

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) benefits millions of families in every state — and in every congressional district. To show this program in action, advocates can invite Members of Congress to be a “Caseworker for a Day.” Bringing your Members of Congress to SNAP offices or to a SNAP outreach project where SNAP applicants are prescreened is an effective way to educate them about the program, the impact it has on the community, and to talk with SNAP applicants and recipients. Such visits can demonstrate how SNAP works and how SNAP plays a critical role in alleviating poverty and food insecurity and improves health and educational outcomes.

How do I Organize a Visit? It’s a SNAP!

Select a Site

Work with your local SNAP office to decide which type of visit would work best — a visit to a SNAP office to meet with clients and caseworkers, a visit where the Member has the opportunity to engage with people in the waiting room, or to a SNAP site where the Member can help people complete applications.

Partner Up with Community Organizations and Leaders

Reach out to partner organizations to co-host the event by focusing on groups or individuals who can tell the story of hunger in the district or who have a strong relationship with the Member of Congress.

Invite Your Member of Congress to the SNAP Site

Call the Congressional Aide who handles SNAP for the Member of Congress, discuss the importance of the program,

including the data about the district, and extend an invitation for a site visit. Email a formal invitation to the Congressional Aide and the Member’s scheduler following your call.

- During the call, ask the Congressional Aide if the Member would be willing to have press attend the event.

Invite Community Leaders to Attend

Invite other elected officials and business and community leaders to attend the event. Their presence may be helpful to tell the story about SNAP’s impact in the district, to attract the press, and to strengthen the coalition of people who support SNAP.

Organize a Stakeholder Meeting

After the Member of Congress visits with caseworkers, clients, and applicants, organize a small meeting to discuss the Member’s experience and the efforts he or she should take to protect SNAP. Invite other community leaders to attend. (Note: The media should not be present for this part of the event.)

Plan for Press

If your Member of Congress has approved media attending and once the date of the visit is secured, plan a press conference to follow the visit. It can be held outside of the SNAP office or at a nearby partner’s office. You can also ask your Member of Congress to pen an op-ed about the importance of SNAP and the site visit experience. Here is a helpful media checklist:

- A few weeks before the event, develop (or update) your media contact list. Include local and statewide media.
- Create a media advisory and a press release for the event. FRAC can help!
- Send the media advisory as far out in advance as you can and then again a week before the event. If your city is served by a news wire service, make sure that your event is listed in the daybook.
- Contact community newspapers, local television network affiliates, cable access channels, and radio stations — they are likely to cover the visit.
- Work with the Member’s press staff to coordinate the media kits, press

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releases, materials, and quotes. Also, determine how much time the Member will have at the site and provide a timeline for the event so everyone involved will know their role and what to expect.

- Create a packet of background materials for your elected official. The packet should contain your press release, relevant fact sheets, brochures and outreach materials, list of other participants in the press event, and any other helpful information. District or state-specific information is especially useful.
- Assemble media kits for reporters. The kit should include your press release, fact sheets, and brochures. List the names of staff contacts and other organizations involved in the event, along with telephone and email information.

- On the day of the event make sure that you have designated someone to identify the press and pass out the media packets. Have a sign-in sheet available so you can get their contact information and keep an eye out for subsequent press about the visit.
- Designate someone from your organization to photograph the event (ensuring that you have releases from any private persons photographed) and also someone to tweet and Facebook throughout the event and put in your organizational newsletter afterward.
- After the event, be sure to share and highlight any resulting press with your Member's office as well as with your supporters.

For more information:

Please let us know how we can help you to prepare for a site visit or let us know about a site visit you are planning so we can share with others.

Questions?

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