



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) PUTTING HEALTHY FOODS WITHIN REACH

STATE OUTREACH TOOLKIT



Foreword

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Please refer to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.htm for the latest statistics and program updates. The toolkit is also available online at this Web site and will be updated as needed.

COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

U.S. Department of Agriculture
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STATE PARTNER TOOLKIT

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The Basics: What You Need to Know



Introduction

The Benefits of Participation in SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formally known as the Food Stamp Program, is an investment in our future. It offers nutrition benefits to participating clients, supports work, and provides economic benefits to communities. However, too many low-income people who are eligible for the program do not participate and thus forgo nutrition assistance that could stretch their food dollars at the grocery store. Their communities lose out on the benefits provided by new SNAP dollars flowing into local economies.

In fiscal year 2008, only 66 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits participated.¹ The most common reason eligible people do not participate is because they do not realize they may be eligible. Others choose not to apply because of myths or misunderstandings about SNAP benefits or because of stigma that continues to persist. Others make a cost-benefit decision that the time involved in applying for benefits is not worth the expected return. Some do not want to accept government assistance. For specific populations, there may be additional compounding factors, such as language barriers for legal immigrants, or time and transportation barriers for the working poor. Seniors may not understand the nature of the program and choose not to apply for benefits, thinking children or families need the help more.

Outreach and education are powerful tools in overcoming barriers to SNAP participation. Even a small increase in SNAP participation can have a substantial impact. If the national participation rate rose 5 percentage points, 1.9 million more low-income people would have an additional \$1.3 billion in benefits per year to use to purchase healthy food and \$2.5 billion total in new economic activity would be generated nationwide.

“SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger in our community. Making sure low-income people receive SNAP benefits accomplishes many things. First and most importantly, people get fed. Second, community and faith-based organizations such as ours are relieved of having to provide a higher level of food assistance. Third, the local grocers do business with customers that they may not have otherwise. And fourth, we are all healthier and happier.”

Bill Bolling, Executive Director,
Atlanta Community Food Bank Atlanta, Georgia

Why does increasing participation in SNAP make sense for your community?

SNAP Generates Economic Activity

SNAP brings Federal dollars into communities in the form of benefits which are redeemed by SNAP participants at local stores. These benefits ripple throughout the economies of the community, State, and Nation. For example:

- Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates a total of \$9.20 in community spending.²
- Every additional dollar's worth of SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.³
- On average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs.⁴

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis (ORA). Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates, 2001-2008, by Joshua Leftin. Washington, DC, June 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/SNAPPartNational.htm>.
2. Hanson, Kenneth, and Elise Golan (2002). Effects of Changes in Food Stamp Expenditures Across the U.S. Economy. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr26/fanrr26-6/fanrr26-6.pdf>. Note: The economic effect of increasing food stamp benefits was measured for the whole U.S. economy and may vary by location.
3. Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs and the General Economy: Links to the General Economy and Agriculture (2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Note: Even though recipients spend all food stamps on food, the food stamps allow them to shift some of their previous cash expenditures on food to alternative uses.

In fiscal year 2009, the average monthly SNAP benefit per household was approximately \$272. These benefits, funded by Federal dollars, create business when they are redeemed at your local food retailers. Eighty-six percent of benefits, totaling \$25 billion, were redeemed at the nation's 35,000 supermarkets. The remaining benefits, totaling \$3.6 billion, contribute to the viability of 121,000 other firms which include grocery stores, convenience stores, combination stores, farmer's markets, and other retail food stores; plus wholesalers and meal services.⁶

SNAP benefits are positively and significantly related to household food expenditures.⁷ Although estimates of the impact vary, studies have shown that a \$1 increase in the value of SNAP benefits of a typical recipient household leads to additional food expenditures of between 17 and 47 cents.⁸ SNAP recipients spend more dollars on food at local retailers in communities than eligible nonparticipants.

SNAP benefits can be used at authorized farmers markets that sell local produce. This provides additional customers for local farmers and provides SNAP recipients access to healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

SNAP Supports Work And Helps Low-Income People Make The Transition To Self-Sufficiency

More than 29 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008 and 40 percent of all SNAP participants lived in a household with earnings.⁹ Employees whose nutrition needs are met at home may be healthier and thus may take fewer sick days for themselves or their children. Employees may stay longer with companies that care about them by sharing information about SNAP benefits and its importance as a work support.

SNAP helps families become financially stable and make the transition to self-sufficiency, getting them through the tough times. Half of all new participants will leave the program within nine months.¹⁰

SNAP benefits are a work support. SNAP benefits help those leaving the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and transitioning to work by supplementing their food budgets so that they can stay independent and work toward self-sufficiency.¹¹ Since SNAP benefits decrease only by 24 to 36 cents for every additional dollar of earnings, SNAP recipients have incentives to work since they will be better off working rather than receiving SNAP benefits alone.¹²

“To reach common ground, we need to go to higher ground. Together with our business and government leaders, we can build community and economic prosperity for all.”

Daniella Levine, Executive Director
Human Service Coalition Miami, Florida

4. Ibid.
5. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2009*, by Joshua Leftin, Andrew Gothro, and Esa Eslami. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA: 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/SNAP/SNAPPartHH.htm>
6. STARS Quarterly Management Activity Report, 10/23/04.
7. Fraker, Thomas M., Sharon K. Long, and Charles E. Post (1990). *Analyses of the 1985 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals--Volume I, Estimating Usual Dietary Intake, Assessing Dietary Adequacy, and Estimating Program Effects: Applications of Three Advanced Methodologies Using FNS's Four-Day Analysis File*. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Also: Levedahl, JW. *The Effect of Food Stamps on Household Food Expenditures*. Technical Bulletin No. 1794. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service.
8. Fox, Mary Kay, William Hamilton, (editors) and Biing-Hwan Lin (2004). *Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health, Volume 3, Literature Review*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service, USDA, 2004. www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr19-3
9. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis (ORA). *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2008, Summary*. October 2009. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/2008CharacteristicsSummary.pdf>
10. Gleason, Phillip, Peter Schochet, and Robert Moffit (1998). *The Dynamics of Food Stamp Program Participation in the Early 1990s*. Alexandria, VA: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03012/efan03012ref.pdf>
11. Rosenbaum, Dorothy and David Super (2005). *The Food Stamp Program: Working Smarter for Working Families*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at <http://www.cbpp.org/3-15-05fa.htm>
12. Ibid.

SNAP Helps Low-Income Families Make Healthy Food Choices And Puts More Nutritious Food On The Table

Dietary patterns among low-income people, as well as those of the general public, indicate an excessive consumption of calories, unhealthy fats and sugars, while fruit, vegetable and whole grain intakes are modest.¹³ These poor eating habits contribute to making overweight and obesity a national health problem. In addition to the toll on personal health, this “epidemic” of obesity has economic implications as well. Obesity-attributable medical expenditures in the United States reached \$75 billion in 2003. Taxpayers financed about half of these costs through Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁴

However, research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and a broad array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.¹⁵ Nationwide, if there were a 5 percentage point increase in the SNAP participation rate, an additional 1.9 million low-income people would reap the nutrition benefits of SNAP. SNAP also helps participants manage their food resources more wisely through SNAP nutrition education. States may exercise the option to provide targeted nutrition education activities or social marketing campaigns designed to help persons eligible for SNAP make healthier food choices and pursue active lifestyles.

Because SNAP benefits are available to most low-income households with few resources, regardless of age, disability status, or family structure, SNAP households are a diverse group. Nine percent of SNAP recipients are aged 60 or older.¹⁶ For the elderly, a particularly vulnerable and underserved population, participation in SNAP and other food assistance programs can help improve their nutrition status and well-being and increase independence. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children.¹⁷ Children who are well-nourished may have better attendance at school and, once there, may be more focused on learning.

“The additional support which [SNAP benefits] provide to needy individuals is readily seen in our stores that serve customers in low-income areas. This benefit not only helps those who require some additional assistance in making ends meet, but is also an aid to the supermarkets making a commitment to serving economically challenged communities. Our partnership with nonprofit organizations in outreaching to potential participants speaks to Pathmark’s commitment to this important program.”

RICH SAVNER, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations
Pathmark Stores, Inc. Carteret, New Jersey

Combined Efforts Are Needed

SNAP is the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition safety net, providing assistance to those who qualify. It helps relieve pressure on emergency food providers, enabling them to provide more assistance to those who do not qualify for SNAP benefits. Because of the nutrition benefits to participants and the economic benefits to the Nation and to States and communities, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has made increasing participation in SNAP a priority. Increasing participation in SNAP requires the combined efforts of National, State, and local public leaders as well as nonprofit community agencies, employers, and anyone else who touches the lives of potentially eligible people.

13. Gleason P, Rangarajan A, Olson C. Dietary Intake and Dietary Attitudes Among Food Stamp Participants and Other Low-Income Individuals. Report prepared for the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, September 2000. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/NutritionEducation/Files/FSPDiet.pdf>.
14. Obesity Costs States Billions in Medical Expenses. Press Release. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 21, 2004. <http://www.cdc.gov/media>
15. Devaney, Barbara, Pamela Haines, and Robert Moffitt (1989). Assessing the Dietary Effects of the Food Stamp Program -Volumes I and II. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Also: Allen, Joyce E., and Kenneth E. Gadson (1983). Nutrient Consumption Patterns of Low-Income Households. Technical Bulletin No. 1685. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Also: Fox, Mary Kay, William Hamilton, (editors) and Biing-Hwan Lin (2004). Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health, Volume 3, Literature Review. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

16. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2003, FSP-04-CHAR, by Karen Cunyningham and Beth Brown. Project Officer, Kate Fink. Alexandria, VA: 2004. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/2003Characteristics.pdf>.
17. Ibid.

The rest of this “Introduction” section provides an explanation of the Toolkit, an overview of SNAP, SNAP question-and-answer sheets (Q&As), talking points, information about nutrition education providers, and other background materials.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Why was this toolkit developed?

We all have a common goal: to improve the ability of low-income people to access nutritious food by participating in SNAP. The information and materials in this toolkit will help you share information about SNAP benefits with those who are eligible but not participating. They will also help you let potential partners, government officials, and the public know how SNAP participation helps the local economy and addresses the national health problem of obesity.

What is SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is providing information or assistance to someone who might be eligible for SNAP. The goals of SNAP outreach are to help someone make an informed decision about whether to apply for the program, and ultimately to increase participation by eligible individuals and families.

What is in the toolkit?

This toolkit includes information on:

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Maximizing your outreach efforts through developing partnerships
- Tailoring outreach to unique audiences
- Resources

How do I use the toolkit?

The materials in this toolkit show a number of outreach possibilities, and offer your State the flexibility to pick and choose pieces that work for your specific needs. Throughout the toolkit there are tip sheets and templates that you can duplicate. You do not have to conduct every one of these activities or invest a lot of time in each one. Do what works best for your State. Since SNAP State agencies have policy options and State-specific information, it is suggested that State-specific references and information be inserted as appropriate into this kit. For example, if your State has its own toll-free number, it may be inserted into this kit to make it more relevant to your State.



Tips & Tools

Each section features easy-to-follow instructions, helpful hints, and useful materials (such as PSA scripts and recipe cards). We also have included templates (for letters, calendar listings, etc.) that you can customize with local and State specifics and enhance with information about your organization.

Target Populations

Findings show that, in addition to the general low-income audience, there are distinct groups that are significantly underrepresented in accessing SNAP benefits. The national outreach campaign is focused on reaching:

- **GENERAL LOW-INCOME** Eligible, nonparticipating individuals and families;
- **WORKING POOR** Employed individuals and families who may not understand that even though they work, they still might qualify;
- **ELDERLY** People 60 years-old or older who may have misunderstandings about the process and potential benefits; and
- **LEGAL IMMIGRANTS*** Immigrants may misunderstand eligibility requirements related to citizenship.

**There are other immigrant groups that could benefit from this educational effort. You may want to connect with local SNAP eligibility workers in your community to identify other distinct groups to target. Some FNS outreach materials are available in 36 languages and can be downloaded from the FNS Web site. Refer to the [Resources](#) section of this toolkit.*

How do I get started with outreach?

You can ask organizations in the community you wish to target about their current efforts to conduct SNAP outreach project, and whether they have a resource guide, task force, or advisory group. Other State SNAP offices and community-based groups would be a good starting point for such a discussion. They may be able to share State and local information and may also have informational materials to add to your effort. By working together, you will be able to further your goals and avoid duplication.

As you start your project, be sure to keep SNAP workers informed of your activities. Explore ways of working together to reduce application barriers—the best outreach efforts will not work if people run into barriers at the SNAP office. Extended office hours, child care areas in waiting rooms, and shorter applications are some examples of how SNAP offices can increase accessibility. Potential roadblocks such as crowded offices, long waiting lines, or repeated visits to the SNAP office may counter your efforts to educate potential applicants about SNAP and prepare them for certification interviews.

Are funds available to help pay for a State outreach project?

One way to pay for part of your outreach project is through a State outreach plan. Outreach is an allowable administrative cost for SNAP. States can receive 50 percent reimbursement from the Federal Government for necessary, reasonable, and allowable SNAP outreach expenditures. States have the option of developing an outreach plan and submitting it for approval to their FNS regional office. FNS encourages States to develop and submit an outreach plan since it provides structure for the activity and enables FNS regional offices to provide technical assistance. The outreach plan also formalizes the State's plans and may be used as a powerful tool to garner community support and resources. Instructions for developing and submitting a plan, as well as examples of allowable and unallowable outreach activities and applicable fiscal policies for State plans, can be found at: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/stateplan.htm.

For more information about State outreach plans, contact your FNS regional office. Contact persons and email addresses are included at the end of this toolkit.

Can States provide nutrition education too?

Yes, SNAP funding is available for nutrition education. States can develop a nutrition education plan and submit it to their FNS regional office. Almost all States have optional nutrition education plans in place. For a list of organizations participating in State nutrition education plans, go to the Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Web site at www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/Stategates/index.html.

What outreach is happening on a national level and how does our State fit in?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a nationwide effort to educate and inform eligible nonparticipants — with special emphasis on working poor, elderly, and immigrants — about SNAP.

The campaign's primary goal is to increase enrollment in SNAP and to reinforce its role as a nutrition assistance program. The objectives of the education effort were developed with advice and input from many local SNAP offices and partners, as well as those in target audiences. These objectives are to:

- Expand awareness of SNAP as a nutrition assistance and work support program;
- Inform eligible, unenrolled people about where and how they can apply; and
- Ensure that people who are eligible to enroll have reasonable access and can participate with dignity and respect.

This effort, designed to raise awareness of and change beliefs about SNAP, includes promotion of a national toll-free information line through a variety of English and Spanish paid radio advertisements and public service announcements. These advertisements run on stations in major population centers, and in areas with particularly large numbers of eligible but unenrolled

populations. Over a seven year period, 2003-2010, markets carrying ads with the SNAP National Hotline number averaged a 272 percent increase in information packets. (Calls could not be tracked in areas where the ads offer a local toll-free number rather than the national one.)

States are an important part of this national effort to inform low-income people across the country about how they and their families can eat right, even when money's tight. The outreach you conduct Statewide and on a local level is a vital part of the national campaign.

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions about this toolkit, or about how to conduct outreach to increase local enrollment in SNAP, please email us at fspoutreach@fns.usda.gov or refer to the FNS Web site, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>. Your FNS regional office is also a good source of information about outreach.

You may also wish to tap the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition, a Web-based network of national advocacy groups and partner organizations, for helpful insights about ways to reach SNAP target audiences. Details about this group can be found in the "Resources" section under "General Food Stamp Outreach Resources," or by visiting www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm.

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

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.

SNAP Fact Sheet

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger. On average, it helps more than 28 million (fiscal year 2008 data) low-income people buy nutritious food each month and make healthy food choices within a limited budget. Eating healthier foods helps low-income people and their families stay well and have the energy they need for today's active lifestyles.

To apply for SNAP benefits, a person must go through the local SNAP office. If it is not possible to get to the office, a person may apply by telephone or make an appointment for another time or place. Any knowledgeable adult in the family can initiate an application, or the household may designate an "authorized representative" to apply for them.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must have INCOMES under certain levels, based on household size. A household is defined as people who live together and eat meals together.

Applicants may have RESOURCES, but they must be less than a certain level:

- \$2,000 for most households
- \$3,000 for a household with an elderly person (age 60 or older) or disabled person
- Most States exempt one or more vehicles from household resources
- A household's home does not count as a resource

An immigrant is eligible to apply for SNAP benefits if he/she:

- Has been in the United States as a legal resident for five years
- Is a legal immigrant child (not born in the United States)
- Has earned, or can be credited with, 40 quarters of work
- Is a refugee or asylee
- Has a military connection
- Is a member of certain Indian tribes

NOTE: A child born in the United States or a legal immigrant child is eligible for SNAP benefits, even if other household members are not eligible because of their immigration status.

Please check with your local SNAP office for more information about these eligibility requirements.

The amount of the SNAP benefit for each household takes into account the household's income, current living expenses, and resources.



Outreach Tools

SNAP outreach is critical to reaching those low-income people who are not aware that they may be eligible for, or do not know how to apply for, program benefits. The Food and Nutrition Service has several efforts under way to help with local outreach:

Tools Available

- A prescreening eligibility tool, written at the 6th grade level in both English and Spanish, is available for anyone with Internet access. The tool helps people learn if they are eligible and how much they **might** receive in monthly benefits. It can be found at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/
- A toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) is available in Spanish and English.
- Free educational posters and fliers in Spanish and English can be ordered at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>.
- Five basics documents in 36 languages can be found online at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm.
- A national SNAP Outreach Coalition brings together national and local organizations interested in SNAP outreach and helps to empower these groups to do more and better outreach.
- The FSOC listserv was developed to be a communication mechanism for those interested in outreach at the local, State, and national levels, and to share ideas among groups. To join, send an email to fsoc@fns.usda.gov.

SNAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net. The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies administer the program at State and local levels. Their responsibilities include determining eligibility and distributing benefits.

Who is eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements can get SNAP benefits. Household income and other resources have to be under certain limits and are reviewed. The program allows for certain deductions like housing costs, child support, medical expenses, or child-care costs. A household may also have up to \$2000 in assets. Households with a member age 60 or older—or a disabled member—may have up to \$3000 in assets. Assets that do not count toward eligibility requirements include: a home, a vehicle to carry a physically disabled member of a household, the fair market value of one vehicle (up to \$4,650; higher limits in most States), and the resources of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Specific details are outlined in the FNS-313 brochure at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>.

Where can people find out if they are eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

People with access to a computer can quickly find out if he/she might qualify for SNAP benefits through the prescreening tool available on the USDA Web site, www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns. Local SNAP offices can provide information about eligibility, and USDA operates a toll-free number (1-800-221-5689) for people to call if they want to receive information about SNAP by mail. Most States also have a toll-free information/hotline number that can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/hotlines.htm. Some community organizations work closely with SNAP offices and can provide information on the application process.

What is the EBT card?

All 50 States have made the transition from paper coupons to the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card is like a debit card and can be used at USDA-authorized grocery stores across the country. At the cash register, the customer or cashier swipes the EBT card through the card reader at the point of sale and the customer enters a personal identification number to secure the transaction. The system deducts the exact dollar amount of the purchase from the customer's EBT account and deposits it into the retailer's bank account. Once the SNAP EBT transaction is complete, a receipt shows the amount of the SNAP purchase and the amount of SNAP benefits remaining in the EBT account.

SNAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are some of SNAP's benefits?

SNAP provides much-needed help so that low-income people can put good, healthy food on the table. SNAP helps with the grocery bill. Households can use SNAP to purchase breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products. Many States offer free nutrition education materials and programs for SNAP benefit recipients. SNAP benefits also help the local community. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Plus, SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars — so when everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.

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Why is there a national SNAP outreach effort?

Currently, only about 65 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are enrolled. The goal of this national SNAP outreach effort is to raise awareness of SNAP eligibility and benefits. The campaign includes promoting a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) (or State toll-free lines where available) through a variety of English and Spanish radio advertisements in major population centers and in areas with large numbers of eligible but unenrolled people.

Who is involved in SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is a community-wide effort enlisting the help of State and local SNAP offices, faith-based groups, food banks, and others. Together, these groups play an important role in helping low-income families learn about and access SNAP. Community groups can help in many ways. For example, they can distribute informational materials, conduct prescreening for program eligibility, provide application assistance and forms, and help gather verification documents.

A core group of national anti hunger advocacy groups and other organizations are part of a group called the SNAP Outreach Coalition. The Coalition members also collaborate to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach to local anti hunger projects.

SNAP Talking Points And Messages

Following are suggested talking points regarding SNAP. You are encouraged to localize this information with State or local SNAP data, or promote State-specific resources such as a toll-free SNAP information line or prescreening tool.

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger.

- SNAP benefits provide much-needed temporary help with the grocery bill so that low-income people can put nutritious, healthy food on the table.
- Nearly half of those who receive SNAP benefits are children.

SNAP is a nutrition program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net.

- Low-income people get financial support to help with their grocery bills so they can buy fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, dairy products, and other healthy foods. In addition, many SNAP participants are offered free nutrition education materials and classes to help them make good purchasing choices and stretch their food dollars.

SNAP has made some fundamental changes in recent years that make it easier to:

- Find out about the program
 - Individuals can call [1-800-221-5689](tel:1-800-221-5689) for a free information packet to learn more about SNAP and how to apply. Information is available in English and Spanish.
 - Individuals can go to a Web site featuring a prescreening tool and, by answering a few simple questions, determine if they might be eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they could receive. The Web site address is www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/snap.
- Apply for benefits
 - FNS and States are working to simplify the application process.
- Shop for healthy food
 - There are no more paper coupons. Now, benefits are delivered with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card at the grocery store.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income people, local retailers, and local communities.

- Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community.
- The average benefit per person is about \$101 a month (fiscal year 2008 data). That translates into money spent at local grocery stores.
- SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars. When everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.
- Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.
- Since SNAP benefits help defray the costs of buying healthy foods, low-income people are less likely to have to make hard choices between eating right and paying for other essentials.

USDA and the anti hunger community are working as partners to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

- Many low-income people are not aware of their eligibility and how to apply, particularly those who are working, seniors, or legal immigrants.
- To ensure that everyone who is eligible knows about the benefits of the program, USDA is conducting a national media campaign.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

Why are Questions and Answers (Q&As) important? Q&As are anticipated questions and suggested answers that program administrators and outreach spokespeople can study to help get ready for media interviews or other public speaking. You might receive these questions from the media, the public, or others.

Here are some examples of Q&As about SNAP outreach:

Why are you encouraging people to enroll in SNAP?

RESPONSE

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income people put healthy food on the table. SNAP supplements the food budgets of low-income people who are having a tough time paying for food for themselves or their families. Children have important nutritional needs and they make up about half of those currently receiving SNAP benefits. We want everyone who is eligible to have the opportunity to apply for benefits so that they can have access to healthier foods. Our outreach efforts are specially targeted to people who are least likely to understand that they may be eligible: elderly persons, immigrants, and working poor.

Why are you encouraging the use of SNAP benefits when application numbers are increasing already?

RESPONSE

Yes, enrollment numbers are increasing. However, there are still many people who need help. Currently, in an average month, more than 13 million eligible households are NOT receiving SNAP benefits. This is usually because they do not think they qualify, or think there are people in greater need of the benefits. We want to reach out to those people, encourage them to get prescreened, and, if appropriate, apply for SNAP benefits so they can get help with their grocery bills. SNAP benefits are not only good for low-income people; they also help the local economy.

Are the financial benefits worth the effort to enroll?

RESPONSE

SNAP benefits are not intended to be the only means of paying the grocery bill, but they do help low-income people purchase healthier food items, such as fruits and vegetables. Monthly benefits vary based on income and household size. On average, an eligible person receives around \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data). This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods for a healthy diet.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

Can people purchase whatever they want with SNAP benefits?

RESPONSE

SNAP benefits are intended to supplement a household's grocery budget and help them purchase healthier foods. Households can use SNAP benefits to purchase a wide range of food items. Participants are encouraged to use their SNAP benefits wisely to maximize their nutrition impact and economic value. To that end, they are encouraged to buy nutrient-dense foods such as whole-grain bread and cereals; fruits and vegetables; low-fat meats, fish, and poultry and milk products. Other items that can be purchased with SNAP benefits are seeds and plants that produce food. Nonfood items cannot be bought with SNAP benefits.

I have heard that enrolling in SNAP is difficult. What does it involve?

RESPONSE

USDA and State and local agencies that administer SNAP are working to improve the application process by simplifying forms, offering extended office hours, and, in some instances, allowing online applications. Anyone can check to see if they might qualify for benefits through an online prescreening process at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/.

Anyone interested in finding out more about how to apply should call 1-800-221-5689 for information. [Localize this information if your State or community has a toll-free number.]

How long does it take to start receiving benefits?

RESPONSE

If you are in special need because of very low income, you may receive benefits within 7 days, if eligible. However, for others, it may take up to 30 days to receive benefits. At the time of application, an eligibility worker will give applicants this type of information.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

What measures are taken to prevent SNAP fraud?

RESPONSE

USDA is committed to integrity in all of its nutrition assistance programs. USDA has taken several steps to make it easier to identify and punish those who misuse SNAP benefits. Retailers who violate program rules, recipients who try to obtain their benefits based on false information, or recipients who sell their benefits can be removed from the program, fined, and even jailed. Also, with the introduction of the electronic benefit card (EBT), which works much like a debit card at a grocery store, the USDA is better able to track and deter fraud.

Doesn't the EBT card make it easier for people to abuse the system?

RESPONSE

No. The EBT card makes it more difficult for people to commit SNAP fraud. EBT eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction, making fraud easier to detect. Not only does the EBT card cut down on SNAP abuse, but it also reduces the stigma some people associate with receiving SNAP benefits.

Why are you advertising a free benefit for poor people?

RESPONSE

SNAP is a nutrition program that helps low-income people have better diets, and better eating can mean better health. There are many people who are eligible for SNAP benefits but are not participating in the program. SNAP is a win-win for local retailers and local communities. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Average SNAP benefits are about \$101 a month per person (fiscal year 2008 data), translating to money spent in local grocery stores. Everyone wins when eligible people take advantage of benefits to which they are entitled.

Nutrition Education Providers In Your Community

Many communities have a wealth of information available to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP. Focusing on nutrition can help get the attention of individuals who might not be inclined to pick up SNAP informational materials. This provides an opportunity to explain SNAP as a nutrition assistance program to potential applicants — as well as employers, community leaders, and others — who might still associate SNAP with welfare programs. Learn more about SNAP nutrition education providers in your community and what role each organization can play to increase SNAP participation.

What is the goal of SNAP Nutrition Education?

The goal of SNAP Nutrition Education is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within their limited budget and choose active lifestyles, as the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends.

How can outreach and nutrition education efforts work together?

Outreach and SNAP Nutrition Education can work together to communicate messages about how SNAP can help needy families obtain healthy foods. The possibility of better nutrition can help generate interest in SNAP among potentially eligible persons as well as community workers serving that population. SNAP Nutrition Education providers have conducted needs assessments to identify which nutrition messages to promote and strategies for communicating these messages to SNAP-eligible populations. They also have access to nutrition education materials that are consistent with national nutrition initiatives. By working together, outreach and nutrition education can communicate accurate, unified, and reinforcing messages that have a more powerful reach.

FNS has developed a series of nutrition education and promotion materials targeting mothers entitled, "Loving Your Family, Feeding their Future: Nutrition Education Through the Food Stamp Program." These nutrition education messages address the needs of English and Spanish speaking mothers with limited literacy skills. This series of education materials includes an educator's handbook, four discussion sessions with accompanying participant handouts, participant guidebook, and an online educator's learning module with a flash video component. These materials were developed primarily for SNAP nutrition education participants, however, they can be used in other nutrition education settings with similar target audiences such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Educators can access "Loving Your Family" materials at <http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov>.



Learn More About SNAP Nutrition Education

States often provide nutrition education to SNAP participants through contracts with the Cooperative Extension System, State Nutrition Networks, public health departments, and other organizations.

The Food Stamp Nutrition Connection, a project of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and the National Agricultural Library, maintains a list of State SNAP Nutrition Education providers. You can access it online at http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=15&tax_level=1, request a print copy by phone at [301-504-5719](tel:301-504-5719), or email FSNC@nal.usda.gov.

You can also contact your State or local SNAP offices for information on SNAP Nutrition Education activities in your area.

SNAP Name Change

Introduction: SNAP: A New Era in Nutrition Assistance

In the summer of 2008, the U.S. Congress passed the Food, Conservation and Energy Act (also known as the Farm Bill) mandating a new national name for the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The Farm Bill renamed the FSP as “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” (SNAP), but States were not mandated by Congress to use the new name. Therefore, States retain the right to choose a name other than SNAP. Visit [this chart](#) for a list of current State names.

This chapter describes the reasons for the name change and provides information, strategies and tools each State agency can use to help communicate the new name to those eligible for SNAP benefits. It also discusses challenges and solutions related to rebranding the program from food stamps to SNAP, and how States can augment the national campaign. Finally, the chapter provides guidance on how to use the new branding elements, such as the graphic (logo) and tagline.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is the new national name for the Federal FSP. Each year, SNAP helps an average of more than 40 million people in 18 million households supplement their grocery budgets.¹ As the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition assistance safety net, SNAP is a vital program, particularly for some of our society’s most vulnerable citizens, including children and seniors.

1. National Level Annual Summary for Persons and Households, 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain/htm>

When Congress renamed the program, did they make any changes to the rules?

Yes, the 2008 Farm Bill made improvements to SNAP in the following ways:

- **An increase in the [minimum benefit](#)** and standard deduction;
- **The elimination of the cap** on dependent care deduction (child care and care for elderly or disabled household members); and
- **The exclusion of education and retirement accounts** from countable resources.

What are the key reasons for the name change?

- **The new name focuses on nutrition.** The program helps low-income people eat a more nutritious diet by supplementing their food budget. Households receiving SNAP benefits can use extra food dollars to buy healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk products.
- **The new name reflects a more modern program.** Today, electronic benefit transfer is the sole means of benefit issuance. There are no more stamps or coupons. This has not only helped to reduce program stigma, but it has cut down on fraud and costs associated with printing, storing, and distributing coupons.
- **The new name reduces stigma associated with “food stamps.”** Historically, some participants felt embarrassed to apply for benefits or use their coupons at grocery stores. The new name helps reduce stigma by stressing the importance of nutrition. The EBT card also reduces the appearance that the user is different from any other shopper.

Why should States use the SNAP name?

The following are several reasons why each State should consider changing its name to SNAP:

- **It promotes healthy eating.** Changing the name is an opportunity to promote messages about healthy eating to those who receive the benefits. The SNAP name focuses on the importance of nutrition.
- **It reflects the program's current format.** The new name reflects a change to the program and its current format for issuing benefits, which is an EBT card, not stamps or coupons.
- **It reduces program stigma.** The new name can reduce the stigma associated with the FSP. The new name can help States promote the nutrition benefits of the program, new policies that make it easier to access, and the use of EBT cards.
- **It helps avoid confusion.** FNS is working hard to transition the name from FSP to SNAP. Keeping the State's program name consistent with the Federal name makes it clear that this is not a different program. Caregivers living in other States and new or transferring applicants will have an easier time locating the local SNAP office. When a State's name is consistent with the national SNAP brand, you are ultimately raising awareness about your program and encouraging more eligible individuals and families to apply.
- **It allows States to take advantage of nationally developed materials and outreach activities.** FNS has developed a range of outreach and nutrition education materials with the SNAP name that partners, States and local offices can use. The change includes a new logo and tagline. By using a different name, States may have to divert limited resources to cover the costs to develop similar materials. FNS also buys paid advertising to promote SNAP in various markets across the country each year. Because the SNAP name is used in these ad spots, FNS can only purchase advertising in States that use the SNAP name.
- **People like the name SNAP.** During consumer focus groups, a majority of participants responded positively to the new name. Respondents said that SNAP explains the purpose of the program and emphasizes how this nutrition benefit helps individuals and families.



Did You Know?

- Program participants in States now using the new name SNAP do not need to reapply to continue receiving benefits.
- The new national name, SNAP, highlights USDA FNS' focus on nutrition and putting healthy food within reach for low-income households.
- Nutrition education is available to help SNAP applicants and participants learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.
- Children automatically qualify for free school breakfast and lunch when they receive SNAP benefits. Some participants may qualify for WIC benefits, as well.
- Program benefits are issued on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to debit cards, and can be used in authorized retail stores and farmers markets nationwide.
- As of June 17, 2009, food stamp coupons are no longer accepted at any grocery, convenience store, or farmers market.
- SNAP is good for communities. Research shows that every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$9.20—nearly twice as much—in total community spending.

The Power of a Strong Brand

Each day, American consumers are bombarded by hundreds of messages and images. The public has an overwhelming number of products, services, and programs to choose from, making it difficult to break through the clutter. Companies and organizations try to differentiate themselves by creating a brand.

What is a brand?

A brand is two things. First, it is a name or a symbol that is commonly known to identify an organization, product, or service. Second, a brand separates one organization, product, or service from competing organizations, products, or services.

What are the benefits of a brand?

The benefits of a brand are significant. A brand:

- **Provides recognition:** It helps your audience connect an organization with a product or service, thereby increasing credibility.
- **Promotes loyalty:** When your audiences trust your brand, they are more likely to be loyal to it.
- **Implies solidity and stability:** While there are dynamic, small organizations that have strong brands, a brand often projects an image of an established, large organization which, in turn, attracts more people to it.
- **Suggests quality:** Whether it represents a great product or superb customer service, a brand usually equates to something that is “better” than the unbranded alternative.
- **Connotes experience and reliability:** It projects a sense of longevity and a more trustworthy organization or product.

What has FNS done to establish the SNAP brand?

FNS has developed and focus group-tested a logo and messages with consumers. It has also developed [guidelines](#) for how to use the brand in outreach materials and advertising. The guidelines tell where to get different versions of the SNAP logo to suit your needs.

What is the SNAP brand?

The SNAP brand focuses on nutrition. At the heart of the SNAP brand is the idea that eating nutritious foods is important for everyone and that the program is meant to supplement the grocery budget of low-income individuals and families during tough times.

What are some of the national SNAP brand's core elements?

- **A positioning statement:** This defines vision and values. It establishes a tone, describes what the program means in terms of the emotional and practical needs of the customer, and serves as “umbrella language” from which key messages for target audiences are derived.

SNAP POSITIONING STATEMENT

Putting healthy food within reach.

Good nutrition and physical activity are an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. But sometimes, bills and unexpected expenses make it difficult to buy healthy food. When that happens, SNAP can put healthy food within reach and provide information to help choose nutritious food.

SNAP is the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The new name reflects changes made to meet the needs of our clients. More benefits are accessible to more people. Through nutrition education partners, SNAP helps clients learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.

With SNAP, healthy food is within reach even when times are tough.

- **A tagline:** A good tagline is a way to quickly and powerfully connect with the public, and it is the first impression of your brand. The national SNAP tagline, which was developed through research and testing, is: *Putting Healthy Food Within Reach*. The Spanish version of this tagline is: *Alimentos Saludables a Su Alcance*.

ENGLISH TAGLINE

Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

SPANISH TAGLINE

Alimentos Saludables a Su Alcance

- **A visual:** A logo is a visual. It is a graphic depiction of your organization, product, service, or program. It has the ability to quickly stir emotions or persuade people to find out more about what it represents. The more your audience positively connects a logo with its owner, the more brand equity or value is built. A relationship begins to form between the brand and the customer. Once that relationship is firmly established, all a customer needs to do is see the logo to know what he or she will get from that brand. While consistency in visuals is important, they do change to keep up with the times.

The official SNAP logo was designed based on focus group research with both current participants and eligible nonparticipants. The logo emphasizes the importance of a well-balanced diet by mirroring the colors used for each food group in MyPyramid and focuses on nutrition by showing healthy foods in a grocery bag.

ENGLISH



Tips & Tools

For more information, FNS has developed specific [guidelines](#) regarding the use of the SNAP logo.

SPANISH



SNAP Logo Usage Guidelines

Non-Interference and Sizing

Standard practice is to use the logo and wordmark with the tagline.

Non-interference space for the logo is .25 inches surrounding its outer diameter (farthest point of logo, outward), illustrated below.



The minimum size of the logo is 1.5 inches in width, illustrated below. This is the preferred smallest size for readability, and any variations reducing this size for usage should be cleared with USDA Food and Nutrition Service.



When using the color version, use logo file colors as provided ONLY. Occasionally, it may be necessary to use a black and white version of the SNAP mark. Please find below suitable example, in place of the color version.



SNAP Logo Requests

To request an electronic version of the SNAP logo and tagline, please email SNAPHQ-web@fns.usda.gov with the subject line SNAP Logo Request. Carefully follow logo guidelines. The logo comes in multiple formats, in color, and in black and white.

In your email request, please specify:

- the logo format you want (e.g., high resolution, low resolution, or .eps file)
- what color logo you want (e.g., black and white or color)
- desired logo language (e.g., English or Spanish)
- how you plan to use the logo

SNAP Color Palette

Dark Green	Light Green	Cyan	Purple	Red	Orange
C: 98	C: 75	C: 100	C: 70	C: 15	C: 0
M: 0	M: 0	M: 0	M: 80	M: 98	M: 60
Y: 72	Y: 80	Y: 0	Y: 0	Y: 100	Y: 100
K: 61	K: 0	K: 0	K: 0	K: 10	K: 0
R: 0	R: 47	R: 0	R: 105	R: 191	R: 245
G: 88	G: 181	G: 174	G: 80	G: 38	G: 130
B: 61	B: 106	B: 239	B: 161	B: 36	B: 32

What are some of the national SNAP brand's core elements?

- **SNAP message platform.** A message platform contains several core messages. These messages were developed based on the target audience and designed to create consistent branding of the program. Key and supporting messages are intended to be woven into all SNAP materials, advertising, talking points, speeches, and presentations.

The following are the official SNAP key messages:

- As of October 1, 2008, SNAP became the new name for the Federal 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.
- Through nutrition education partners, SNAP helps clients learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.
- Changes have been made to make the program more accessible.
- The program continues to stimulate the local economy. Research shows that every \$5 of new benefits generates up to \$9.20 in total community spending.
- SNAP puts healthy food within reach for low-income Americans.
- SNAP responds quickly to meet sudden need. Benefits are available in as little as 7 days in an emergency.
- Feeding children is a priority for SNAP. Out of every \$4 in benefits, \$3 go to families with children.
- SNAP is the Federal name for the program. State programs may have a different name.



5 Guidelines for Building Strong Brands

1. **Brand identity.** Have an identity for your brand. How would you like people to perceive your program? What image do you want it to convey?
2. **Value proposition.** Know what value your brand brings to people's lives and convey that through visuals and written words.
3. **Brand position.** Understand how your program's brand fits into the larger national brand.
4. **Execution.** Execute the communication program so that your State brand will be durable enough to convey your program over time.
5. **Consistency.** Having a consistent identity over an extended time is essential to a strong brand. Once you decide on your brand, maintain the symbols, imagery, and metaphors that work. This will increase awareness of your State's program.

Co-Branding: Highlighting Your Unique Brand While Adopting SNAP

SNAP outreach, whether it is on the State or local level, is part of the larger national effort. To that end, States may want to consider co-branding with SNAP.

What is co-branding?

Co-branding is the practice of using more than one brand name together to represent a single product, service, or program. When done effectively, co-branding provides a way for agencies, divisions or organizations that fall under one name to join forces so that their outreach efforts work in harmony. However, State agency identifiers or program brands should not compete with each other. For example, only one tagline should be used—never more than that—otherwise you begin to clutter your own message. It is best to make co-branding decisions on a case-by-case basis.

What can co-branding include?

Co-branding might include using the SNAP logo along with another logo or incorporating SNAP messaging in a brochure your organization is developing. For example, MyPyramid and SNAP nutrition education (SNAP-Ed) have co-branded with SNAP. Please refer to the [logo guidelines](#) for more guidance.



Did You Know?

FNS encourages States to conduct local outreach efforts. State agencies can receive reimbursement for approximately 50 percent of their administrative costs for outreach efforts. In addition, community and faith-based organizations may serve as contractors under [State outreach plans](#). FNS also offers a number of resources to help people on a tight budget eat healthy, such as [recipes](#) that use low-cost but healthy ingredients and nutrition education courses or [materials](#).

Creative Ways To Promote SNAP

1. Drop ready-to-use content (known as matte copy) into an e-newsletter or email.
2. Pitch the matte article to your local community newspaper or local blogger.
3. Use standard content to develop fliers and place them at grocery stores, food banks, health clinics, libraries, community centers, churches, and other places that serve low-income populations.
4. Use the SNAP logo as a Web button on your organization's Web site.
5. Pitch the [PSAs](#) and [radionovelas](#) to appropriate media outlets.

Communication Tools

FNS has created free materials that are available to States.

- **Visual with tagline.** To request an electronic version of the SNAP logo and tagline, please email SNAPHQ-web@fns.usda.gov with the subject line SNAP Logo Request. Carefully follow logo guidelines. The logo comes in multiple formats, in color, and in black and white. In your email request, please specify:
 - the logo format you want (e.g., high resolution, low resolution, or .eps file)
 - what color logo you want (e.g., black and white or color)
 - desired logo language (e.g., English or Spanish)
 - how you plan to use the logo.
- **Core message platform.** You may want to use one or more of the official SNAP messages. By using the same messaging language as FNS, you are helping to build a consistent, well-recognized brand across the country.
- **Avery labels.** FNS provides a template for standard Avery 5163 labels or equivalent with a notice about the change to SNAP. Print these [labels](#) and add them to your existing materials. An informational notice about the new name is also provided with all orders for outreach materials.
- **Newsletter article and paragraph.** FNS has developed a [newsletter article](#). You may choose to use some or all of the content from this article and add it to your own in-house newsletters. Similarly, this [standard paragraph](#) can be useful content for products such as fliers, letters, and reports you may develop in order to raise awareness about SNAP.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs).** FNS has updated the [television](#) and [radio public service announcements](#) in English and Spanish to include the new SNAP name and tagline. For detailed guidance on how to pitch PSAs to television and radio outlets, refer to the [PSA chapter](#) of the Community Outreach Toolkit.
- **Spanish Radionovelas.** For low-income, eligible Spanish-speaking audiences, FNS developed a [radionovela series](#) that includes ten 2-minute episodes that promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP and provide information about who are eligible and how they can apply.

Communication Channels: How to Get the Word Out



Partnerships

How can partnerships help SNAP agencies with their outreach?

Partners can help by educating potential SNAP applicants about the benefits of their participation in SNAP and by preparing them for the application process. This can make determining eligibility of applicants more efficient.

Here is what you will find in this section:

- Ten steps for establishing a partnership;
- Useful template materials that can be tailored for local needs; and
- Examples of outreach and partnership materials.

What if I have questions about outreach and partnerships?

Go to the SNAP Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>. There you can find free materials such as posters, brochures, and fliers to order, as well as general information about outreach, outreach strategies, and promising practices.

Learn from your colleagues by joining the SNAP Outreach Coalition, a nationwide network of advocacy groups and partner organizations that works to promote the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. Formed in 2003, this core group of national food banks, community and faith-based groups, and service organizations works together to end hunger and improve nutrition.

For more information about the Coalition, please visit the Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm>. You will also find a listing of national partners that may have a local chapter with which you can collaborate.

What are the steps for developing and maintaining a partnership?

You can establish a partnership by following 10 simple steps. These steps may also be helpful if you are approached by a community organization seeking a partnership with you.

10 Steps To Developing And Maintaining Partnerships

1. Find out your State and local policies
2. Assess your customer service
3. Select a target audience
4. Determine which partners will most effectively reach your target audience
5. Research and get prepared
6. Contact your prospective partner
7. Jointly establish your outreach plan
8. Confirm the partnership roles and responsibilities in writing
9. Stay in touch with your partner
10. Evaluate your partnership

Step 1 Find Out State & Local Policies

As a State or local Government agency, there are some important things you must do before you approach partners with a proposal to work together:

- Always let people in your chain of command know of your plans.
- Be sure you have their approval to move forward with your partnership plans before you begin.

Research Your State Or Local Policies

In general, keep the following in mind as you think about your potential partnerships:

- Your State may have activities that are coordinated at the State level only.
- Your State may require approval before a local office can conduct certain types of activities.
- There may be paperwork to complete.
- Your State may already have contracts or grants with groups that could potentially be partners. Your activities must not interfere with the contract or grant.

Then make sure you understand the specific State and local policies and procedures on:

- Partnerships and the types of activities that partners can do
- Use of volunteers
- Posting of information on the Web sites of other organizations
- Working with media
- Working with businesses or retailers
- Provision of translation services
- Use of administrative funds to conduct outreach
- Contracting requirements

Does your State have an optional outreach plan?

Find out if your State has an optional plan for SNAP outreach. Such a plan may already involve grants or contracts to local organizations that you might consider as partners. Your potential partners may already have SNAP funds to design, develop, and/or print materials or conduct outreach activities.

If your State doesn't already have a plan, you may want to explore this as a possible funding source for your partnership. If the partnership is funded through the optional State outreach plan, your State grant or contract rules, such as rules regarding sole source awards, competition, and monitoring, among other things, will apply.

Step 2 Assess Customer Service

Make sure there are no customer service barriers for potential customers. Take a look around your local office and imagine how customers might view it. Assess service procedures to see if any changes might be needed as a new outreach project is implemented. Consider the following:

- Does the office offer extended hours of operation?
- Is there a child care area in the waiting room?
- How long is your application form? What languages is it in? Is it easily available? Is there a person available to help the applicant fill out the form?
- Is there a 24-hour drop-off box for applications and verification documents to make it easy for applicants to return information after normal business hours? The drop-off box also saves time, as an applicant does not need to wait to see a receptionist or eligibility worker.

Step 3 Select A Target Audience

Next, figure out what populations you want to reach through your partnership. National SNAP data shows that the most hard-to-reach and underserved populations are seniors (age 60 and older), immigrants, and the working poor. But the target audience for the community selected for an outreach project may be different. For example, your targeted community may have a large number of homeless individuals or unemployed people. You can:

- Talk to others about which groups in your community tend to be underserved.
- Work with your State office to review State- or community-specific information on underserved populations.

Step 4 Determine Partner Groups

To decide whom to choose as partners, brainstorm and make a list of organizations that your target audience trusts and uses. Seek advice from others:

- Ask staff in your office which organizations they work with on a regular basis.
- Take advantage of any advisory groups or county boards that work with the local agency to find out more about how best to reach the target group.
- Ask existing partners for input about other groups that should be involved in community outreach.
- Ask customers during the intake process for the names of groups with whom they come into contact and how they learned about SNAP.



Using Volunteers

Volunteers are enthusiastic and eager to help. If your plan calls for the use of volunteers, be sure you discuss these issues with your partner as well:

- How will you train volunteers to let them know what they can or can't do? For example, they can schedule appointments and fill out application forms. (Note that volunteers cannot certify households for SNAP benefits).
- How will you educate volunteers about SNAP?
- How will you handle volunteer turnover?
- How will you thank your volunteers?

Step 5 Research & Get Prepared

Increase your chances of success by being prepared before you contact your prospective partner.

Research

Take some time to learn as much as you can about your prospective partner. Make sure you understand the role the organization plays in the community and whom the organization serves. Following are some ways you can do this:

- Ask others in your office what they know about the prospective partner.
- Ask if anyone in your office has the name of a contact.
- Study the organization's Web site.

Get Prepared

- Collect your ideas. Be prepared for questions your partner may ask.
- Be sure you can:
 - Provide a brief overview of your organization.
 - For community partners, promote the health and economic benefits of SNAP.
 - Present the partnership as a “win-win” situation for all parties.
 - Explain the role partners can play to assist potentially eligible people in accessing SNAP.
 - Discuss the importance of the project and why a potential partner should work with you to help their customers learn about and apply for SNAP benefits.

Special Considerations For Business Partners

Although local businesses have a genuine interest in helping out the needy in their community and will most likely have a formal community relations staff member, they also are driven by profit motivation and will have to think about their bottom line. If you plan to approach a local business or retailer about partnership, you may have to emphasize the economic arguments for participation expansion more than others. Be sure you can tell retailers how SNAP participation helps their business thrive. Be sure you can tell employers how participation in SNAP will help their employees.

See end of this section for a list of activities for outreach partnerships.

Step 6 Contact Prospective Partner

As you approach potential partners, remember that enthusiasm goes a long way. But if a potential partner says “no” to your ideas, do not get discouraged. Your ideas might not fit into their schedule right now. There will be other partnership opportunities. Try the next organization on your list.

Call

First, call the potential partner to start the ball rolling and gauge his or her interest. Here are some tips for making this initial call:

- Practice the talking points in advance. Do this regardless of whether you are talking to an acquaintance or someone you don't know.
- When speaking, use a conversational tone.
- Be respectful of your contact's time; ask if it is a good time for a conversation.
- Offer to schedule an appointment to conduct a meeting in person.
- Invite him or her to your offices for a tour and a brief overview of the SNAP application process.

Write

If you can't reach your contact by phone, send an email or letter. The following are some tips on composing your email or letter:

- Personalize and localize the information as much as possible. Your partner will want to know why you selected his or her group and what role you will want the partner to play on the project.
- Keep the letter short and to the point.
- Proofread your letter before sending it out.
- Promise to follow up. Don't wait for a call. Post a reminder on your calendar and call back in a few days.

Meet

If you have scheduled a meeting with your partner, here are some helpful tips for a successful meeting:

- Confirm the meeting date, time, and equipment a day or two before the scheduled meeting.
- Consider sending your partner an agenda and some informational materials by email or mail that he or she can review before the meeting.
- Tailor your presentation to your audience. Take along materials from this toolkit or your agency that are appropriate to your audience, and leave materials for the partner to review after the meeting.
- Provide your partner with information about the SNAP application process. If you are talking with a local SNAP office, discuss how your organization will submit the application forms. Clear procedures are needed to protect the date the application was filed.

- Be clear about your role in this project.
- Be clear and direct about how you would like your partner to be involved.
- Be clear on funding. If there is no funding available, be sure that is understood.
- Bring your partnership ideas to the table.
- Listen to the ideas your future partner suggests.
- Look professional, be on time, and be respectful of your partner's time.

Step 7 Jointly Determine Plan

Once you and your partner have agreed to work together, take some time to jointly establish a plan for your outreach. Discuss your goals and what strategies or activities you will use to reach those goals.

Examples of outreach goals:

- Educate people about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.
- Increase the number of applicants who fill out and file an application form for SNAP benefits at locations other than a SNAP office.
- Increase the number of individuals prescreened for SNAP benefits.
- Increase the number of callers to your toll-free number.
- Develop a local Web site that will contain community resources or other information.
- Increase the number of hits to your Web site.
- Promote the Web site location containing SNAP application form or prescreening tool, if applicable.
- Distribute application forms at locations such as food banks.
- Promote the EBT card to possible participants as a confidential way to receive benefits.
- Promote extended hours.

You will also want to discuss the following issues with your new partner:

- How many people do you want to reach?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each partner?
- How will funding be handled?
- How will you evaluate your work?
- How will problems be resolved?

Step 8 Confirm Partnership Roles

Confirm your partnership arrangements in writing by sending a letter or email to your new partner. If the partnership is straightforward, this document can be simple. Just list the details of the partnership. You may want to include a summary of the roles and responsibilities of each partner. For an example, go to the end of this section.

Step 9 Stay in Touch

Once your partnership is established and outreach is underway, keep your partner informed and involved.

Here are some suggestions to help maintain your partnership:

- Update your partner on activities. Be sure to call or meet periodically to check in on how things are going.
- Send periodic thank you notes to the partner and volunteers. Let them know how many new people are getting SNAP benefits as a result of their efforts.
- Offer to include your partner in promotional activities like a newsletter or an event.



Tips & Tools

Establishing and Maintaining a Strong Partnership

- Present the partnership as a “win-win” situation for all parties.
- Agree on goals and objectives.
- Develop clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Practice clear and frequent communications.
- Show appreciation through recognition.

Step 10 Evaluate Your Partnership

Although partnerships can be time-consuming, they can also be a valuable part of your work. It is important to track the value of these collaborations so that you can find out if you met your goals, and what did and didn't work. You can use either process measures, outcome measures, or both, depending on the nature of your partnership.

Partnership Process Measures

- Has the number of partnerships you have developed increased since you began your alliance-building program?
- When you established your partnerships, you began with a clear list of expectations. Are those expectations being met?
- Do staff who are working on the partnerships feel they are proceeding well? For example, if a partner is filling out application forms, are these forms filled out properly or must State or local staff redo them?
- Do your partners approach you with new and creative ideas for working together?
- Have your partners provided you with new information and expertise?

Partnership Outcome Measures

- Have you seen an increase in calls to your local number?
- When clients call or come into your office, ask how they learned about SNAP. If these individuals were a part of your project, are they better prepared (for instance, form filled out and verification documents in hand) for the certification interview?
- Maintain a referral tracking document. Assign a code (like color, label, number) for your partner(s) and place the code on applications that will be distributed by them. When those applications are submitted, you will be able to see where the applicant picked up the information and track the number of referrals from that particular relationship.
- Has your ability to reach the target audience improved? Have more people from the target audience called or come into your office as a result of a partnership?
- If you host an event, such as a prescreening at a grocery store, keep track of the number of people in attendance and the number of applicants prescreened for SNAP benefits.
- If certification interviews are conducted, keep track of how many.
- If informational materials were distributed, keep track of what materials were used and how many were given out.
- Did your partners help generate media coverage that increased the awareness of SNAP benefits?

Share Your Success

Once you have been able to demonstrate success, do not forget to share it! By sharing your partnership successes, other organizations will clearly see the value and benefits of joining in the outreach effort.

You can:

- Mention your current partners when you are at meetings and conferences.
- Write up your success and submit it on SNAP's Promising Outreach Practices Web page. (See the Promising Practices section of the toolkit for more information.)

Potential Partners

Community Service Groups

- Food banks and pantries
- Community action agencies
- Homeless shelters and soup kitchens
- Family support centers (e.g., day care, domestic violence shelters, literacy, utility assistance programs)
- Legal Aid
- Salvation Army
- Goodwill
- Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) locations

Faith-Based Organizations

- Churches
- Temples
- Mosques
- Synagogues

City, County, State, Or Federal Government

- Local SNAP offices
- Local health department
- Employment assistance offices, including one-stop career centers
- Schools and technical colleges
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- Property tax offices
- Mayor or city or county officials
- Housing projects
- Federal agencies (for prisoners with imminent release)
- Local Social Security office
- Local military bases or installations
- Local or regional IRS offices

Business And Labor

- Employers
- Grocery stores
- Local unions
- Transit providers
- Utility companies

Medical Community

- Doctors
- Hospitals
- Pharmacies
- Community Health Centers
- Medicaid offices
- WIC offices

Seniors' Groups

- Assisted living facilities
- Area Agencies on Aging
- AARP Foundation chapters
- Meals-on-Wheels program

Immigrant Groups

- Local consulates
- Clubes de Oriundos
- Immigrant service organizations (e.g., the Michoacan Federation, Lao American Community Service)

Media Organizations Or Channels

- Radio
- TV
- Newspapers
- Internet
- Blogs
- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube

Activities For Potential Outreach Partnerships

Community groups/agencies/other organizations can:

- Conduct SNAP eligibility prescreening.
- Provide application assistance. Distribute SNAP application forms and help potential clients fill out the forms. Explain to potential applicants what types of information and documentation the local SNAP office will need in order to complete the application process.
- Provide translation services, when appropriate.
- Include information about the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP in newsletters or other local outreach materials.
- Post posters or fliers in lobbies, waiting areas, employee break areas, health clinic checkout areas, nutrition education rooms, etc.
- Post information on their Web site and link to Step 1, the FNS eligibility prescreening tool.
- Provide SNAP information or giveaways at community events such as health or county fairs.
- Host a “nutrition/health fair” to promote SNAP benefits.

Retailers/grocers can:

- Play PSAs on in-store radio.
- Include fliers and brochures in mailings and weekly circulars.
- Include SNAP benefit information on store receipts and in grocery bags.
- Print SNAP information on grocery bags. Make it lively—a grocery bag image containing the national toll-free number is available from USDA.
- Advertise SNAP information on grocery carts.
- Design, produce, and post promotional materials about SNAP benefits in the store — posters, banners, floor graphics, recipe cards, etc. (You can request logo files at: SNAPHQ-web@fns.usda.gov.)
- Provide SNAP information in the checkout display area.
- Underwrite paid advertising on local media.
- Underwrite printing of outreach materials.
- Allow eligibility prescreening to be conducted in the store or outside of it.

Activities For Potential Outreach Partnerships

Pharmacies can:

- Include SNAP information on the patient information form that is stapled to prescription drugs.
- Include information in circulars.
- Air PSAs on in-store radio.
- Advertise SNAP information on shopping carts.
- Post information on pharmacy Web sites.
- Encourage sponsorship of health fairs where prescreening for benefits can take place.

Employers can:

- Include SNAP information in new employee packets, newsletters, job training programs, etc.
- Put a notice about a local or national toll-free number on check stubs.
- Make periodic announcements about SNAP over the intercom system.
- Post SNAP information on bulletin boards.

Transit companies can:

- Provide free advertising space on bus shelters, buses, and subways/light rail.
- Include fliers and brochures in mailings.

Utility companies can:

- Put SNAP benefits information in newsletters.
- Print information on utility bills.
- Enclose insert along with invoice.
- Allow organizations to give out informational materials or prescreen for SNAP benefits onsite.

Media organizations can:

- Air public service announcements (PSAs) and radio readers.
- Provide a disc jockey or on-air celebrity to be the official spokesperson of your outreach effort, or make an appearance at community events, such as a nutrition fair.
- Serve as a media advisor to your outreach efforts.
- Introduce groups to local advertisers who may be interested in funding newspaper, radio, or TV ads.

Get Involved!

Partners With A Common Goal

Community and faith-based groups, retailers, and anti hunger advocacy groups across the country have a common goal to reduce hunger and improve nutrition.

Strength In Numbers

By coming together in partnership, we can advance our efforts to inform individuals and families in our communities about SNAP, ensuring that everyone can eat right, even when money's tight.

Raising Awareness

There are a number of ways you can help inform members of a targeted community about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

Ways To Inform Members Of Your Community

- Provide free SNAP resources including USDA's free trifold brochures and bookmarks (available in English and Spanish) for waiting rooms, health fairs, libraries, and community centers.
- Insert free SNAP materials in grocery bags, informational packets, new employee materials, etc.
- Include the SNAP toll-free number or Web site (www.fns.usda.gov/snap) on promotional pieces such as posters, fliers, milk or egg cartons, paper or plastic bags, store receipts, and in-store displays.
- Include information about Step 1, SNAP's online prescreening tool and application assistance in promotional pieces or make arrangements with employers or senior groups to allow individuals to use the prescreening tool to learn about their possible eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- Publish an article about the nutrition benefits of SNAP in employee or group newsletters and magazines.
- Broadcast SNAP public service announcements (PSAs) at your store or company or use your contacts to get donated time at radio stations.
- Add a link to www.usda.gov/snap from your Web page.
- Host a special SNAP prescreening event, cooking demonstration, or information fair.
- Volunteer at an activity to raise awareness about SNAP (options could include helping at a food pantry or food bank, soup kitchen, or prescreening event).
- Subscribe to the [SNAP Outreach Coalition listserv](#) and learn about other outreach efforts taking place across the country.

10 Ideas For Retailer SNAP Outreach

Help your customers learn about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

Help your customers learn about the nutrition benefits of SNAP. SNAP benefits bring Federal funds into your community that can increase sales at your store. With SNAP benefits, your low-income customers can purchase more healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, and dairy products. As a retailer, you can:

1. **DISPLAY SNAP** posters, fliers, magnets, and other materials. Go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm> for free USDA materials and promotional items.
2. **INVITE** local groups such as food banks, anti hunger groups, or other community or faith-based groups to staff an information table to give out SNAP information or prescreen customers for eligibility.
3. **PUT SNAP** information, such as national or local SNAP toll-free numbers, on grocery bags and in weekly circulars and bulletins.
4. **PUBLISH SNAP** materials in languages spoken in your community.
5. **PRINT SNAP** promotional messages on store receipts.
6. **BROADCAST SNAP** public service announcements in the store.
7. **HOST** nutritious food tastings or cooking demonstrations. Give out recipe cards that contain nutrition information and the national or local SNAP toll-free number.
8. **FORM** partnerships with local community and advocacy groups. Host a “health fair” to conduct SNAP eligibility prescreenings. Invite local media to the event.
9. **PARTNER** with EBT processors to educate cashiers about the benefits of SNAP.
10. **ENCOURAGE** EBT processors to add recorded messages to help-desk numbers promoting the nutrition benefits of SNAP and encouraging SNAP clients to “tell a friend.”



Tips & Tools

There may be a host of potential partners interested in joining your effort to boost SNAP enrollment and inform people of the nutrition benefits of the program. Retailers, businesses, community-based organizations, and government entities can all play a vital role in SNAP outreach.

The Benefits of SNAP

SNAP Helps Low-Income Families:

- Stretch food dollars. Those receiving SNAP benefits spend more money on food than other low-income households.
- Fight obesity through education. Nutrition educators teach SNAP participants the importance of a quality diet, how to prepare healthy foods, and how to make healthy choices.
- Put food on the table for their children. SNAP benefits are an investment in our future. Nearly 50 percent of participants are children.
- Keep elderly family members independent. For the elderly, participation can help improve nutritional status and well-being and increase independence. Nine percent of SNAP recipients are age 60 or older.
- Make the transition to self-sufficiency. SNAP helps participants become financially stable, and provides needed support as they transition to self-sufficiency. Half of all new participants will leave the program within nine months.

SNAP Helps States and Local Economies:

- Support local food retailers. The average monthly SNAP benefit is approximately \$222, which is spent in local grocery stores.
- Generate economic activity. Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates a total of \$9.20 in community spending.
- Support farms. On average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs.
- Leverage Federal funds. SNAP benefits are Federal funds. By increasing the number of people in SNAP, communities can bring Federal money into their States and communities.

SNAP Helps Businesses and Workers:

- Achieve optimal performance. Employees whose food needs are met at home may have higher productivity and take fewer sick days for themselves and their children.
- Attain self-sufficiency. SNAP benefits supplement the food budgets of low-income workers so they can stay independent and work toward self-sufficiency.

Partner Letter Template

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger. On behalf of [ORGANIZATION NAME], I am writing to invite you to lend your support to [STATE/CITY/TOWN'S] SNAP outreach effort by *[Describe the request — an activity you would like the organization to participate in, such as: hosting a health fair or prescreening event; volunteering; distributing informational fliers; promoting events; etc.]*.

The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about the program and is able to access benefits. Our organization is helping to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

[Provide local information on what your organization is doing, who you plan to target in your campaign, and the need in your community (number of potentially eligible individuals that are not being served for this type of effort.)]

We hope you will join us in supporting [ORGANIZATION or COALITION NAME'S] outreach efforts; we would be honored to work with you. With your support, we are confident that we can reach more of [CITY/STATE'S] individuals and families not yet enrolled in SNAP. By participating, *[List benefits to organization such as: reinforces position as community leader; provides opportunity for positive media exposure; offers community service opportunities; etc.]*.

I will contact you in the next few days to further discuss the vital role you can play in helping our community. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER] should you have any questions. I have also enclosed additional information on SNAP benefits for your review.

Again, we hope you can join us in supporting this important effort, and look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Partnership Agreement Letter Template

[DATE]
 [NAME]
 [TITLE]
 [BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]
 [ADDRESS]
 [CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]



Tips & Tools

How can I initiate a partnership? If a relationship is not currently in place, a good way to initiate a partnership is by sending a letter to a community relations, marketing, or communications contact. Your letter should outline your outreach effort, provide background information on your organization and SNAP, and describe the nature of your partnership request. This is a template letter that you can use with your own letterhead.

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

Thank you so much for agreeing to partner with [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] to help us reach those low-income individuals and families in our community who can benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Our partnership is part of a larger national effort to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP benefits receives them.

Below is an outline of the partnership specifics we discussed:

In-Kind Donations

- Financial contribution for production of materials such as pamphlets, bus/subway ads, bus/subway shelter ads, pot holders, recipe cards, etc.
- In-store space to conduct nutrition events, prescreenings, etc.
- Placement of PSA or donated print advertisement space, etc.
- Personnel support to help fill out SNAP application forms, obtain verification documents, etc.

Promotional Opportunities

- Appearance of company name in SNAP media materials.
- Visibility through advertising, media and event signage
- Your company's logo on SNAP signage and in outreach materials.
- Opportunity for a company representative to attend/participate at event(s).

We're so glad you see the value of partnering on such an important outreach effort. Please feel free to call me at [PHONE NUMBER] with any questions. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
 [TITLE]

Promising Practices

What is a promising practice?

“Promising practices” are everywhere. New ideas or refinements of existing ideas are continuously being implemented by State and local programs to educate and help individuals access their programs. Promising practices may involve big or little changes to existing projects to improve service delivery. They may or may not have evidence of positive results from evaluations; in fact, they might just have a general intuitive appeal rather than a proven effect. Promising practices sometimes prompt completely different ideas. Sometimes, promising practices are those “A-ha!” moments — something that makes sense but you did not think significant right away. Unfortunately, practical knowledge in one community that could lead to significant improvements in another often goes unshared.

Who is compiling our promising practices?

FNS is compiling promising SNAP practices to assist States, local agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and others to share their best ideas.

Why is FNS sharing the practices?

The collection of promising practices is an effort to find and share outreach or customer service models that can help increase participation in SNAP. Through this collection of promising practices, timely information on program and policy innovations is disseminated so that all stakeholders may benefit from the experiences of their peers across the country. The sharing of ideas can stimulate program changes, spark creative exchanges, and serve as a launching pad for the next generation of program innovations. It can inspire a dynamic examination of ways to improve service delivery systems for people eligible for, applying for, and participating in SNAP.

Whom can I contact for more information?

The project contact person listed by each promising practice can provide further information. FNS has developed an informal process of collecting promising practices and updates the Web site continually so check back often.

How can I share my promising practice?

Submit your practice to FNS. Tell about something new you did or how you put an innovative twist on an existing idea. Go ahead and brag about the response you received — from your co-workers, managers, or your customers. This is an opportunity to shine while you give others ideas to improve or develop their projects. Worried that your idea may not be new? Not to worry; something that is “old hat” to some may be a complete revelation to others.

Are you looking for a new idea?

On the Web site, you will find information that you can use in your own project. You can learn about promising practices from around the country as well as from other programs.

 Promising Practices are Online

Go to: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach and click on “Promising Practices.”

Who can use the Web site?

The Web site is for State and local SNAP agencies as well as Federal/State program staff, volunteers, community members, policymakers, funders, researchers, or anyone else who wants to develop a project or improve the quality of their existing programs.

Some Examples Of Promising Practices

Media Outreach

- **Vermont** Partnering with Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and Vermont Grocer's Association, the State SNAP agency held a press conference at a supermarket to announce changes in SNAP that make it easier to apply.

Developing Partnerships

- **California** In partnership with the local food bank, Alameda County Social Services facilitated periodic SNAP outreach trainings for organizations interested in helping their own clients apply for SNAP benefits. Participants received a training manual complete with tools and resources to help them get started in their own SNAP outreach efforts.
- **California** Alameda County Food Bank provided on-site "Food Stamp Enrollment Clinics" for clients of other community-based organizations. Bilingual staff from the food bank prescreened clients for potential eligibility and assisted them in completing the application.
- **Connecticut** The State agency sent mailings to soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters to ask them to make SNAP applications and information available to their customers.
- **New York** The Korean Grocers Association in New York City published SNAP information in Korean.
- **Pennsylvania** Pathmark grocery stores in underserved areas of Philadelphia hosted eligibility prescreening events.
- **Virginia** Americorps volunteers in rural counties of the State went door-to-door to provide information on SNAP. They talked to people about SNAP benefits while grocery shopping, hosted outreach gatherings, prescreened for potential eligibility, and helped complete application forms.

Using PSAs

- **California** The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties aired television ads to market the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP.
- **California** The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties developed a 5-minute video in English and Spanish that answers 12 commonly asked questions about SNAP benefits. The video was distributed to health and social service agencies on California's central coast.

SNAP: Special Services



Disaster Outreach

What are disaster SNAP benefits and how does the program work?

After a natural or man-made disaster occurs and a Presidential declaration of disaster with a provision for individual assistance has been made, State agencies can request approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to activate disaster SNAP benefits and provide temporary food assistance to households. FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits once grocery stores are operational and telecommunications and electricity have been restored. Disaster SNAP benefits are delivered on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to regular SNAP benefits, and require telephones and electricity for redemption. Generally, States request and FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits a week or more after a disaster has occurred.

Disaster SNAP benefits help people buy food when they are experiencing economic hardships as a result of the disaster (loss of jobs, loss of food because of power outages, damages to home and personal possessions, etc.). Although every State agency maintains a general disaster SNAP plan for use in time of disaster, State agencies do tailor disaster benefit policies and procedures to fit the community's specific needs following each disaster, so every disaster SNAP program is unique.

How do disaster SNAP benefits differ from SNAP?

Disaster SNAP benefits are different from SNAP in some important ways:

- Families who are not normally eligible for SNAP may be eligible for disaster SNAP benefits. During the eligibility process, a household's short-term, disaster-related expenses are considered.
- Students, strikers, noncitizens and people subject to work requirements are not barred from disaster SNAP benefits as they are from SNAP. Rules surrounding verification, income and resources are relaxed.
- Recipients receive the maximum SNAP benefit for their household size.
- The period to apply for disaster SNAP benefits is short, generally one week.
- State agencies may operate mass application sites at fairgrounds, stadiums or other easily accessible locations that can serve large populations. For very small disasters, State agencies may provide disaster SNAP benefits out of social services offices. All applications for disaster SNAP benefits are distributed to prospective clients and collected at these sites.

How are ongoing SNAP participants aided in the disaster SNAP benefits program?

Aid to SNAP participants will depend upon the disaster. Your State agency may decide to issue replacement benefits for lost or damaged food. Additionally, a supplement or additional benefits may be provided to ensure participants receive the maximum level of benefits for their household size. Sometimes these benefits are paid automatically – in other cases, participants need to complete an affidavit attesting to disaster losses to qualify.

Why should my agency conduct outreach during disasters?

Since each disaster SNAP plan and operation is unique and many participants are first-time applicants, your agency must be prepared to clearly communicate what benefits are available, who is eligible, how to apply, and how to use SNAP benefits. Because disaster SNAP benefits generally operate for a one-week period, providing timely and detailed information is essential.

In addition, SNAP participants may need to know how to verify food loss for replacement benefits, how to obtain supplemental benefits, or whether or not benefits will be automatically replaced.

Because the days following a disaster are often chaotic, news about disaster SNAP benefits might be overshadowed by other disaster-related issues, or misinformation might be circulated. Ongoing outreach is essential to correcting misperceptions and providing factual information to disaster victims about the nutrition benefits to which they may be entitled.

Why should my agency partner with community and faith-based organizations during disasters?

Community and faith based groups provide a unique opportunity to connect your clients with disaster SNAP benefits because they often are the trusted messengers that disaster victims turn to for information and help during times of crisis. Affected people may already be interacting with these groups for their needs, such as clothing, shelter, or medical care. These organizations are in a good position to help you provide accurate information and may be in areas where your staff are not present. They also may have resources that are useful during disasters, such as media contacts, Web sites, toll-free numbers and translators.

How can my agency involve these community organizations in our disaster preparedness discussions?

Convene a “get-ready” meeting before a disaster occurs. Invite grocers, community organizations, and faith-based groups. At this meeting, consider conducting a [needs assessment](#). A needs assessment will identify existing outreach services and resources in your community. It will also provide your agency with a better understanding of the number and nature of diverse groups in your community. In addition, it will help you identify geographic areas most prone to disasters, or communities, locations, and neighborhoods that may need unique assistance in the aftermath of a disaster, such as language assistance. Information identified in the needs assessment will not only help you effectively prepare to coordinate outreach efforts during a disaster, but will also reinforce cooperation for ongoing outreach.

Can my State agency include a disaster SNAP contingency plan in its State outreach plan?

Yes. A State outreach plan may include contingency plans for SNAP outreach during a disaster. Preparation is critical for an adequate disaster response. It enables a State to quickly implement activities that have been carefully planned.

? Questions Your Clients Might Have

- Am I eligible for the disaster SNAP benefits?
- Where do I go to apply?
- When can I apply?
- What should I bring with me?
- When and how will I receive the benefits?
- How long will I be able to receive the benefits?
- Where can I use the benefits?

When disaster SNAP benefits are operationalized, what outreach activities can be reimbursed by FNS?

To be eligible for reimbursement, partners must secure approval from the State agency in advance of implementing any disaster SNAP outreach activities.

Allowable outreach activities during a disaster may include:

- Distributing information about disaster SNAP benefits to disaster victims;
- Funding a toll-free number;
- Distributing information to media outlets;
- Translating disaster SNAP outreach materials into other languages;
- Prescreening activities that do not involve accessing the State eligibility system or existing client case files;
- Distributing and helping prospective participants fill out disaster SNAP benefit application forms at disaster sites; and/or
- Greeting prospective participants at disaster SNAP benefit application entrances and directing them to appropriate areas.

How can I learn more about disaster SNAP benefits?

For complete information on conducting SNAP outreach during times of disaster, please see the Disaster SNAP Guidance on the FNS Web site:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm>

Web-Based Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Website</i>
FNS Disaster Assistance Home Page	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
SNAP Disaster Handbook	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
Outreach State Plan Guidance	http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm
FNS press releases	http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/PressReleases/PressReleases.htm
FRAC Disaster Handbook	http://www.frac.org/pdf/dfsp05.pdf

Before A Disaster Strikes

Step 1 Develop A Plan

Convene or participate in a “get-ready” meeting with community and faith-based partners.

- Convene or participate in a “get-ready” meeting with community and faith based groups.
- Discuss with community and faith-based groups how they might partner to help disaster SNAP provide food assistance to those adversely affected by disasters, whether man-made or due to natural causes, and how they might assist disaster victims already enrolled in the regular SNAP program with replacement benefits.
- Discuss strengths and needs of each partner in terms of disaster response.
- Discuss what community and other partners staff can and cannot do during a disaster.
- Plan and document how you will work together to prepare for potential future disasters. Be very specific about the best ways to get the word out, how that can be done in an emergency, and who will do it.
- Develop a contact list of participating partners, with multiple ways of reaching each party in the event of a disaster.
- Discuss what resources, such as toll-free numbers or Web sites, can be shared in the event of a disaster.



1. Develop A Plan
2. Develop Needs Assessment
3. Add To The State Plan
4. Describe Outreach Activities
5. Plan For Media Activities
6. Maintain Good Relationships
7. Implement Activities
8. Develop New Partnerships
9. Connect Disaster Victims
10. Thank Staff And Partners

Step 2 Conduct a Needs Assessment

- Discuss who will take the lead to complete or update a needs assessment; reevaluate the findings and update corresponding next steps.
- Identify existing outreach services and resources in your community.
- Identify partners with special expertise, such as ethnic media contacts or translators.
- Identify vulnerable populations in your community, such as those in certain geographic areas or those with particular language needs, who may be most affected by potential disasters or who will need extra support accessing help following the disaster.
- Identify community organizations which may help with outreach during disasters. Each organization must be sure that it can adequately account for its employees and mobilize them quickly with the right tools and materials to implement the response plan as agreed with other partners.

Step 3 Add To The State Plan

- Develop an outreach plan with a contingency plan for SNAP outreach during disasters.
- In the plan, include a list of allowable activities and identify which partner will handle each activity. Advanced planning improves your disaster response. Knowing you have the tools and resources in place will reduce stress and improve your ability to react and respond to a disaster, when or if it occurs.
- Include draft or template materials that your organization might use as part of your media response.
- Maintain a hard copy of the contingency plan in a secure off-site location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.

Step 4 Describe Outreach Activities

- Describe outreach activities that could be performed by community groups and include them in the State Disaster SNAP Plan.
- Maintain a hard copy of the plan in a secure off-site location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.
- Develop templates of outreach materials such as fliers, posters, and a Web page, so that they can be finalized quickly when needed. Consider the alternatives for printing and distributing in an emergency situation.
- Identify a community liaison whose responsibility during a disaster is to coordinate and share information between the State agency and community partners.

Step 5 Plan For Media Activities

- Develop and articulate State policy on who initiates or handles media inquiries in your State Disaster SNAP Plan and State Outreach Plan.
- Identify State spokespeople in the plans. There may be more than one contact.
- Develop a list of media outlets (television, radio, online or print) for disaster SNAP outreach. These outlets can inform your audience of details about disaster SNAP benefits when it is implemented.
- Include phone numbers, fax numbers and addresses so that you have multiple ways to reach the media.

Step 6 Maintain Relationships

- Keep in touch with your partners. Check with them periodically to confirm their roles and responsibilities and to update your contact lists.
- Know your partnership liaisons and how to initiate contact.
- Consider holding a practice drill, role-playing game, or table-top

When A Disaster Strikes

Step 7 Implement Activities

exercise to practice what you will do in the event of a real disaster.

- Make contact with partners to implement your outreach plan.
- Provide accurate and consistent messages to your clients using your toll-free number or Web site.
- Stay informed. As the disaster SNAP benefits application process changes, provide updates to your clients and partners.
- Remind State employees in disaster areas of media procedures. This is important if you have employees from other States with different media policies.

Step 8 Develop New Partnerships

- Initiate partnerships with additional organizations to conduct allowable and reasonable outreach activities to get the word out about disaster SNAP benefits.

When A Disaster Is Over

Step 9 Connect Disaster Victims

- Conduct outreach to connect those disaster SNAP victims eligible for the regular SNAP to those benefits. Disaster SNAP benefits recipients who wish to apply for the regular SNAP will need to follow the normal SNAP application process. Community and faith-based partners can assist these households in understanding SNAP requirements, helping them to secure verification documents or access other types of assistance such as clothing or household goods.
- Let the media and other opinion leaders know how disaster SNAP and regular SNAP responded to the needs of families and the broader community.

Step 10 Thank Staff And Partners

- Recognize employees and partners for a job well done.
- Make changes to your outreach and disaster plans based on what worked and what didn't work.
- Visit the FNS Web site and prepare promising practices for disaster outreach: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/promising/Default.htm>

10 Ideas For Disaster SNAP Outreach

1. **Inform the media.** Use the media to spread messages about the availability of disaster SNAP benefits. Be sure the identified spokesperson has the timely and correct information and an updated media list. Be sure to follow your State's procedures.
2. **Coordinate with other responders.** Identify the liaison to other first (disaster) responders in the community. Be sure that they have the correct information about disaster SNAP benefits and can share it with disaster victims they serve.
3. **Engage grocery store partners.** Provide information to grocers to post, distribute in grocery bags or announce in stores.
4. **Enlist faith- and community-based partners.** Enlist the help of your partners to distribute information (who can apply, when, where) about disaster SNAP benefits or to perform other duties as described in your State Disaster or State Outreach Plan(s).
5. **Use community volunteers.** Engage volunteers to perform activities such as answering the State/local toll-free number, distributing informational materials at grocery stores and monitoring SNAP lines to make sure potential applicants are in the correct line at disaster sites.
6. **Enlist community translators.** Work with community translators to translate news releases for ethnic media and informational materials, and to serve as interpreters during SNAP interviews.
7. **Provide a toll-free number.** Set up cellular phones to use as disaster SNAP benefit informational numbers if land lines are not working.
8. **Use the remote telephone feature.** Use the remote message feature of your telephone system, if available, to announce disaster SNAP benefit information. If this is not available, contact FNS to ask about using the national toll-free number remote messaging feature and/or contact your State SNAP EBT provider to ask if a message can be added to the customer service phone line.
9. **Post disaster SNAP information on your Web site.** Provide basic information, such as who may qualify, where and when to apply, and types of verification documents, if needed.
10. **Develop new outreach partnerships.** Develop new outreach partnerships to provide disaster SNAP benefit information to disaster victims, based on what is occurring in your community.

Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

[DATE]

[NAME OF APPROPRIATE CONTACT]

[AREA CODE AND PHONE NUMBER]

[CELL PHONE]

Disaster Victims Now Eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

[CITY, STATE] - Many victims of [DISASTER] are now eligible for disaster SNAP benefits.

[QUOTE ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE OF NUTRITION ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING A DISASTER,] said [STATE OFFICIAL.]

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service has approved disaster SNAP benefits to allow victims of [DISASTER] in [eligible geographic area] to receive nutrition assistance. Eligible households will receive an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to use to purchase food at retail locations. Eligibility criteria for disaster SNAP benefits are different than for the regular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Residents who have experienced *(describe unique disaster elements that may make residents eligible for the disaster SNAP benefits)* may be eligible. Other eligibility factors include [LIST ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.]

Applications for disaster SNAP benefits will be accepted until [date]. Residents of [ELIGIBLE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS] can apply for disaster SNAP benefits at the following locations and times:

Location: [ADDRESS]

Hours of Operation: [HOURS]

Those seeking to apply for disaster benefits from SNAP are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant's documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity. [List other documents that should be available at application or other information about needed verifications.]

More information about disaster SNAP benefits is available on [WEB SITE ADDRESS AND TOLL-FREE NUMBER].

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Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

[DATE]

[NAME OF APPROPRIATE CONTACT]

[AREA CODE AND PHONE NUMBER]

[CELL PHONE]

Deadline To Apply for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits

Is [ADD WHEN]

[CITY, STATE] – Victims of [DISASTER] are reminded that they have until [DEADLINE] to apply for disaster nutrition assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP's disaster benefits enable those who have experienced loss, such as [list criteria], as a result of the [DISASTER] to receive SNAP benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card and purchase food at retail stores.

[QUOTE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLYING BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT.] said, [STATE OFFICIAL].
[QUOTE ABOUT HOW MANY BENEFITS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO DATE.]

Residents of [GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION] may be eligible for disaster nutrition assistance from the Food and Nutrition Service. Provisions of disaster SNAP benefits are different from the regular SNAP, so those affected by [DISASTER] in the designated locations are encouraged to apply to find out if they may be eligible for benefits under this program.

Applications will be accepted at the following locations until [DEADLINE.]

Location: [ADDRESS]

Hours of Operation: [HOURS]

Those seeking to apply for disaster SNAP benefits are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant's documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity.
[LIST OTHER DOCUMENTS THAT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT APPLICATION OR OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT NEEDED VERIFICATIONS.]

More information about the disaster SNAP benefits is available on [WEB SITE ADDRESS AND TOLL-FREE NUMBER.]

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Engaging Special Populations



Cultural Competency

Section I. The Right Thing: The Importance of Effective SNAP Outreach Across Cultures

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence refers to how well people understand and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Diversity means not only people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds, but also includes gender and age, people with disabilities, as well as the extent to which immigrants have integrated into mainstream American culture.

While there are many definitions of cultural competence, we have chosen to use the following as the foundation for this section of the Outreach Toolkit:

Cultural competence is the capacity of an individual or an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively and to convey information in a manner that is easily understood by and tailored for diverse audiences.

What does this section hope to accomplish?

This section of the toolkit provides suggestions and practical tips, planning tools, and real-life examples of how to make SNAP outreach more culturally competent. It is not, however, intended to provide specific strategies and tactics for reaching individuals of distinct races, ethnicities, cultures, or other demographic groups.

Why should agency staff workers care about being culturally competent?

By using language and materials that are tailored for specific target groups, workers improve communication with clients for better customer service. Ultimately, their jobs are easier, more productive, and more fulfilling. Culturally competent communication allows outreach workers to:

- Spend more time providing services and less time trying to clarify confusing or misunderstood information.
- Decrease the level of stress and anxiety for themselves and clients.
- Reduce the likelihood of errors on applications and other important paperwork.
- Increase the level of trust with clients and improve overall satisfaction with SNAP.



Reaching Diverse Audiences

You Know You Are Being Effective When...

- Your staff reflects your client population, or target client population, in racial and cultural makeup and language.
- Your staff is aware of and demonstrates the behaviors, attitudes, and skills that enable them to work well across cultures.
- You work with organizations that are directly involved with the diverse communities you need to reach.
- You have relationships with ethnic or minority media in your community.
- Your outreach includes varied approaches to sharing information with individuals with disabilities.
- You use translation and interpretive services to meet the language needs of your clients.
- Print materials are easy to read and meet the sixth grade literacy level. Print materials include picture and symbol formats, as needed.
- Materials are available in different formats, such as video, audiotape and enlarged print.

Why is cultural competence important for SNAP outreach?

The need to reach diverse audiences is greater now than ever before. The U.S. population is changing, and communities today are more racially, ethnically, culturally, and economically different. By the year 2030, the Census Bureau reports that 40 percent of the U.S. population will describe themselves as members of racial and ethnic groups other than non-Hispanic and White.

A recent report on participation rates by various demographic characteristics shows that more than half of all individuals receiving SNAP benefits are non-White:

- More than 33 percent or one-third of participants are Black or African-American.
- Nineteen percent are Hispanic.
- Another 4 percent belong to other races or ethnic groups.

Still, not everyone who is eligible for SNAP takes part in the program. Participation among target populations continues to be low. This is especially true among Hispanics and the elderly:

- About 51 percent of the eligible Hispanic population participate in SNAP.
- Only 30 percent of the elderly who are eligible for SNAP actually participate.

What are the implications of not being culturally competent?

Given the current and projected demographic changes in the United States, outreach providers must take the Nation's increasingly diverse and complex backgrounds into account when conducting SNAP outreach in order to be effective in reaching as many eligible people as possible.

Workers who are not culturally competent are less effective or successful when conducting outreach due to potential miscommunications and misunderstandings. A small amount of time invested up front in learning to communicate effectively with diverse groups, especially those groups that the office serves frequently, will pay off with more efficient time management, better customer relations, and improved participation in SNAP.

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that enables families to supplement their food budget so that they can buy more healthful food, such as vegetables and fruits. A healthy diet and physical exercise are important. An increasing number of studies and reports, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 (www.healthypeople.gov), cite poor nutrition as a leading contributor to diseases that disproportionately affect minorities and low-income populations. Consider these other facts:

- Obesity among low-income Americans is linked to having limited or uncertain access to nutritious and safe foods.
- People living in rural areas are more likely to be older, poorer, and less healthy than people living in urban areas.
- Obesity continues to be higher for African-American and Mexican-American women than for non-Hispanic and White women.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure in African-Americans is among the highest in the world.



Myths About SNAP

Myth

"I work every day. SNAP benefits are for people who are unemployed or who can't work."

Fact

Many SNAP users are employed full-time yet need extra help to afford more nutritious foods.

Myth

"I can't buy the types of food my family eats with SNAP benefits."

Fact

Most grocery store chains and even some small specialty or "corner" stores and farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. What's most important is that there are very few foods that you cannot purchase with SNAP benefits; examples of items that may not be purchased are alcohol, pet food, and hot, prepared foods.

Myth

"I refuse to be on welfare. Only welfare recipients receive SNAP benefits."

Fact

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program, which is not the same as welfare. Participants do not have to receive welfare to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Section II. Getting To Know Your Community: How To Conduct a Needs Assessment

What is a needs assessment?

A needs assessment is the process of gathering and examining information to get a clearer and more accurate picture of an issue, challenge, or environment. In this case, the needs assessment will help you better understand the diverse community in which you want to conduct SNAP outreach. This information is gathered through a series of carefully crafted questions that will likely be asked of individuals inside and outside of your organization so that you can get a number of different opinions. The results can be presented as a formal report or an informal document—the key is to summarize the findings accurately.

Why is a needs assessment an important part of SNAP community outreach?

A needs assessment will help you better understand the challenges facing underserved communities and the barriers that potential clients face in applying for SNAP. It allows for a more in-depth and unbiased look at the problem from a wide range of people. This information can provide new insights and answer questions you may have, such as:

- What do we know about the local needs for SNAP outreach?
- Are we reaching out to the neediest groups?
- Which organizations in our community are conducting SNAP outreach, what services do they provide, and how are these services funded?
- Do various groups understand who is eligible for SNAP?
- Which media are most credible among our target populations?
- How do we establish and maintain trust?
- How can we strengthen the effectiveness of current community outreach activities?
- Do our materials appeal to multicultural audiences?
- Are our materials in the appropriate languages? At the sixth grade reading level?
- Are we maximizing relationships with influential people and organizations to reach diverse communities?

Having the facts in hand enables you to set specific goals, develop tailored plans-of-action, and determine the best use of limited resources. Once you know and understand your audience, it is easier to develop strategies to reach them.



Reasons To Conduct a Needs Assessment

- To learn how other organizations, such as community-based groups or your local SNAP office, might support your outreach efforts.
- To get tried-and-true suggestions that worked with other programs.
- To get insight into what your target audience really thinks and believes about SNAP.
- To help set goals and measure success.
- To understand basic statistical and other information about the needs in your community and the gaps between services and needs in order to identify appropriate strategies to address them.

How Do I Get Started?

Step 1 Identify The Community

Through your day-to-day activities, you may have a clear understanding of the population in the community you wish to target. If you are not sure which groups to reach, there are many sources that can help you create profiles of key populations in your area to identify which group(s) you want to conduct the needs assessment on, starting with your State SNAP agency and your city's Web site.

How To Identify the Community You Want To Reach

The State SNAP agency may have population profiles of the community. You can find your State SNAP agency at http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/state-contacts.htm.

Other sources include:

When using demographic information or statistics, be mindful that numbers change. Check yearly or frequently for updates.

- The Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>)
- The U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.dol.gov>)
- Visit the Web site of the city or community you wish to target. Here, you'll likely find demographic information on the racial and ethnic groups in your community and average household incomes. If it's not readily available on the Web site, make a few quick phone calls to city agencies requesting the data you want.
- Contact the local Office on Aging. The Office on Aging should be able to help identify the number of low-income seniors in your community, along with ZIP code data on where they might reside.
- Contact the local department of education to request schools in your targeted community where large numbers of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. In many cases, they can also provide a profile of the students—their racial/ethnic backgrounds and languages that are spoken.
- Contact the local health department and department of social services. Because both of these agencies have specific programs for low-income residents, they can also provide information
- Contact the local United Way, whose mission is to help identify community needs and provide funding to support these efforts. The United Way may be willing to share research and other data that it has collected from and about local groups.
- Contact professors or research institutes in local colleges and universities that may be collecting data or conducting research with your target population.

Step 2 Review What You Know

After choosing the population you want to reach, you may find that you already know something about how to reach them with information about SNAP. In fact, you may be aware of many possible solutions. But it's important to go through the process. Ask yourself:

- What other organizations have similar goals and might be willing to work with us to address this need?
- What resources (staff, in-language support, materials) do we have but may not be fully using?
- Has any research been conducted that highlights effective ways of reaching the target population within the community? Can we rely on other work to give us insight and answers?

Step 3 Draft Questions

Asking the right questions is the key to getting the information for your needs assessment. Accurate information helps you develop the most effective and culturally competent outreach plan. This is an important step, so take your time to think broadly about the type of information you need. You may want to invite other groups to join you, including members of the communities you wish to target and representatives from culturally specific organizations, to help draft or to review your list of questions. Ask if someone has already done a needs assessment—you may want to build upon their model. While your questions may be tailored to meet local needs, the following list of questions can act as a guide.

You may wish to have more than one person in your organization complete the questions to get different opinions and a range of responses.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Ms. G. speaks very little English. She knows she could qualify for social services, such as SNAP and WIC, but finds it very difficult to communicate over the telephone, and is frustrated when she shows up in person because she usually must wait until the only bilingual person in the office is free to assist her. Thus, Ms. G. has to ask a friend or one of her older children to make the call or go with her to the office.

A fixed appointment with a bilingual person is one way to help someone like Ms. G. This way she could avoid long waits, which are often difficult when coordinating schedules with others. The office could also arrange to have its bilingual staff person call Ms. G at home at a scheduled time. This is an opportunity to review the application and identify documents Ms. G would need to provide.

Sample Questions for a Needs Assessment

- Which group(s) are you most interested in reaching and why?
- How many SNAP offices are in your area? Where are they located, and does the location pose a potential barrier (e.g., is it accessible by public transportation)?
- Are there any linguistic or cultural barriers that prevent individuals from participating in SNAP? What community resources are available to help minimize these barriers?
- What is happening with your outreach efforts vs. what you would like to happen?
- What groups are already successfully reaching the population you want to access?
- Which of their initiatives have been particularly effective and why?
- Where does the majority of the target population live? Are they clustered in one area or spread out?
- What local organizations and individuals have the greatest influence with the population?
- Do the grocers/farmers markets they patronize accept SNAP benefits? Are they served by public transportation?
- Is public transportation easily accessible in their community? Do public transportation routes reach the local SNAP office and grocery stores? If no, how do people access SNAP and grocery stores?
- Are there existing community events and activities that attract the people you're interested in reaching? Is there a Diabetes Support Group meeting nearby? Is there an annual Cinco de Mayo celebration coming up? What events or activities are popular with your target group?
- What media outlets does this group prefer?
- Is the "word on the street" about SNAP positive or negative? What are the positives and negatives?
- What types of partnerships would help achieve the outreach objectives?
- Would these partners be able and willing to provide volunteer outreach workers? If yes, what services will the volunteers provide; what type of training will they need; and how often will they be available?
- What outreach activities might motivate your audiences to seek more information?
- How can media and community channels be used most effectively?
- Are there any other barriers that prevent potentially eligible individuals of this community from enrolling in SNAP? What are the barriers? What can your organization do to help eliminate the barriers?

Step 4 Identify Whom To Talk To

Once you've created a profile of the group(s) you intend to target and gathered the necessary background information, it's time to speak directly to individuals in the "field." It's these "primary sources" that will help you fine-tune your outreach strategies, avoid potential pitfalls and, hopefully, provide ongoing support. While there are a wide range of people who can participate in the needs assessment, you will want to identify those who will provide the most useful information. Once you've identified the people you want to talk to, revisit the questions to make sure they are appropriate for each group. You may need to reword some questions or eliminate one or two for a specific group.

Examples of influential people:

- Religious leaders
- Representatives of faith-based and community-based organizations
- Business leaders
- Doctors, nurses, and nutrition educators
- State or County SNAP workers
- City, County, State, or Federal workers
- Elected officials at the State and community level
- Schools, teachers, and coaches
- Leaders of age- or race-based or culturally specific organizations that advocate for those groups
- Current SNAP participants
- Opinion/trusted leaders in the identified communities such as promotoras
- People in the community you want to reach, including potentially eligible nonparticipants

Step 5 Decide How to Collect Info

Some common and effective methods for gathering information include:

- One-on-one interviews with influential community members. These are useful if you are working with a small budget and are already knowledgeable in the area.
- Written questionnaires conducted with influential community members and members of the community at-large. While it might be a little more time consuming to collect and tabulate the data, there are online tools, such as www.surveymonkey.com, that make drafting a well-crafted research instrument easy for the beginner and experienced researcher alike. Graduate students in survey research courses may be willing to help you design, collect, and/or analyze information. Establish relationships with professors in local colleges and universities who could help you with this project.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Mr. M. is an independent, 23-year-old young man with a hearing impairment who uses sign language. He also participates in SNAP. He is able to communicate effectively in most day-to-day situations, but one of his parents or an interpreter usually goes with him on appointments to the doctor, or the Medicaid or SNAP offices, because staff cannot communicate with him. Recently, he had an appointment at a SNAP office, but work emergencies prohibited either parent from accompanying him. To make matters worse, it was too late to get an interpreter. Mr. M arrived at the office during an extremely busy time—several clients were already waiting for assistance. Realizing that an interpreter was not available and believing that helping Mr. M would be a lengthy process, the staff immediately brushed him off and asked him to come back later when an interpreter was available.

Unfortunately, no one took the time to ask if Mr. M was comfortable communicating in writing, which he was. Sometimes people assume that individuals with physical disabilities are also developmentally delayed or have limited literacy skills. In addition, if an outreach worker had taken the time to ask if there was someone they could call to help interpret, Mr. M would not have had to make another trip. The night before, he had role-played with his parents on how best to respond to any communication problems. Therefore, a quick telephone call to either parent would have enabled Mr. M to get the information he needed.

Additional Techniques for a More Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Your organization's resources will likely dictate the complexity of your needs assessment. With additional staffing and budget, focus groups and/or literature reviews can help fill in remaining information gaps. If you have the budget but not the time, market research firms can help you; www.greenbook.org provides an extensive listing of market research firms.

Focus Groups

These are sessions held with small groups of the target audience. A facilitator, who speaks the same language as the participants, will ask specific questions and the responses will be recorded for later analysis. However, getting individuals to participate in a focus group can take time and may require some sort of incentive for participation, such as meals, transportation costs, or childcare expenses. Your partners can play an important role in helping you stay within your budget by locating facilitators and focus group participants. Focus groups with current participants and eligible nonparticipants can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about SNAP, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions. With current SNAP participants, you can explore their motivations for enrolling and where they received information about the program. By contrast, potential participants may be able to share what they've heard about SNAP benefits, any concerns they have, and outreach methods that might be effective.

Literature Review

Review existing research about the population of interest and their behaviors, habits, or preferences as they relate to nutrition and/or nutrition programs. The reference desk at your public library may conduct a search for you—free or for very little cost. Of course, many of the documents you're looking for may be found online. Another idea is to seek volunteers at your local university. Often graduate students are looking for research projects to enhance their coursework or gain real-world experience. Another good starting point is the bibliography located in the Resources section.

Regardless of the methods you use, the most important part is to listen and respect the insights of people who have access to and understand the populations you want to reach. In the end, your needs assessment will not only ring with a richness that only a diverse, multifaceted group can provide, but will also provide a blueprint for enhancing culturally competent SNAP outreach.



Free or Low-Cost Sources of Information

- The Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/research.htm>)
- Local SNAP office or State SNAP agency
- Local or college library
- Local Census Bureau or Census Bureau Web site (www.census.gov)
- City/County/State health department Web sites and community clinics
- Local United Way or other community funding sources
- Professors in local colleges and universities who conduct research with your target population
- Race-, ethnic-, and/or culturally specific business associations
- Race-, ethnic-, culture-, disability-, and hunger-related advocacy groups

Section III. The Right Messengers

How can community partners help us reach diverse audiences?

One of the key elements of reaching out to diverse audiences about the benefits of SNAP is working with your community partners. Outreach providers who reach diverse groups must extend their reach beyond the walls of their own organizations to other programs with similar missions and services. Community partners can offer substantive and long-lasting benefits to your organization and to the health of the community. They can:

- Provide cultural perspectives.
- Bring credibility to your efforts.
- Bring expertise in working with the groups you want to target. For instance, they may have knowledge of health and nutrition beliefs and practices, and preferred sources of information and distribution channels.
- Offer help with providing translation and interpretive services or allowing your organization to conduct SNAP prescreenings at their offices.
- Bring community resources to support your efforts; for example, access to media, community opinion leaders, or financial and/or in-kind support for costly services such as translation and interpretive assistance.
- Discuss new ways of doing business.
- Assist in efforts to select focus group participants or “pretest” materials.

Lastly, some community partners can become ambassadors for your organization within the target communities. Those partners who will be most effective at conveying your program messages will be ones who are already trusted messengers within those communities.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Ms. B. takes great pride in her appearance and frequently receives compliments on her choice of clothing and jewelry. On this day, Ms. B. walks into the SNAP Office to apply for benefits. She sits down with a caseworker who immediately compliments Ms. B. on her outfit. The caseworker goes on to remark how she can't believe someone so well-dressed would need SNAP benefits. Although Ms. B. finished her appointment, she left feeling insulted. She could not believe that anyone, especially a caseworker, would stereotype the way SNAP recipients dress. The next day, Ms. B. called the county grievance office to lodge a complaint.

There's an old adage that's well known but not practiced nearly enough: “Don't judge a book by its cover.” Always avoid making assumptions or judgments about people based on outward appearance, or even a few moments of conversation. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs, including SNAP outreach activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or disability. In this scenario, the caseworker should have refrained from making remarks related to Ms. B's outfit or outward appearance. In Ms. B's case, this was not only a wrong assumption, but one based on stereotypes about race and income. Instead, the case worker should have followed federal mandated SNAP policy (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/policy.htm)

How do i identify community partners?

Step 1 Assess The Gaps

Are you in regular contact with anyone who works with or has ties to the communities you need to reach? If not, then you'll want to look specifically for partners who are linked to those communities.

Step 2 Ask Your Colleagues

Some names of community partners may surface through the needs assessment process. In addition, coworkers, SNAP workers, advisory groups, board members, or other professional colleagues, particularly ones who work with the communities you want to target or are focused on access to health and nutrition information, are good sources for information about possible partners.

Step 3 Don't Forget Your Clients

Your SNAP clients can be the best source for identifying good community partners. Informally poll several clients about whom they trust for information about issues that matter in the community and, more specifically, about issues such as health and nutrition.

Step 4 Broaden Your Thinking

You'll want to make sure that you are not limiting your potential partnership pool to those organizations or individuals you know or with whom your organization has had a previous relationship. Other reliable sources to check for suitable partners include:

- Internet, including news search engines to see what organizations are quoted in the media
- Nonprofit or charity directories (available at your local library)
- Community and faith-based organizations
- United Way
- Schools
- Local age-, cultural-, or ethnic-specific businesses or professional organizations, such as local Office on Aging; local Office of Asian and Pacific Islanders; or local in-language newspapers (most staff speak English)

More on identifying valuable community partners can be found in the [Partnership](#) section of the SNAP Outreach Toolkit.



Maintaining Relationships With Diverse Partners

- Share information and resources that could support one another's efforts.
- Recognize and respect cultural differences in expressing opinions and in the decisionmaking process.
- Be flexible. Meeting times and locations may need to support childcare arrangements and/or attendance by family members or children.
- Rotate meetings to visit groups located in ethnic and rural communities.
- Be sensitive to the fact that the level of formality associated with meetings, meeting times, conference calls, or other group endeavors may reflect differences in racial, ethnic, or cultural habits, customs, and traditions.
- If hosting meetings, be prepared to provide interpretation and translation services for participants with limited English proficiency or who need accommodations due to disability.
- If chairing a committee, consider including a SNAP participant representing each of the diverse communities you want to reach.

How do i reach out to community partners?

Send a letter to potential partners to introduce yourself and your program. Acknowledge their work in the community, and identify the specific audience you need to reach. State your desire to discuss how you might work together. Make sure to include what you want them to respond to or your planned follow up to the correspondence.

“Please call me if you are interested in discussing how we might work together...” or,

“I will call you next week to discuss how we might work together...”

Telephone potential partners and schedule a convenient time to discuss your suggestions and requests. If the potential partner is referred by a colleague, ask him or her to facilitate an introduction.

What is the difference between a partnership and a coalition, and what can one do that the other cannot?

There is strength in numbers. Sometimes that strength lies with just two or three people and other times it comes with 10 or 12. A partnership – typically defined as two or three individuals or organizations coming together to work toward a common goal – is ideal for many organizations. Partnerships are more likely than coalitions to include members who are of like mind and mission. They tend to be much easier to manage. Finally, they reach decisions more quickly and are more likely to stay on point and focused toward reaching a single goal. On the other hand, because of the limited number of individuals, a partnership may not offer a broad representation of ideas. Depending on the project, the workload could be quite heavy.

Because coalitions are more structured and tend to meet more regularly, there’s a greater opportunity to share ideas, lessons, and resources. Because coalitions often function as work groups, you are also more likely to get in on the ground floor when planning culturally specific activities and events.

Challenges in Working With Coalition Partners

Anytime you are working with a large group, there are bound to be challenges. While the benefits of coalitions certainly outweigh the negatives, you should be aware of the following:

- Larger, better-funded organizations tend to have more experience conducting meetings and outreach and may talk more than those with less experience. Make an effort to engage everyone equally and focus on your topic and goals to maintain control of your meetings.
- People may have had previous bad experiences with other members of the coalition. Encourage participants to focus on the business issues being discussed rather than personal issues.
- Group decisionmaking may require a longer approval process. Propose and agree on an approach for achieving consensus.
- You may have to compromise on some issues. Determine which issues or positions you are willing to compromise on before negotiations.
- Additional workload, meetings, and outside activities can be time-consuming. Consider the members’ time and interests when organizing events.

Ways To Ensure Outreach Materials Are Appropriate

Materials Are Culturally Competent When They...

- Show respect for the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the intended audiences both in content and graphics.
- Contain straightforward messages and are free from idioms, clichés, and colloquialisms that the intended audience may not be familiar with or understand.
- Convey the intended concept in a manner that is meaningful to the target audience. Some words or ideas are more difficult than others to get across, especially in translation. For instance, in other languages the concept of SNAP benefits must be conveyed, rather than translating the actual words. Use your community partners or a translation service, if needed, to make sure that the message you are trying to convey is on target.
- Do not lay blame or use guilt or negative stereotypes to get the point across.
- Are readily available in the preferred language or medium of the target audience.
- If appropriate, use pictures and symbols to simplify messages for low-literate audiences.
- Use large and/or bold type for seniors or people who are visually impaired.
- Depict the family and community as primary systems of support and intervention. To achieve greater efficiency, use pictures of persons and families that reflect the community you are trying to reach. If you are depicting activities, illustrate an activity that your target group is familiar with and enjoys.

Section IV. The Right Materials for Diverse Audiences

How are materials important in SNAP outreach?

Once you have identified your target audience and have community partners on board to help you, one of the next steps is to make sure you have the materials to conduct outreach. Your materials must tell the story—that there is a program that can help individuals and their families with their unique nutrition needs.

What culturally competent materials already exist?

A wealth of translated SNAP information—from forms and brochures, to fliers and fact sheets—is available on the FNS Web site. To view translations and to print out the materials, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>. Also, be sure to check out your local SNAP office to see what materials are available.

How do I go about creating my own culturally competent materials?

Materials should be tailored to reflect the demographics and cultural backgrounds of the intended audience. This should be evident in how they look, what they say, and the manner in which actions and people are depicted. As a rule of thumb, keep information simple and be sure to provide a description of the program, how to get it, where to ask for help, and where to use the benefits.

Is there a way to test materials to make sure they are culturally competent before I use money to produce and distribute them?

Yes. That's where your community partners can help! Call on their expertise and ask them to review draft materials and point out areas that could be problematic given the intended audience. Also, partners can assist by helping to assemble small groups of the intended audience to test materials for unbiased feedback.

This may seem a bit time-consuming on the front end, but it can go a long way in mitigating costs associated with “fixing” inappropriate materials later on. Keep in mind that some feedback about the materials may have more to do with preferences than possible barriers. For example, while paper quality or brochure colors are important considerations, your goal in testing for cultural competence is to identify wording, graphics, or other content that could be a barrier to someone understanding or taking part in your program.

How can I find good, reliable translation services on a shoe-string budget?

If you are trying to reach a certain segment of the population because of their predominance in the community and need for service, chances are other organizations and programs are, too. Local universities and colleges, community partners, and other neighborhood programs and services are all good resources for obtaining low-cost translation and interpretive services.

What is the best way to ensure that my materials reach the intended audience?

The importance of the mode of delivery cannot be overstated when communicating health messages to certain audiences. Through your needs assessment, you identified trusted messengers or sources of information about food and nutrition. In your community, these sources could be peers, elders, spiritual leaders, business leaders, or medical professionals. They can help distribute materials or steer you toward appropriate distribution points. Grassroots outreach through faith-based organizations may also play a critical role in reaching intended audiences, particularly in African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities, where churches and related organizations often play a central role.

Knowing the preferred language will help you decide whether or not to transcreate or adapt your materials, or provide information in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or video.

What are some other ways of reaching my target audience?

Don't rely solely on written materials to get the word out! Printed materials are the least preferred mode of communication—and that goes for most Americans today. Among diverse populations, surveys consistently reveal that word-of-mouth, phone calls, or face-to-face and peer-to-peer communications are the most desired forms of communication. Consider asking volunteers from partnering organizations to help spread the word. Public service announcements (PSAs) are another way to get free publicity for your program. Most stations will run a select number of PSAs at no cost; however, there is stiff competition for airtime. There is no guarantee that your ad will be chosen and, if it is, that it will air during a time when your target audience(s) is listening or watching. Generally, paid advertisements are run during the most desirable time slots.

- By participating in community events, such as health fairs, supermarket openings, or anniversary promotions, your chances of reaching large numbers of people are pretty good. But you'll still need to check beforehand to make sure that the event reaches the population you want to connect with, and that it is usually well-attended and conducive to disseminating SNAP information. A block party or festival with loud music might be popular with the intended audience and well-attended, but at the end of the day, you'll probably find most of your materials on the ground or in the trash. Look to your community partners, clients, and even event organizers for help to identify the most worthwhile events.
- Another way to personally touch clients and individuals who are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits is by using the promotora model. Promotora, the Spanish word for “promoter,” is a model for outreach that uses a lay worker who lives in the targeted community to educate residents. Their expertise? The knowledge they have of the community rather than their formal education, and the established level of trust they have with residents—something an “outsider” would have difficulty gaining—coupled with some basic training in a specific health issue or SNAP outreach. The promotora model can use both male and female outreach workers, depending on the target population, and can be successful in reaching all minority communities, particularly immigrants.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

For the past two years at the Henson Community Health Fair, Maria has talked with Mr. Williams, who stops by her table with his son to talk about SNAP and whether or not she thinks he might be eligible. Each year, Maria invites Mr. Williams to have a seat at her table, where she gives him an application and asks him to read and complete it to get the process started. But Mr. Williams says he's in a hurry--his son has football practice--and that he doesn't have time to do it right here, but that he'll fill it out at home and mail it back to the office in the next few days. Maria never hears back from Mr. Williams, that is, until the next year's health fair where he hangs around her table asking for the same information.

Reluctance in filling out paperwork or signing documents can be a sign that an individual may have difficulties with reading, writing, or comprehension. This can be hard to spot because often they will go to great lengths to avoid the embarrassment of asking for assistance. For instance, Mr. Williams was trying to find out as much information as he could without having to read anything, and he had a good excuse for not filling out the application onsite, where his problem might have become apparent. Some people even carry around newspapers and magazines to throw off anyone who might be suspicious.

To help the individual, and most importantly avoid causing embarrassment, outreach workers can acknowledge that the process can get overwhelming and offer to go over a brochure with the person—point by point—or read through the application—question by question—and write the answers, if necessary. This presents a win-win situation—it meets the goals of both the outreach worker and the individual, in an efficient, professional, and respectful manner.

Section V. Getting to the Root of It: How To Work With Minority Media

What are minority media?

Today there is an abundance of media outlets that specifically target one or more ethnic populations, races of people, or age groups. Local demographics typically will drive the need for and preponderance of minority media in a given geographic area. In the case of media that target African-Americans and Hispanics, there are well-established outlets in most big cities and urban areas across the country. Asian media are emerging in those same areas, as well. Building relationships with media that specifically target your audience can be important to communicating the benefits of SNAP.

Why is it important to use minority media?

Minority media are another trusted messenger for reaching diverse audiences about SNAP. Minority media highlight news and events of particular importance to their audience. In addition, in-language media provide an invaluable service for those who do not speak English. Further, minority media personalities tend to be well-respected and credible sources on issues that affect their community. Minority media are also more likely to use public service advertising and news that target their audience. Topics concerning health and education are of primary importance for the audience as well as the media.

I know radio and television are popular media, but what about newspapers and magazines?

Print outlets, like newspapers and magazines, are still a very popular medium for older people across all racial and ethnic groups. For some cultures, newspapers are also a link to the community and to the country of origin and serve as a resource guide. Print also allows for further explanation of topics that cannot be fully covered on radio or television.

How should facts and figures be presented to minority and targeted media?

It's okay to use statistics, but do not rely on facts and figures alone to tell your story. Prove your story's relevance to your target audience. Make sure your statistics and data focus on the target audience, as well. Keep in mind that sources and spokespeople should be credible with groups you are trying to reach. If possible, bring statements from community leaders as testimonials for your story and consider including real-life examples of how the program can be used.

Beyond sending out materials regularly to media, how else can I build relationships with minority media in my area?

You may find that editors and staff at many minority media outlets are actively involved in the community and sit on numerous committees and local boards. In short, they make great advocates for your organization beyond today's story.

How can I find the minority media in my area?

To ensure that your media contact list is up-to-date on minority or targeted media in your area, go to your local library or check online for media directories, such as Bacon's, or do a general Internet search. It's also worthwhile to go into the communities you want to reach and check out what free papers are available—ethnic supermarkets and restaurants are a good place to pick up a few or visit a local newsstand for a broad range of local media. Chambers of Commerce may also have information about local media.

Step 1 Identify Media Outlets

Outlets should be those with readers or listeners who represent your target audience.

Step 2 Know What is Newsworthy

Stories that are newsworthy to minority media will have a sense of immediacy and offer fresh, new information that will impact their audience's lives.

Step 3 Develop Story Angles

One story can be presented from different perspectives, which will make it more appealing to the media and their audiences.

Step 4 Pitch Your Story

Decide how best to present your story—in a press release or letter.

Step 5 Follow Up!

This is an important step to getting your story covered in mainstream or minority media given the amount of information most media outlets receive and the ever decreasing number of reporters available to cover stories.

**Tools & Tips****Tips for Success When Working With Minority Media**

- Use statistics about SNAP that are relevant to your target audience.
- Be prepared with SNAP information and other supporting materials. Minority media often work with much smaller staffs and may ask you to provide photographs and background materials.
- Check with each media outlet on whether or not they need information in English or translated. Some will translate for you, but not always.
- Identify and offer culturally appropriate spokespeople, including community leaders and trusted people such as religious leaders. Don't forget about the director of your local SNAP office.
- Include tips and educational information about how to use the program

Section VI. Culturally Competent + Customer Service

The focus of this toolkit is on outreach, but really that is only the first step in ensuring that more diverse audiences participate in SNAP. Outreach efforts can be undone in a matter of seconds with a negative encounter at the first point of contact with SNAP. If individuals or families are met with insensitivity, lack of courtesy and respect, bias, or even discrimination, we may lose a potential participant.

After a negative encounter, clients may experience:

- Feelings of being unwelcome, unwanted, and not valued.
- Fear of further contact with the office or agency.
- Fear that complaining about negative experiences with staff will compromise service or benefits.
- Anger, frustration, and insult. Thus, they may refuse to initiate further contact.
- Confusion about completing paperwork, following instructions or next steps, because clients did not understand acronyms used by an eligibility worker.

After a negative encounter, organizations may experience:

- Loss in time and resources due to missed appointments or errors on paperwork.
- Loss of clients due to negative first impressions or word-of-mouth.
- Frustrated staff due to lack of training and knowledge of appropriate ways to handle certain situations.
- Possible filing of a grievance or report of discrimination based on a bad experience with a first point of contact.

Being Culturally Sensitive in the Application Process

- Support and obtain professional development and training for frontline and eligibility staff on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence. Share articles and other materials that will help in this effort.
- Emphasize customer service and courtesy. Accurate information should be provided in a respectful and timely manner.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of outside resources that may exist, and how and when it is appropriate to access those resources.
- Develop written guidelines for handling situations that are procedural in nature, such as accessing TTY or language-line services and interpreters.
- Train and retrain frontline workers on your agency's policies and procedures regarding communication issues, such as serving individuals who speak little or no English.
- Identify bilingual staff or those who have an affinity with other cultures in your agency who can make a connection with individuals whose primary language is not English.
- Train and retrain frontline workers on how to serve individuals who have special communication challenges, such as a limited literacy level.
- Do not assume that supervisors are knowledgeable about the behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets necessary to work effectively with diverse populations. They may also need training.
- Consider cross-training with an organization that can teach you about a specific culture. In return, you can teach them about the SNAP application process so they can relay this information to their constituents.

Tips for Communicating With Clients & Families

At the heart of cultural competence is learning to communicate effectively with individuals and their families. Here are a few tried and true suggestions:

- When working with people different from yourself, it's important to put your own personal biases aside. Keep an open mind and don't jump to conclusions. Because a person speaks with an accent does not mean they are not a native-born citizen. Take time to learn about the person you are speaking with, which demonstrates respect and an understanding of cultural competency.
- Establish rapport. In many cultures, it is important to establish some type of relationship before discussing business. Taking a few extra moments to ask questions and learn more about an individual and his/her family often makes an enormous difference in the long run.
- While developing rapport, refrain from discussing topics such as personal relationships or behaviors that may be misinterpreted. As a practice, avoid making jokes or displaying questionable posters or artwork in your office or workspace.
- If you don't know what their native language is, use the "I Speak" document available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>, which lists, in 36 different languages, the words "I Speak." Give this document to your clients so they can point out for you which language they speak when they spot it.
- Respect personal space. When you first meet with potential clients, ask them to sit where they feel the most comfortable. This will allow people to choose the personal distance that makes them most comfortable. Similarly, refrain from casually tapping or touching someone, which in some cultures can be perceived as being too familiar.
- Identify the decisionmaker. Find out who the influential parties are and how they make decisions.
- It may be important to ask, "Do you want to discuss SNAP with other members of your family?"
- Send a message through children but do not use children as interpreters. For many parents who don't speak English well, their children often serve as conduits for information. They can take home what they received in school—for instance, information on summer programs or SNAP. However, some caution must be taken if a parent brings a child to a meeting to serve as an interpreter. Children may be able to informally convey casual conversation points. However, eligibility for a government program is different. Children may not understand the meaning of technical words such as income and resources. Also, parents may not feel comfortable discussing certain information such as household income in front of their children.
- Ask questions and listen to the answers. Asking questions shows that you really are interested in what a person has to say and his or her perspectives. But pay attention. Do not interrupt your client or try to put words in his or her mouth.
- Check for understanding. In some cultures, people are reluctant to ask questions of authority figures. Explain that asking for clarification is acceptable—then ask follow up questions to determine whether they correctly understood you. Ask open-ended questions to ensure the information has been adequately understood.
- Learn greetings and titles of respect in other languages that you commonly encounter.
- Write numbers down. People easily confuse numbers spoken in a new language.

Eight Common Mistakes To Avoid

1. Disrupting home and work schedules when conducting education and outreach activities.
2. Dismissing cultural preferences, customs, and traditions when discussing health and nutrition.
3. Assuming others perceive things the same way you do.
4. Getting “right down to business.” In many cultures, socializing is an important first step before discussing business or personal matters.
5. Conducting interviews or discussing personal information in an open setting. Receiving assistance from outside agencies is an embarrassment in some cultures, and may be better discussed behind closed doors.
6. Misreading silence for confusion or lack of knowledge. Allow for a short period of silence or reflection. Rather than asking if the person understood what was discussed, ask open-ended questions as you probe for understanding.
7. Ignoring the importance of such factors as age, gender, or position in family when asking for decisions.

Examples

Ms. L. has a Hispanic surname and speaks with an accent. She arrives for a community-sponsored workshop on how to apply for SNAP. When she approaches the sign-in table and gives her name to the staff person, she is promptly asked to step to the side and wait a moment. The staff person speaks slowly and in a loud voice. Ms. L immediately knows that the staff person assumes she cannot speak English, and has gone to get someone who is bilingual to help out. Although she is pleased that they are making the effort to provide translators for individuals who require this level of language assistance, she wishes they had asked about her specific needs.

Ms. T is African-American. She stops by the SNAP booth at a citywide festival and asks where in her community she can find out more about applying for SNAP. She notices that instead of asking where she lives, the outreach worker assumes she lives in a predominately African-American section of town and immediately refers her to a location in that area. This infuriates Ms. T because she does not live in that area and must point that out before receiving the correct information.

Kernels of Wisdom

I participate on a weekly talk show for the Haitian community. It's a 20-minute question-and-answer, call-in show that has a cultural theme each week. My job is to tie that theme into a nutrition-focused topic.

SNAP Outreach Grantee

We cover everything that affects and benefits the Hispanic community. We are always interested in initiatives that benefit the Hispanic community. Personally, I prefer receiving information via email. And we always appreciate good quality photos.

Mary Aviles, Hispanic editor, EFE News Service (national news agency)

Recently, we've been covering stories about how Hispanics are the minority group that's been able to overcome poverty the fastest, according to studies. I think there needs to be more education on the program. There are families that qualify for SNAP, and yet don't take advantage of it. Others don't take advantage of their right because they're scared they'd draw criticism and that they'd be labeled as lazy and as irresponsibly having too many kids.

Jose Carrera, El Dia (Houston)

Our biggest pet peeve is old news. We also don't like it when we are given little time before an event. We value information that affects the Hispanic community: education, crime, etc. Sometimes we get information that is unrelated to Chicago or to Hispanics.

Arely Padilla, reporter, La Raza (Chicago)

Kernels of Wisdom

Almost all our reporters are native Chinese speakers, and some may not speak English well or at all. Therefore, we prefer translated, in-language fact sheets and releases.

Emerson Chu, Southern Chinese Daily News (Houston)

If organizations have big presence in our communities, then we are more likely to cover news about that organization. By participating in our events and supporting our communities, they will appear credible, trustworthy, and recognizable in our particular ethnic community. Consequently, our community will be more interested in their news.

Yunju Choi, News Korea (Dallas)

While we cover news that is relevant to the Asian community, we prefer to get news that is specifically relevant to our target nationality group. As a Japanese publication, our ideal news relates to the Japanese population specifically.

Jacob Marolies, Yomiuri Shimbun, (New York City)

Partnerships can be extremely effective, even among groups that don't agree on some issues; our common points are far more numerous and powerful than our differences.

Larry Goolsby, American Public Human Services Association

We have quite a few helpful volunteers from local credit unions. Their customer service skills are great, and they're used to helping people complete applications.

Teresa Kunze, FNS Outreach Grantee Catholic Charities of Wichita, Kansas

Kernels of Wisdom: Partnerships

Faith-based groups sometimes get church volunteers to go door-to-door talking to those they imagine could use a service or program.

Jean Beil, Catholic Charities USA

We partner with the traditional organizations, like senior centers. But we also work with grocery stores and apartment complex managers. We make it a priority to free up our outreach workers so they can attend community meetings, whenever they happen.

Ana Paguaga, FNS Outreach Grantee
Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, Waterbury, CT

Give partnerships a chance to work; invest time to develop trust.

Nicole Christensen, FNS Outreach Grantee
Food Change, New York City

Fostering of partnerships is difficult, however, vitally important. Partnerships are beneficial for agencies, especially to underserved populations and community organizations that work with these populations. As for Vietnamese Social Services, it has a positive effect and brings growth to our Somali, Vietnamese, and Burmese immigrants and refugees.

Thao Dao, FNS Outreach Grantee
Vietnamese Social Services

The best tool is the power of the relationship.

Jose Humphreys, Esperanza USA

Tips & Tools: Resources for Outreach



Resources

Informational SNAP Resources Translated into 36 Languages

Five basic SNAP documents have been translated into 36 languages and are easily downloadable for simple copying and distribution. An “I Speak” document is also available which allows a person to indicate to a caseworker or advocate what language he or she speaks so that accommodations can be made.

The following documents are available:

- **Questions and Answers About Getting and Using SNAP FNS-313**
A brochure that provides useful information about SNAP.
- **“Public Charge”**
A notice to reassure immigrants that receiving SNAP benefits will not make them public charges, so that it will not affect their immigration status.
- **“Immigrant Eligibility Questions and Answers”**
A series of facts for immigrants about SNAP eligibility, based on changes in the 2002 Farm Bill.
- **“Documents Needed to Apply for SNAP”**
A list (in English and the target language) of documents that may be needed to prove eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- **“Fact Sheet on Eligibility”**
Ten facts about SNAP for elderly (60 and older) and disabled persons.

View and download at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>

“10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the SNAP Program”

This low-literacy flier outlines 10 steps to follow to apply for SNAP benefits.

View and download PDF version:

<http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>

SNAP Application Envelope

Help potential recipients compile all of the necessary materials to apply for benefits with this handy envelope featuring a checklist of verification documents. Also available in Spanish.

Order copies online at <http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>.

Document number SNAP-02 (comes with SNAP-01, “10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the Food Stamp Program.”)

SNAP Photo Library

Groups are encouraged to download photographs for use in communicating SNAP nutrition education and outreach messages. FNS requests that these pictures be used only for promotion, information, and education purposes of a nonprofit nature.

Download at www.grande.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp_album.php.

Order print-quality files by contacting FNS directly.

“Community Hunger Champions—Helping People Eat Right When Money’s Tight” Video

This eight-minute video introduces influencers at the regional, State and local levels to the SNAP Media Campaign, familiarizes viewers with campaign messages, and showcases the important role eligibility workers play in ensuring eligible individuals obtain the benefits of SNAP. This video is a companion piece to the toolkit and will help eligibility workers and community partners understand how they can work together and utilize the outreach materials developed by FNS.

[Download video](#)

SNAP Logo Guidelines

The SNAP logo may be applied to program materials used for identification, public notification and awareness, nutrition education, and outreach. The SNAP logo may be used by those administering SNAP, including the 53 State SNAP agencies and their counterparts at the local and county levels, for purposes consistent with SNAP statutes, regulations, and policies. Other organizations, such as nonprofit organizations and authorized SNAP retailers engaged in SNAP outreach or nutrition education, may use the SNAP logo for noncommercial educational and outreach purposes when such uses are a public service and contribute to public information and education concerning SNAP. FNS has developed guidelines for using the SNAP logo.

Download logo guidelines at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/logo.pdf>

ENGLISH



SPANISH



General SNAP Outreach Resources

General Information

Main SNAP Web page

A starting point for general information about SNAP.

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/

History of the SNAP Program

Provides a brief history of SNAP from 1939 to the present.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/about.htm>

Legislation, Rules, Waivers, and Certification Policy

Includes a waiver database showing which States have received waivers of sections of SNAP rules for specific purposes or to accommodate local conditions.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/legislation_rules_cert.htm

USDA Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Background information about USDA's initiatives for faith-based and community organizations.

www.usda.gov/fbci

Research Studies

Office of Research and Analysis (ORA)

Regularly released research studies that might prove useful in your outreach efforts. For the latest research and studies issued by the Food and Nutrition Service visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora>

SNAP Communication Tools

Main SNAP Outreach Web page

A starting point for information about SNAP outreach including information about developing and submitting an optional State SNAP outreach plan for FNS approval; the SNAP outreach coalition; and promising outreach practices.

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

SNAP Radio PSAs

A compilation of USDA's SNAP radio public service announcements.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>

SNAP TV PSAs

Two 30-second video public service announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish. They are suitable for both TV and in-store broadcast and can also be used in meetings and presentations.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/psas.htm>

Radio Novelas

A compilation of 10 two-minute Spanish public service announcements in the form of radio novelas or miniseries.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/radio/default.htm>

SNAP Newsletter Article

A prewritten newsletter article to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-article.pdf>

SNAP Newsletter Paragraph

A prewritten newsletter paragraph to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-paragraph.pdf>

General SNAP Outreach Resources

Other SNAP Outreach Resources

SNAP State Policy Guidance

FNS provides guidance on implementing program policy to State SNAP agencies through memos to its seven regional offices.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>

The regional offices distribute the guidance to the State agencies with which they work.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/certification_policy.htm

SNAP Outreach Coalition Information

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups, and other groups interested in promoting the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. These organizations work to end hunger and improve nutrition at the national level through both advocacy and outreach to local antihunger projects.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

USDA Grant Information

Information about past and future research grants given by USDA to nonprofit organizations and others to improve access to SNAP by low-income persons and families.

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

Hunger Champions Information and Applications

Established to honor local offices that provide exemplary service in assisting eligible clients to obtain SNAP benefits.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

Broad-based Categorical Eligibility

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2010/121809.pdf>

Prescreening and Application Assistance

FNS Prescreening Tool (Step 1)

This simple, low-literacy online prescreening tool enables users to input their information privately and, based on their information, tells them if they might be eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they might receive.

<http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>

Links to Downloadable SNAP Applications and Local Office Locators

Features a United States map. Click on a State to find links to that State's downloadable SNAP application, links to local office locators, and list of outreach providers.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm>

Combined Application Project (CAP)

As part of FNS' priority to improve access to SNAP, the agency is working in collaboration with regional offices, States and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to increase access to the nutrition benefits offered by SNAP for elderly and disabled populations receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The Combined Application Project (CAP) demonstrations make it much easier for the elderly and disabled SSI recipients to receive SNAP benefits by reengineering the SNAP application process and eliminating the need for this population to visit the local SNAP office.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/program-improvement.htm>

Research, Data, and Statistics

SNAP Participation Data

Features data and studies about participation in SNAP and the characteristics of households receiving SNAP benefits. Also includes evaluation reports for past FNS outreach grant programs from 1993-1994 (see “Food Stamp Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Projects: Final Evaluation Report, July 1999”) and 2001 (see “Research Grants to Improve SNAP Access Through Partnerships and Technology: 2001 Program Evaluation Summary – September 2004”).
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm>

Economic Impact of SNAP Benefits

Links to studies about the economic benefits of SNAP. The research was conducted by USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS), which is USDA’s main source of economic information.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/business-case.htm>

Impact of Food Assistance on Nutrition and Health

A comprehensive review that compiles and synthesizes published research about the impact of domestic food assistance programs on participants’ nutrition and health outcomes. There are several volumes to the report.
www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr19%2D3?

United States Census Bureau

Vast amounts of data on income and poverty levels, including data by county and State.
www.census.gov

Nutrition Education

SNAP Nutrition Connection

Features resources related to SNAP nutrition education including lists of State and local SNAP nutrition education cooperators (“State Gates”).
http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=15

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

FNS campaign to motivate children to be active and eat healthy. Features fun activities for kids and information for caregivers. Free materials available.
<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/eatsmartmaterials.html>

Nutrition Education Resources

Links to national SNAP nutrition education resources including guidance for developing an optional State nutrition education plan and submitting it for FNS approval.
<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/>

Success and Challenges In Delivering Nutrition Education to Low Income Older Adults

A PowerPoint presentation advising outreach providers on how to effectively educate low-literacy older adults about good nutrition.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/NNEC/Files/Presentations/DeliveringNutEdOlderAdults.pdf>

Information for Retailers

General SNAP Information for Food Retailers

Main source of information about SNAP for food retailers including information about how to become an authorized retailer, frequently asked questions, and tips for food retailers about outreach.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/merchants.htm>

Organizations Serving Older Adults

Please note that this is a sampling of organizations serving older Americans and not a complete list.

The Administration on Aging (AoA)

An agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one of the nation's largest providers of home- and community-based care for older persons and their caregivers. This network, serving about 7 million older persons and their caregivers, consists of 56 State Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging; 233 Tribal and Native organizations; two organizations that serve Native Hawaiians; 29,000 service providers; and thousands of volunteers. These organizations provide assistance and services to older individuals and their families in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the United States.

www.aoa.gov

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

The CMS is a Federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CMS runs the Medicare and Medicaid programs - two national health care programs that benefit about 75 million Americans.

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

A large coalition of the nation's nonprofit organizations serving older Americans. There is a 56 member association which is diverse and dedicated to preserving and strengthening the well-being of America's older population. This national organization advocates on behalf of seniors and their families in the ongoing national debate on aging policy.

www.lcao.org

Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides retirement and disability benefits to eligible Americans. Retirement benefits start at age 62 and are based on your average earnings during a lifetime of work under the Social Security system. SSA is responsible for two major programs that provide benefits based on disability: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is based on prior work under Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Under SSI, payments are made on the basis of financial need. SSI disability benefits are payable to adults or children who are disabled or blind, have limited income and resources, meet the living arrangement requirements, and are otherwise eligible. SSDI benefits are payable to blind or disabled workers, widow(er)s, or adults disabled since childhood, who are otherwise eligible.

<http://www.ssa.gov>

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)

N4A is the umbrella organization for the 655 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and more than 230 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. Through its presence in Washington, D.C., N4A advocates on behalf of the local aging agencies to ensure that needed resources and support services are available to older Americans.

www.n4a.org

AARP Foundation

Founded in 1958, AARP Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50 and over improve the quality of their lives.

www.aarp.org

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

NANASP is a professional membership organization with members drawn primarily from persons working in or interested in the field of aging, community-based services, and nutrition and the elderly. Founded in the 1970s, NANASP is one of the leadership organizations in that it helps shape national policy, trains service providers, and advocates on behalf of older adults.
www.nanasp.org

National Council on Aging

A nonprofit service and advocacy organization. Brings together nonprofit organizations, businesses and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults.
www.ncoa.org

BenefitsCheckUp

Developed and maintained by The National Council on Aging (NCOA), *BenefitsCheckUp* is the nation's most comprehensive Web-based service to screen for benefits programs for seniors with limited income and resources. *BenefitsCheckUp* helps older adults find and enroll in Federal, State, local and private programs that help pay for prescription drugs, utility bills, meals, health care and other needs.
www.benefitscheckup.org

Elder Care Locator

The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community. Just one phone call or Web site visit instantly connects individuals to eldercare resources in their communities.
www.eldercare.gov

Community Transportation Association (CTA)

Transportation planning and coordination, supported with sufficient investment in transit alternatives, can help communities more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of their seniors and ensure their essential place in community life.
www.ctaa.org

Senior Corps, Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

Senior Corps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. Senior Corps offers a network of programs that tap the rich experience, skills and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges. Among these programs is the Senior Companion Program which brings together volunteers age 55 and over with adults in their community who have difficulty with the simple tasks of day-to-day living. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or just making a friendly visit.
www.seniorcorps.gov

Additional Organizations

Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)

MOWAA represents those who provide congregate and home-delivered meals services to people in need. Most members are executive directors, Registered or Licensed Dietitians, volunteer coordinators, or nutrition directors at Meals-On-Wheels and congregate programs.

Membership in MOWAA is diverse.

www.mowaa.org

Families USA

A national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the achievement of high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

www.familiesusa.org

SNAP Outreach Media Contacts

National

National Headquarters

3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

Media Team

703-305-2281

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Northeast Region

(ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY):

Northeast Regional Office

10 Causeway Street, Room 501
Boston, MA 02222-1069
617-565-6370

Mid-Atlantic Region

(PA, MD, DE, NJ, PR, VA, VI, WV):

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

Mercer Corporate Park
300 Corporate Blvd.
Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1518
609-259-5025

Midwest Region

(IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI):

Midwest Regional Office

77 West Jackson Blvd., 20th floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
312-353-6664

Southeast Regional Office

(AL, FL, GA, KY, MI, NC, SC, TN):

Southeast Regional Office

61 Forsyth St. SW, Room 8T36
Atlanta, GA 30303-3427
404-562-1801

Mountain Plains Region

(CO, IA, KS, MO, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY):

Mountain Plains Regional Office

1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 903
Denver, CO 80204-3581
303-844-0300

Southwest Region

(AR, LA, TX, NM, OK):

Southwest Regional Office

1100 Commerce St., Room 555
Dallas, TX 75242-9800
214-290-9800

Western Region

(AZ, CA, OR, WA, AK, HI, ID, NV, Guam, Mariana Islands, Amer. Samoa):

Western Regional Office

90 Seventh St., Suite 10-100
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-705-1310

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Capital Area Food Bank, Washington, DC

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FoodChange, New York, NY

Fresno Metro Ministry, Fresno, CA

Human Services Coalition of Dade County, Inc., Miami, FL

Project Bread - The Walk for Hunger, Boston, MA

United Way of New York City, New York, NY

Urban Justice Center, New York, NY

SNAP Outreach Coalition Members

USDA FNS Regional Offices

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<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/>