

SNAP Benefits

Since 1939!

Why are they important?

Older families versus younger families -- who do you think struggles with buying food the most? One may assume older families struggle the most since most are unemployed. But in reality, both families could be struggling. Younger, bigger families have trouble getting enough food to properly feed their children (1). Imagine you are a young single mother with four young children. One infant, one toddler, and two kids. You have to feed all of them by yourself; you might even have to work two jobs to afford all the food you need, including baby formula and diapers. Now, the load could be lighter with a second parent helping you, but in some cases, this doesn't completely lift the problem. Alongside that, also imagine you're an elderly woman, you could be living by yourself, or you could be living with your husband. You don't work anymore; the only source of income you have is likely disability payments and retirement. It could be hard to buy food at times, especially since the money you're getting isn't so much, right? For both families, yes, you may be able to buy food, but you have such a limited variety that you can afford due to your budget. This is where *SNAP Benefits*, also known as food stamps, come into play. With food stamps, families can be fed despite their current situation! Food stamps have been helping families since 1939! Without these helpers, young families would be starving, with little food to feed their little ones, who desperately need it. While these stamps have been lifesavers for some families, there are unfortunately some issues with them today.

Today's Problems

Due to the government shutdown, many families are getting reduced or incomplete payments for their November benefits. Additionally, the state of Indiana is required by new federal rules to pay a larger share of benefits starting in 2026-2027 (2). Not only that, but there are also new changes to SNAP that apply restrictions on purchasing certain foods. And most importantly, recently, the US Department of Agriculture has ordered states to stop issuing full food stamp benefits for November, which means families will only receive partial benefits for that month, along with the new bill that forbids SNAP benefits from being used to purchase food items such as soft drinks, candy, ice cream, or prepared desserts. While this ensures children eat healthy foods, they do deserve a nice, sweet treat now and then. This is a part of the "Healthy SNAP Act of 2025" (3)

Recommendations

A starting recommendation would prevent people from buying excessive amounts of snacks from stores, such as soda and chips. “The SNAP benefits were for people to afford the nutritious food and essential health and well-being. However, 23% of the people in 2016 who used SNAP used it for soda, snacks, desserts, candy, potato chips, and a lot of other unhealthy foods” (Edwards, 2023). They already have a limit on what they can’t buy, such as alcohol and hot items. With research done, they have figured out that over 23 billion dollars are being spent on junk food a year (4). That’s nearly 25% of all of the money spent with SNAP being spent on “junk food.” Now, the government can prevent that by limiting the amount of junk food a single person can buy in a month with their SNAP benefits. By limiting the amount of snacks/junk food one person can buy with SNAP a month, it could potentially reduce the obesity rate by a significant amount.

Overall Outcome

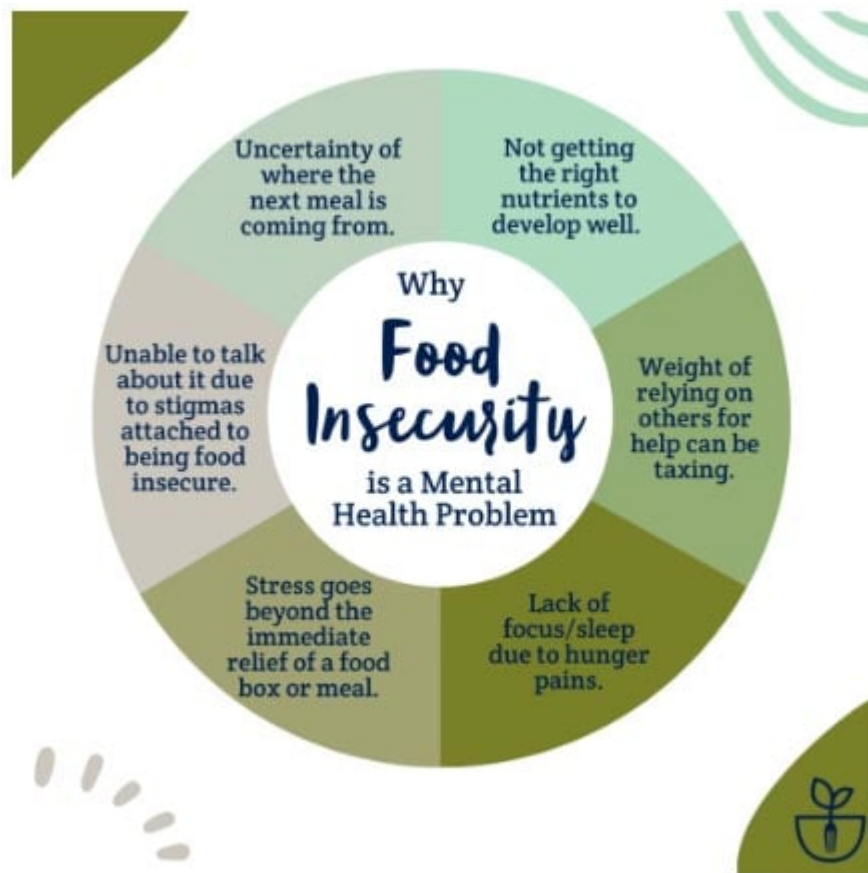
Many things can and most likely will happen due to the change to SNAP if the recommendations are implemented. People may start using SNAP less because they were essentially using it for snacks rather than nutritional food. Additionally, the obesity rate could drop since a large portion of the food bought with SNAP is junk food and food with excessive amounts of fat (5). Studies show that lower-income children and adults on the SNAP program have a higher obesity rate than lower-income children and adults not on the SNAP program (6).

Positive Outcome

One positive outcome of limiting the amount of unhealthy food that one can buy a month with the SNAP program would be a drop in obesity for SNAP participants. The reason we believe that the obesity rate would drop for SNAP participants is that the 2015 study done by the USDA showed that 40% of food stamp recipients are obese; however, only 32% of low-income people who are not SNAP recipients are obese. That 2015 study showed that people on SNAP had a higher obesity rate than people who were not on SNAP. Although obesity won't be completely dealt with, it's still a bit of change, and a bit of change is better than no change. The World Health Organization states that 2.8 million people die from obesity a year. (12)

Problem-Solutions

The cuts to food stamps could lead to numerous problems, but fortunately, most have a solution. Following the cut of SNAP, those struggling to feed their family could seek local assistance in food pantries, soup kitchens, and community organizations that provide food relief. There are also companies such as DoorDash that are now offering emergency food delivery services (7). Additionally, they could connect with school resources, which give access to school-based meal programs, food pantries, and other support services. Food insecurity can greatly affect mental health in younger individuals, such as increased stress, chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and hunger, which themselves can lead to insomnia, mood changes, shame, and social withdrawal (8). Food insecurity can also greatly affect cognitive abilities such as memory, the ability to focus, and pay attention. This likely harms younger children who are still developing those cognitive abilities (9). Food insecurity might lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse, as well. It might even lead to suicidal ideations rooted in stress and depression.



Statistics

In Indiana, SNAP benefits approximately 610,700 residents, which accounts for 9% of Indiana's population (10). More than 69% of SNAP recipients are families with children. More than 38% of SNAP recipients are in families with members who are elderly or disabled. 12.2% of households were "food insecure," meaning that their access to certain foods was limited by lack of money. According to the article "Food Insecurity and Suicidal Behaviors Among Students", in 2018, approximately 11.1% of all US households and 13.9% of US households with children under the age of 18 reported food insecurity (11).

References

- (1) Nearly 2 Million Young Children in the U.S. Lived in Food-Insecure Households in 2023
- (2) Medicaid work requirements delayed until 2027 following federal action
- (3) S.561 - 119th Congress (2025-2026): Healthy SNAP Act of 2025
- (4) Americans collectively spent approximately \$349 billion on fast food services in 2023
- (5) Food Stamps and Obesity | Downsizing the Federal Government
- (6) SNAP: High Costs, Low Nutrition | Cato Institute
- (7) DoorDash Launches Emergency Food Response As SNAP Funding Cliff Threatens To Impact 40 Million Americans
- (8) The Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Mental Health | American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' Journal
- (9) Effects of Hunger on Children's Development
- (10) A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets
- (11) Food Insecurity and Suicidal Behaviors Among US High School Students* - Brown - 2022
- (12) Obesity
- (13) Breaking the cycle: Food insecurity and mental health