

UNITED WAY LEGISLATIVE ISSUE BRIEF FOR THE 113th U.S. CONGRESS: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

“United Way urges Congress to protect and fully fund SNAP.”

What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is the nation’s largest nutrition assistance program. The program provides monthly support to low-income households for the purchase of food.

Anyone who qualifies can receive the support. SNAP serves households with income up to 130% of the federal poverty line who meet asset limitations, and 87% of SNAP households include a child, elderly or disabled person. SNAP benefit levels are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, a market-basket of food updated annually by the United States Department of Agriculture to reflect the minimum amount a family could spend for a nutritiously adequate diet. The average monthly SNAP benefit per person in 2011 was \$134 – roughly \$1.50 per meal.

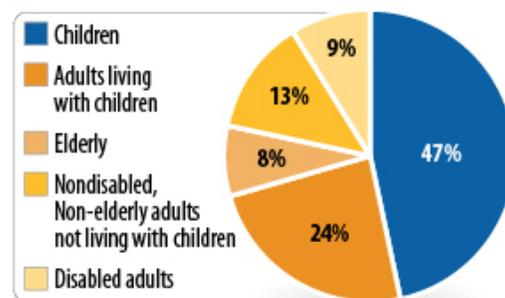
SNAP benefits are delivered monthly through an electronic debit card (EBT) programed to allow only the purchase of food. The federal government pays 100% of SNAP benefits and shares the administration costs with states. In 2012, more than 46 million people (nearly half of whom were children) accessed food through SNAP – about 72% of those eligible.

How does SNAP support families, communities and the economy?

SNAP increases financial stability and improves health – both of which strengthen communities and advance the common good. SNAP also boosts local economies.

- **SNAP is an important work support:** SNAP supplements the income of low-wage earners helping working families make ends meet.
- **SNAP is responsive in economic downturns and natural disaster:** In fact, SNAP enrollment is counter-cyclical, expanding when the economy weakens and contracting when the economy recovers, making it one of our country’s most responsive programs in stabilizing families.
- **SNAP promotes economic activity:** Moody’s Analytics estimates that every \$1 increase in household SNAP benefits generates \$1.71 in economic activity.
- **SNAP supports children’s health and education:** Children with regular access to nutritious food have improved academic performance and have decreased risk of behavior problems, obesity and illness & infection.

Nearly Half of Those Who Receive SNAP Benefits Are Children; One-Quarter Are Adults Living With Children



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2010

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org

What are United Way’s priorities for SNAP?

- Protect SNAP to maintain its counter-cyclical intent to provide nutrition assistance and stability
- Ensure policies promote access and facilitate enrollment rather than create roadblocks
- Fully fund SNAP to prevent food insecurity and promote healthy choices for children and families

The Ask: United Way urges Congress to protect and fully fund SNAP in reauthorization efforts & deficit reduction discussions.

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