



NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

SNAP PUTS HEALTHY FOOD WITHIN REACH

No one in America should go hungry. But every day, hard-working and retired individuals and families face the choice between buying enough food and paying for basic life necessities like rent, heat and electricity. In addition, unexpected day-to-day circumstances like a trip to the emergency room or the loss of a job can easily push a household into food insecurity.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers 15 nutrition assistance programs that serve as the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Its largest program, the Food Stamp Program (FSP) helps 28 million low-income people each month put healthy food on the table. Half of those recipients are children.

As of October 1, 2008, SNAP is the new name for the Food Stamp Program. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and reflects the changes we've made to meet the needs of our clients, including a focus on nutrition and an increase in benefit amounts. While SNAP is the federal name for the program, State programs may have different names. Current clients will not lose benefits as a result of the name change. Current clients and recent applicants do not need to re-apply.

On average, 37 million individuals were eligible for food stamp benefits each month in 2006, and 25 million received them. This means that only 67% of eligible participants signed up while 33% of those chose not to participate.

Studies show that families who do not have access to healthy foods and nutritional education suffer from higher rates of obesity. Children without access to healthy eating can experience behavioral and social problems that they otherwise wouldn't if they were simply not hungry.

But there is an opportunity to increase the number of participants in the FSP. Recent program improvements include an increase in the minimum benefit amount (from \$10 to \$14) and standard deduction, elimination of the limit on child or dependent care deduction and the exclusion of education and retirement accounts from countable resources. Through nutrition education partners, SNAP helps clients learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices. Research shows that every \$5.00 of new benefits generates \$9.20 in total community spending.

Please spread the word about the SNAP name change and program improvements. With SNAP, healthy food is within reach for low-income Americans.

For more information about SNAP or one of the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services fifteen programs, please visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

SNAP: Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

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