SNAP Education and Advocacy for Older Adults

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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

Participation

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

Impact

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

Value of Benefits

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

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+)

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<td>% Participating</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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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/](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
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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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