

# NISC Connections

## SNAP Education and Advocacy for Older Adults



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March 25, 2021



# Panelists

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# Food Insecurity Among Older Adults

## Food insecure older adults:

- 9.8 million older Americans are faced with food insecurity
- Food insecure older adults consume inadequate micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals, which puts them at greater risk of developing chronic diseases.
- They are at increased risk of falls due the impact of poor nutrition on muscle mass, bone density, and balance.
- Low-income older adults are often forced to choose between buying groceries and paying other bills.

# What is SNAP?

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

- SNAP is a federally funded entitlement program that provides low-income individuals and families with a monthly benefit that they can use to buy food.
- SNAP benefits can be used at any approved store, over 250,000 authorized retailers nationwide.
- SNAP benefits can be used to purchase breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products.

# SNAP Improves the Health of Older Adults



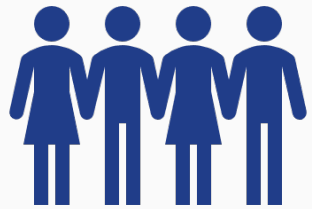
## SNAP is a vital program for the health and well-being of older adults

- SNAP increases prescription adherence (less likely to skip pills to afford food)
- SNAP participants age 60+ are more likely to access health care (physician visits) than their eligible but non-participating counterparts and are less likely to be hospitalized

# Key Facts about Seniors and SNAP

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## Participation



**5.0 million** older adults (age 60+) use SNAP each month

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## Value of Benefits



The average monthly SNAP benefit for a household with an elderly person is **\$125**

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## Impact



Participation in the SNAP program reduces food insecurity overall by **30%**

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## Economic Impact



Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates over **\$1.79** in community spending

# Participation in SNAP Among Older Adults

- 48% of eligible older adults are participating in SNAP, which means that 52% are missing out on this critical benefit
- Despite the low participation rate, it has improved in the last 8 years.

## SNAP Participation Among Qualified Elderly Individuals (Age 60+)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
% Participating	33%	38%	42%	41%	42%	42%	45%	48%

# Common reasons seniors don't participate in SNAP

Other people need SNAP more than I do.

SNAP is only for families with children.

No stores near me accept SNAP.

I'll only get \$15 a month.

It's too *hard* to apply for SNAP.





# Strategies for Increasing SNAP Participation

## Best Practices from our Community Based Partners

- Provide seniors with information to empower them to make an informed decision.
- Benefits CheckUp: <https://www.benefitscheckup.org/>
- Provide comprehensive application assistance on site.
- Develop community partnerships with organizations fighting senior hunger.

# Benefits Outreach Program

## Overview

Program goal: Connect eligible individuals to SNAP and Medicaid benefits

Team of 21 coordinators and supervisors

Outreach Strategies:

- Benefits Outreach Hotline: Dedicated benefits hotline – provide application assistance, education, and guidance
- On-site Assistance: Directly assist clients in applying for SNAP and Medicaid through outreach events held in community.
- Case Application support: Work closely with local offices to resolve application issues
- SNAP-Outreach Network: Train representatives from member agencies in our network to submit SNAP applications on behalf of clients.



# SNAP Outreach

## Benefits Outreach Model

- Build relationships with community organizations serving older adults
- Educate staff working with older adults on the importance of SNAP
- Work with sites to schedule virtual and onsite enrollment events
- Provide marketing materials to senior residential sites and other partners to promote benefits hotline services
- Promote services on social media and Google
- Provide case application support to older adults to ensure they are connected to benefits



# SNAP Outreach

## Future Opportunities

- Resume field outreach in the Spring
- Targeted social media promotion – focus on areas with high number of eligible older adults
- Older adult marketing campaign
- Recruit new sites to train and submit SNAP applications

# Federal Policy & Advocacy Opportunities

## COVID-19 Relief to Date

- 15% increase in benefits, extended through Sept. 30, 2021
- SNAP Purchasing Pilot extended to 46 states & DC
- Funding for increased administrative costs & grocery delivery technology

Learn more: [American Rescue Plan Improves Senior Health and Financial Security](#)



# Federal Policy & Advocacy Opportunities

## COVID Relief Next Steps

- Extend 15% increase through economic downturn
- Extend Purchasing Pilot to all 50 states
- Increase minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30



# Federal Policy & Advocacy Opportunities

## SNAP & Older Adults Next Steps

- Make benefit increases permanent
- Improve benefits by revisiting Thrifty Food Plan (Biden EO)
- Transition Purchasing Pilot to universally available waiver/state option & increase # of retailers
- Transition ESAP and SMD pilots to universally available waivers/state options
- Increase funding for SNAP outreach to older adults
- Increase the frequency of data releases on state trends in SNAP eligibility and participation for older adults



# Federal Policy & Advocacy Opportunities

## SNAP Policy Key Targets

- Make benefit increases permanent
- Improve benefits by revisiting Thrifty Food Plan (Biden EO)
- Transition Purchasing Pilot to universally available waiver/state option & increase # of retailers
- Transition ESAP and SMD pilots to universally available waivers/state options
- Increase funding for SNAP outreach to older adults
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# Federal Policy & Advocacy Opportunities

## House Agriculture Committee



### Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations

Chair:  
Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT-05)

Ranking Member:  
Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE-02)

## Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry



### Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research

Chair:  
Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ)

Ranking Member:  
Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN)

# Contacts

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