

Federal Nutrition Programs For LGBTQ Individuals & Families

This resource provides organizations working with LGBTQ individuals and families information on programs that can help LGBTQ people with low incomes access meals, food, and resources to buy food.

LGBTQ individuals and families experience higher rates of poverty and hunger, with particularly high rates for some community members, including transgender people and LGBTQ people of color. Federal nutrition programs can help, and these programs have important benefits for participant nutrition, health, and economic security.

In spring 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers many of these programs at the federal level, strengthened their civil rights protections by clarifying the prohibitions around discrimination related to gender identity, including gender expression, and sexual orientation.

NUTRITION PROGRAMS Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

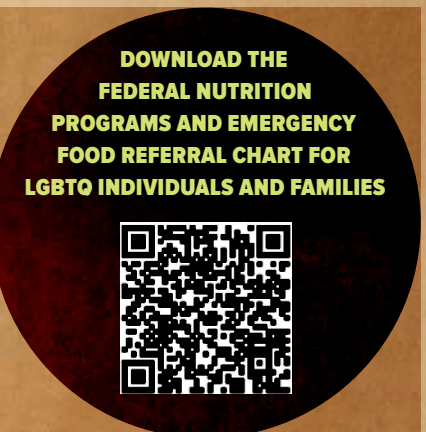


SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

SNAP participants receive monthly benefits on an EBT card (which works like a debit card) to purchase food at grocery stores, corner stores, farmers' markets, and other participating food retailers.

Did You Know?

- ▶ According to a Williams Institute analysis, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals 18–44 were more likely to use SNAP than non-LGBTQ counterparts, though many more are eligible but not participating. Income-qualified transgender adults were less likely than income-qualified cisgender adults to participate in the program, suggesting that transgender adults face particular barriers to accessing SNAP. Directing people to a SNAP online application (available in many states) or partnering with a local nonprofit that provides SNAP application assistance can help people you serve connect to SNAP in a way that's more accessible and comfortable.
- ▶ USDA recently improved equitable access for LGBTQ individuals by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. You can partner with anti-hunger advocates in your state to advance equitable access as they monitor implementation of and compliance with the SNAP non-discrimination policy, and promote best practices, such as:
 - » inclusive language in SNAP applications and program information;
 - » anti-bias training for SNAP administrators, caseworkers, and other SNAP personnel; and
 - » acceptable forms of identity verification for SNAP eligibility, including forms that do not match someone's gender identity. If identity matching sex assigned at birth is required, such as for validation with Social Security records, this should be explained to the SNAP applicant using inclusive language.
- ▶ Many SNAP agency interactions can be done using a preferred or chosen name, though in some cases a legal name is required and practices vary by location. The National Center for Transgender Equality has information on getting name and gender changes on identity documents, or check if legal aid providers in your area can help.





SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAMS

Children and youth can receive meals that meet high nutrition standards at the nearly 97,000 participating schools around the country. In most schools, children living in households with low incomes are certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals (breakfast and lunch). High-need schools can offer meals at no charge to all students primarily through the Community Eligibility Provision.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Some children and youth are automatically eligible to receive free school meals (breakfast and lunch), including those experiencing homelessness and those in foster care. This can be especially important for LGBTQ youth since they are more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBTQ youth, and for LGBTQ families since same-sex parents are more likely to foster a child than different-sex parents.



AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER NUTRITION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Children and teens can access healthy meals and snacks after school and in the summer through participating schools, enrichment program providers, community-based organizations, and other sites. These programs help kids stay fueled, engaged, safe, and ready to learn.

Did You Know?

- ▶ These programs are a great opportunity for organizations that provide programming during the summer, after school, and on weekends for LGBTQ children and youth to leverage federal funds to provide healthy meals and snacks.



WIC (SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN)

WIC is an important source of nutrition support for pregnant and postpartum people, infants, and children up to age five. Participants receive nutritionally tailored monthly food packages that families redeem in participating food retailers. The program also connects participants with breast/chestfeeding support, nutrition education, immunizations, and health referrals.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers can access WIC for eligible infants and children up to age 5 in their care.



CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

Through CACFP, childcare providers, emergency shelters, and adult daycare providers receive federal funding to serve healthy meals and snacks to the children or eligible adults in their care.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Emergency shelters can leverage federal funds to provide healthy meals and snacks to LGBTQ youth (age 18 and younger) experiencing homelessness.
- ▶ If you refer families to child care, it can be helpful to know which centers in your area provide free, healthy meals and snacks through CACFP. All Headstart centers participate in CACFP.



EMERGENCY FOOD

Food banks and pantries provide food to households and are important ways to get food when people need immediate help. The type of food, hours of operation, and who can access services varies.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Partnering with a local food bank or pantry can help show people you work with that an organization is safe and welcoming. This is particularly important since some food pantries or food banks are located in or affiliated with religious institutions where some LGBTQ people may be hesitant about seeking services.



NUTRITION PROGRAMS Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL)



HOME-DELIVERED AND CONGREGATE MEAL PROGRAMS

There are multiple programs available to help older adults get healthy meals and foods in their homes or at community sites, and often these programs are accompanied by opportunities to socialize. These programs have participation caps.

Did You Know?

- ▶ ACL, which administers these programs at the federal level, supports the SAGE National Resource Center on LGBTQ Aging, which is the country's first and only technical assistance resource center focused on improving the quality of services and supports offered to LGBTQ older adults, their families, and caregivers. ACL has engaged in other efforts to support LGBTQ older Americans in the array of programs it administers.



MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS

There are various programs that deliver medically tailored meals or food to people with HIV and other severe illnesses.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Many medically tailored meal providers started in the 1980's in response to the AIDS pandemic. According to the Food is Medicine Coalition: Medically tailored meals were conceived to combat wasting, improve side effects, and bring dignity to the lives of AIDS patients at a time when no other treatments were available.