

SNAP Outreach: A Win-Win for School Districts and Families



The federal nutrition programs play an important role in ensuring children and their families have access to the nutrition they need as they recover from the impact of the COVID-19 health crisis. One nutrition program that has a huge positive impact on families is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The program provides monthly benefits to purchase food. SNAP also [plays a critical role](#) in reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty; and it improves family security, child and adult health, employment, and other outcomes. Yet, [gaps in SNAP participation](#) leave too many families who are eligible to participate without much-needed nutrition assistance. [Barriers range](#) from a lack of awareness that help is available or how to apply, to resources not being available in an accessible language, to stigma.

School Meals and SNAP: Why Schools Should Conduct SNAP Outreach

Schools can play an important role in connecting families with SNAP, and in doing so, bolster their school nutrition program and support their students' health and access to good nutrition.

- Students whose families receive SNAP benefits are directly certified for free school meals, which eliminates the need to process and verify school meal applications for these students.
- Students who are directly certified for free school meals contribute to a school's identified student percentage (ISP), which determines which schools qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision and is used to calculate the reimbursement level for participating schools.
- By identifying more students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, schools may be able to meet the area eligibility threshold needed to participate in other child nutrition programs such as summer and afterschool meals.
- Participating in SNAP has the added benefit of automatically qualifying students and their families for the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program.

As many families are unaware that they may be eligible for SNAP, schools are perfectly positioned to spread the word about this critical federal nutrition program. A [survey conducted by MassINC Polling Group, sponsored by the Shah Family Foundation](#), found that out of 10,000 Massachusetts households during the pandemic,

- only one-third (32 percent) of surveyed respondents received SNAP benefits;
- among those who reported food insecurity, only 40 percent received SNAP;
- fewer than half of the respondents making \$25,000 a year or less received SNAP; and
- more than half (53 percent) of households making less than \$15,000 a year, and 43 percent of households making between \$15,000–\$25,000 a year didn't know how to apply for SNAP.

By helping families increase their food budget each month, schools are ensuring children are better nourished and ready to learn when they arrive at school.

Possible Partnerships for SNAP Outreach

There are many ways to ensure your district is giving families the best and most relevant SNAP information as well as ensuring they are able to complete the application process. Connect with a state anti-hunger organization or

food bank that works on SNAP. These organizations are in a strong position to help the school district disseminate timely information and aid families through steps of the application process as well as answer questions on eligibility and applications. Many of these anti-hunger organizations already have outreach materials that schools can customize to spread the word about SNAP. Other possible partnerships include working with community service organizations, community health centers, and hospitals to help create and circulate materials as widely as possible and to lessen the burden on any one organization.

SNAP Outreach Strategies for Schools to Implement

✔ Spread the word on the school district's website and social media channels.

- Promote SNAP via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other channels.
 - Here are some [sample social media messages](#) and infographics from Hunger Solutions New York's SNAP Outreach Toolkit.
- Link to your state's SNAP application on the school district's website.
 - Use [FRAC's customizable graphic](#) on your website to link to your state's SNAP application.
- Conduct outreach by using easy-to-read resources for families to understand whether they qualify for SNAP.

✔ Share information on SNAP through flyers and mailings.

- Share information with families about SNAP in newsletters, [flyers](#), registration information, report cards, [emails](#), and other communications. Make sure to include contact information for families to use if they have questions about SNAP.

✔ Share information through robocalls and texts that encourage families to check out whether they qualify for SNAP

- Check out End Hunger Connecticut's [sample](#) robocall and robotext script.

Schools should share information in multiple languages to ensure that all families in the school community are reached.

State Spotlight on SNAP Outreach Efforts in Schools

- End Hunger Connecticut!: [Outreach Toolkit](#), including robocall scripts and letters for parents
- Hunger Free Oklahoma: [Pilot Project Overview](#), including implementation strategies and best practices
- Hunger Solutions New York: [Outreach Toolkit](#), including sample social media messages and flyers