

Factsheet

August 2016

Background

As the cornerstone of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition assistance programs, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) plays a vital role in helping to improve nutrition in the nation among low-income individuals.

In an average month in fiscal year 2014, SNAP provided benefits to 46.5 million people living in nearly 22.7 million households across the United States. The total federal cost of the program in fiscal year 2014 was \$74.2 billion with the average monthly SNAP benefit for all participating households amounting to \$257.

SNAP participant characteristics for fiscal year 2014:

- 69% are children between 5 to 17 years of age
- 10% are age 60 or older
- 10% are non-elderly adults with disabilities



All 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam provide nutrition education and obesity prevention programs for SNAP recipients and other eligible low-income individuals. The goal of the education component of SNAP, commonly known as SNAP-Ed, is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and MyPlate.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296, section 241) established SNAP-Ed as the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program. The Act calls for SNAP-Ed to include an emphasis on obesity prevention in addition to nutrition education.

Activities must be evidence-based and delivered through individual and group-based strategies, comprehensive multi-level interventions, and/or community and public health approaches. Many SNAP-Ed efforts also focus on policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE) interventions with a stronger emphasis on partnerships.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) encourages

States to center their efforts on the following behavioral outcomes for SNAP-Ed participants:

- Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan at an appropriate calorie level to help achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, support nutrient adequacy, and reduce the risk of chronic disease
- Shift to healthier food and beverage choices, which includes a mix of vegetables (from all vegetable food groups); fruits (especially whole fruits); grains (half of which are whole grains); fat-free or low-fat dairy, including fortified soy beverages (soymilk); a variety of protein foods (from both animal and plant sources); and healthy oils
- Limit added sugars as well as saturated and *trans* fats and reduce sodium intake
- Meet the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*

More information about SNAP-Ed is available in the current *SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance*, which is posted on the SNAP-Ed Connection. To learn more about the SNAP-Ed Connection Web site, see the back of this page.

Resources

SNAP-Ed Connection

The SNAP-Ed Connection is a Web site that supports SNAP-Ed personnel in following the *SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance*.

It provides tools for program administration, nutrition education, social marketing, collaboration, and professional development.

Check it out at the following address:

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/>.

Educators can get lesson plans focused on stretching food dollars, graphic designers can download free high resolution nutrition images, and program administrators can easily find report templates. Educators and the general public can learn about seasonal foods in *Nutrition Through the Seasons* and how to *Eat Right When Money's Tight*. Everyone can also browse the SNAP-Ed Library to find all things related to SNAP-Ed.

Consumers and professionals can find recipes for delicious and affordable meals and snacks as well as nutrition facts on the *What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl* Web site. All recipes are available in both Spanish and English. Among other site features, users can build cookbooks with their favorite dishes and plan menus.



MyPlate Materials

Consumers and professionals can access information and downloadable materials related to USDA's food guidance system, MyPlate, by visiting <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>.



The site contains tips on healthy eating, weight management, daily food plans, and related resources. Some materials are also available in Spanish.

The Healthy Eating on a Budget section of the Web site includes information on planning, smart shopping, preparing food, sample 2-week menus, and other tools. A direct link to it is

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget>.

For complete information on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and MyPlate, please refer to the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) Web site at

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietary-guidelines>.



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