \$1.3 billion on healthy food. This would generate ***\$2.5 billion in new economic activity*** nationwide.

Always Reaching Out

There are many reasons that eligible people do not participate in the FSP, including lack of information, lack of accessibility, language barriers, and the stigma that some associate with food stamps. FNS is making great efforts to ensure that all eligible people, particularly seniors, legal immigrants and the working poor, are aware of and have access to the benefits they need and deserve.

FNS continues its commitment to reach all those eligible for food stamps by working with and through partners on all levels – Federal, State and especially the local level. Partners include food banks, anti-hunger organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, individuals, employers, and State and local governments.

FNS supports its partners and has developed many targeted resources to improve awareness of and access to critical nutrition benefits.

“Food Stamps Make America Stronger” is an FNS ongoing national educational campaign to reach key target populations – the working poor, seniors, and legal immigrants. The campaign includes radio advertising; National and State toll-free numbers; and posters, flyers, brochures and other materials. Resources are available in English and Spanish.

In FY 2006, FNS awarded more than \$1 million to 15 faith- and community-based organizations to conduct food stamp outreach. In FY 2007, FNS awarded an additional \$1 million to another 14 organizations.

In 2006, FNS awarded a total of \$5 million to five States through the program to help increase access. The FSP also awarded \$18 million to States for improving access and increasing program participation through performance bonuses.

Three outreach tool kits designed for State and local food stamp offices, faith- and community-based partners, and retailers are available on the FNS website:

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.

Food Stamp Nutrition Connection

Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) plays an increasing role in helping low-income families make healthy food choices within a limited budget, and pursue a physically active lifestyle consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid. Through FSNE, food stamp recipients and eligibles can learn to make wise food choices.

FSNE promotes consumption of more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat free or low-fat milk products, lean meats, poultry and fish, daily physical activity, and energy balance.

Education campaigns such as Eat Smart, Play Hard are designed to convey messages in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid to low-income mothers and children.

The Food Stamp Nutrition Connection is a valuable resource for nutrition educators and includes materials, information on the latest research, a chat forum and other useful features, including a recipe finder database: <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>.

Who Is Eligible?

Most American citizens or legal immigrants with little income and few resources can receive nutrition assistance through the FSP. Eligibility depends on the total income and expenses within a household.

Most food stamp households must have a monthly gross income equal to or less than 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, and all must have a monthly net income equal to or less than 100 percent of the poverty guidelines.

The FSP allows deductions from income such as housing costs, child support, medical expenses and childcare costs.

Households may have up to \$2,000 in assets. Households with an elderly or disabled person may have up to \$3,000 in assets. Homes and many vehicles are not counted toward the asset limit.

For additional information, please contact your local food stamp office. Consult the yellow pages of a phone book under the heading “Social Services” or “Human Services,” log on to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/, or call 1-800-221-5689. Assistance is available in English and Spanish.

USDA offers a pre-screening tool in both English and Spanish called Food Stamps Step1, a fast and effective way to determine whether an applicant may be eligible for FSP benefits and estimate monthly benefits.

For more information log on to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.