



SNAP Informational Packet

Feeding America West Michigan

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal nutrition assistance program for eligible low-income individuals and families. Formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, SNAP uses electronic benefits for members to purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency. SNAP is the country's largest federal nutrition assistance program.

Who is eligible?

SNAP provides important nutritional support for low-wage working families, low-income seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes. SNAP eligibility rules and benefit levels are set at the federal level, but also gives states the flexibility to tailor aspects of the program. The federal rules require individuals and families to meet the following criteria:

- Gross monthly income is at or below 130% of the poverty line. Households with an elderly or disabled member do not need to meet this limit.
- Net monthly income must be less than or equal to the poverty line.
- Assets must fall below certain limits.

The SNAP benefit formula targets benefits according to need. So, the amount of benefits an individual/family receives is based on where they fall in the poverty line.

How do you apply?

To get SNAP benefits, you must apply in the state in which you currently live and you must meet certain requirements, including resource and income limits, which are updated annually.

In the state of Michigan, the following resources are available to apply for SNAP benefits:

- MDHHS Food Assistance webpage: www.michigan.gov/mdhhs
- Apply through MI Bridges: www.newmibridges.michigan.gov
- Food and Other Resources Helpline (for application assistance) 1-888-544-8773
- Local office locations:
www.mdhhs.michigan.gov/CompositeDirPub/CountyCompositeDirectory.aspx



How does it work?

SNAP benefits are distributed monthly to program participants via an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The card can be used like a debit card to purchase nutritional food such as bread, cereal, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish and dairy products in authorized retail food stores. The EBT card can also be used at farmers markets and to purchase seeds and plant starters.

Why is it important?

In addition to being the nation's largest anti-hunger program, SNAP also:

- Provides families with the resources to meet their nutritional needs and protects them from hardship and hunger
- Protects the overall economy by being the quickest, most effective form of economic stimulus. By receiving SNAP benefits, low-income individuals are able to spend their money on shelter and transportation since their SNAP benefits will cover most of their food costs.
- Supports and encourages work by acting as a safety net for people who are elderly, disabled or temporarily unemployed. SNAP is also designed to supplement the wages of low-income workers.
- Supports healthy eating by enabling low-income households to afford more healthy foods. Since SNAP benefits can be spent only on food, they allow families to purchase healthy items, like fruits and vegetables, which are often the most expensive items at grocery stores.
- Responds quickly to disasters – SNAP acts as a first responder in the wake of natural disasters by providing critical food assistance to vulnerable households.

How can my organization help?

The best way to assist federal, state and community organizations in increasing SNAP enrollment is by spreading the word. Conducting SNAP outreach has been proven to increase the number of SNAP recipients.



Here are a few ways to increase SNAP outreach at your organization:

- Pass out SNAP flyers – available at www.FeedWM.org/AgencyPartner/Resources
- Refer community members to SNAP application assistance resources:
 - Food and Other Resources (F.O.R.) helpline (for pre-screening, SNAP questions & application assistance): 1-888-544-8773
 - MI Bridges (online SNAP application): www.Michigan.gov/MIbridges
 - Local MDHHS office locator:
www.mdhhs.michigan.gov/CompositeDirPub/CountyCompositeDirectory.aspx
- Set up outreach visits with MDHHS representative. Here are a few examples of ways to collaborate with MDHHS to provide SNAP outreach:
 - Set up table at community event
 - Attend food distribution or congregate meal site
 - Present information during a group meeting (senior day program, after-school program for parents, cooking class, etc.)

Other resources:

- SNAP State Directory of Resources: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory>
- MDHHS Food Assistance Resources: https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_5527---,00.html
- SNAP Eligibility FAQ's: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: Snap Policy Basics:
<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>