

# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

## Resource – Fact Sheet

The Feeding America Government Relations Team is providing background information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and opportunities for strengthening the program's impact.

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) COVID-19 Fact Sheet

The Feeding America network of food banks will continue to need additional food and funds from the government to help meet increased need, but the single most important thing we can do to put money into the hands of people who need to purchase food is to increase SNAP benefits by 15 percent.

#### What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is the nation's first line of defense against hunger in America. Before this crisis, SNAP served 37 million low-income Americans, providing benefits that are timely, targeted, and temporary. SNAP benefits are delivered monthly to eligible participants through electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards that can be used to purchase groceries at over 239,000 authorized retailers nationwide. For every meal the Feeding America network provides, SNAP provides nine.

#### Who is eligible for SNAP?

SNAP households must generally have a gross income below 130 percent of poverty (\$2,790 a month for a family of four). A SNAP household's net monthly income, or income after deductions are applied for items such as high housing costs and childcare, must be less than or equal to the poverty line (\$2,146 a month for a family of four). 55 percent go to households with incomes at or below half of the poverty line. The vast majority of SNAP participants (69 percent) are children, seniors, or people with disabilities. SNAP benefits phase out as participants get back on their feet, with the average household staying on the program about a year.

#### Is SNAP efficient and well administered?

SNAP boasts one of the highest payment accuracy rates and one of the lowest fraud rates of any benefit program with low administrative overhead. According to the Congressional Research Service, between 2012 and 2014, there was a 1.5 percent fraud rate in SNAP most of which was due to retailer trafficking of benefits. SNAP responds quickly to changes in the economy. During the 2008 recession, SNAP participation grew alongside rising unemployment and fell as the economy recovered.

#### What impact does SNAP have on the economy?



Households typically spend their monthly benefits quickly, making SNAP a particularly effective stimulus in providing quick support to local economies- every dollar in SNAP benefits helps generate more than \$1.70 in economic activity.

### Why increase SNAP benefits now?

SNAP is an economic multiplier, infusing money into local economies. With unemployment rates skyrocketing, SNAP is also vital to the individuals and families who were already food insecure, as well as newly unemployed individuals. The maximum household benefit varies by household size, with an individual currently receiving a maximum of \$194 a month. We urge an increase in maximum household benefits of 15 percent, increasing that individual's purchasing power to \$223 per month. We also urge an increase of the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30 per month.

