Hunger Cliff 2023:

OKLAHOMA

FRAC
Food Research & Action Center

On March 1, 2023, most Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants suffered cuts to their monthly SNAP benefits. This affected **more than 325,679 households in Oklahoma**.[1]

When this "hunger cliff" hit, on average, SNAP participants lost **$82 a month**, causing the average SNAP benefits to fall to a meager **$6 a person a day**.

OVER 325,679
households experienced SNAP cuts.

SNAP HOUSEHOLDS IN OKLAHOMA COLLECTIVELY LOST $54 million
in federal food benefits per month.

The "hunger cliff" affected all age groups and all parts of Oklahoma. The steepest cliff has been for many older adults who only qualify for the minimum SNAP benefit — dropping from **$281 a month to $23**.

The SNAP cuts are due to congressional action in December 2022 to prematurely end SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs). These benefit boosts aimed to mitigate food insecurity and stimulate the economy for the duration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE).[2]

- In total, **Oklahoma's SNAP participants lost $54,509,764 in federal food benefits per month** when the EAs ended.[3] Not surprisingly, that loss has exacerbated food insecurity and hardship in Oklahoma. **13.8 percent of households in Oklahoma are experiencing food insecurity**.[4] Emergency food providers are struggling to fill this gap. Even before the cuts, food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens reported high demand for assistance. SNAP provides nine times the number of meals the food bank network does, according to estimates from Feeding America.[5]
- In May, the federal PHE ended, which removes several administrative flexibilities that supported SNAP households, particularly populations, including college students with low incomes and unemployed and underemployed adults, struggling in the labor market. This will deepen the hunger cliff for these populations.
  - » For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, **nearly 27,000 working-age adults without dependents were enrolled in SNAP**, and the suspension of the time limit rule was critical in ensuring they were able to access food resources.[6]
- Mitigating the "hunger cliff" has important health and economic impacts. Research shows SNAP improves food security, health, and well-being. Moreover, each $1 in SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between $1.50 and $1.80 in economic activity, benefiting all parts of the food chain — from farmers, ranchers, and food manufacturers, to truckers, retailers, and store employees.[7]

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

- It is important to get clear information about this change to all Oklahoma SNAP households, including through mass media, hunger hotlines, and the SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer call center. The communication plan must take into account language access and cultural preferences.[8]
- State governments can assist in mitigating the "hunger cliff" by supplementing federal SNAP benefit amounts. For example, New Jersey invested state funds so that the minimum SNAP monthly benefit is now $95! Massachusetts allocated $130 million for three months of partial extra SNAP benefits between April and June 2023 after the federal extra SNAP pandemic benefits ended in March 2023. California passed legislation to increase their minimum SNAP benefits to $50.
- State and local governments can streamline the process for SNAP households to claim deductions for certain out-of-pocket expenses and connect households with additional resources. They can also partner with local trusted agencies to increase outreach and education on SNAP in the community.
- Congress and the Biden administration should enact legislation to strengthen SNAP benefits and equitable access, including by enacting The Closing the Meal Gap Act (H.R. 3037/S. 1336), The Improving Access to Nutrition Act (H.R. 1510/S. 2435), and The Enhance Access to SNAP (EATS) Act (H.R. 3183/S. 1488).

YOU CAN READ MORE HERE.

Sources for this state fact sheet can be found here.