

# *SNAP Into Action*

Idaho's SNAP Outreach Plan by  
The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network



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- Magic Valley Hunger Coalition
- Food Stamp Program, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Women, Infants, and Children Program, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Child Nutrition Programs, Idaho Department of Education
- Idaho State Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger
- The Idaho Foodbank
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program
- Idaho Council of Governments
- Eat Smart Idaho (formerly the University of Idaho Extension Nutrition Program)
- Emmett Valley Friendship Coalition
- Community Council of Idaho
- Tables of Hope
- Boys and Girls Club of Ada County
- Catholic Charities of Idaho

## *Purpose*

The Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known to Idaho as the Food Stamp Program, is a frontline program fighting hunger and food insecurity in the United States today. The program provides essential nutrition and serves as a vital work support for low-income families.<sup>1</sup>

SNAP has been shown to improve access to food and to promote economic growth, and yet only about 75% of eligible Americans are currently participating in SNAP.<sup>2</sup> Though Idaho's participation rate is slightly higher than the national average, 19% of eligible residents throughout the state do **not** receive food stamps.<sup>3</sup> The gap between those eligible for SNAP and those participating in the program represents a striking failure to alleviate hunger and dramatically improve the health and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Idahoans and millions of Americans.

SNAP outreach is essential in closing this participation gap, as it provides support to both potential recipients and state SNAP offices. The products of outreach efforts can provide potential recipients with the knowledge and resources needed to participate in the program, such as mailings and advertisements that deliver information about how an individual can apply for SNAP. Additionally, outreach activities can lessen the workload of state SNAP offices. For instance, prescreening tools and application assistance can increase the number of applications that are complete when submitted for review by a caseworker, making it easier and faster for offices to process applications.<sup>4</sup>

The Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) division of the USDA recognizes the gravity of the SNAP participation gap, and encourages outreach to potential recipients as a means by which to improve participation and reduce this gap. In fact, FNS offers the states considerable funding for outreach activities. A state SNAP office can receive reimbursement for 50% of its administrative costs associated with outreach by submitting a state SNAP Outreach Plan for approval by FNS each year.<sup>5</sup> In addition to providing a vehicle for monetary compensation, a state SNAP Outreach Plan is an invaluable resource that promotes public-private collaboration and coordination of outreach efforts. In 2012, 41 states chose to submit plans for FNS approval.

Despite the tangible benefits of SNAP outreach, the Idaho legislature prohibits the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) from performing outreach activities.<sup>6</sup> Because a state SNAP agency must apply for the federal approval and support of a SNAP Outreach Plan, Idaho cannot submit such a plan or receive the corresponding funding from FNS. Though Idaho has

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<sup>1</sup> USDA, FNS. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)." 2013. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap>

<sup>2</sup> As of the most recent estimate, for FY 2010. Data from: Cunyningham, Karen E. (Mathematica Policy Research). "Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2010." USDA, FNS. December 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2010.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, December 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). "SNAP/Food Stamps Outreach and Access Toolkit." May 2010. [http://frac.org/pdf/snap\\_outreach\\_access\\_toolkit\\_2010.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/snap_outreach_access_toolkit_2010.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> USDA, FNS. "State Outreach Plan Guidance." April 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Andueza, Rosie. Idaho Food Stamp Director. Interview: October 2012.

several organizations dedicated to eradicating hunger by increasing awareness of SNAP, these groups do not have a unified strategy to accomplish that objective. The goal of this document is to propose a plan that will organize SNAP outreach efforts. The plan will detail the need for outreach in Idaho, barriers to food stamp access, best practices regarding SNAP outreach, and potential outreach activities moving forward. This plan constitutes the first document crafted by The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network, a group of agencies and organizations dedicated to fighting hunger and poverty in Idaho by increasing participation in SNAP.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Background***

#### **The Case for SNAP Outreach**

Idahoans are hardworking, resourceful, and innovative; they are truly the ‘gems’ of this Gem State. Nevertheless, hardship and poverty are ever-present in Idaho. Over 16% of Idahoans were living below the federal poverty line in 2011.<sup>8</sup> From 2009 to 2011, an average of 13.7% of Idaho’s population was food insecure.<sup>9</sup> Given Idaho’s population, this rate signifies that about 214,558 residents were affected by food insecurity.<sup>10</sup>

## **Food Insecurity**

**Food insecurity is the term used to describe a lack of consistent, dependable access to enough food for active, healthy living due to a lack of sufficient money and other resources. The condition not only breeds hunger; it is also associated with a variety of poor health outcomes for adults and children alike.**

For a definition of food insecurity, see, among others; Coleman-Jensen et al. “Household Food Security in the United States in 2011.” USDA, ERS (ERS Report Number 141): Washington, D.C., September 2012.

For evidence of poor health associated with food insecurity in children, see, among others; Cook, John T., Elizabeth L. March, and Stephanie Ettinger De Cuba. “Even Very Low Levels of Food Insecurity Found to Harm Children’s Health.” Children’s HealthWatch (Children’s HealthWatch Policy Action Briefs): Boston, MA, May 2009.

For evidence of poor health associated with food insecurity in adults, see, among others; Seligman, Hilary K., Barbara A. Laraia, and Margot B. Kushel. “Food Insecurity is Association with Chronic Disease Among Low-Income NHANES Participants.” *The Journal of Nutrition*. 140 (2): 304-310.

<sup>7</sup> A description of the Idaho SNAP Advisory Network can be found on page 6 of this plan.

<sup>8</sup> Indicators Northwest. “Indicators Idaho: Poverty rate, overall.” University of Idaho, Office of Community Partnerships. December 2012.

<http://www.indicatorsnorthwest.org/DrawRegion.aspx?RegionID=16000&IndicatorID=10>

<sup>9</sup> USDA, ERS. “Key Statistics and Graphs: Food Insecurity by Household Type.” September 2012.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#map>

<sup>10</sup> The population of Idaho in 2009 was 1,545,801; in 2010, 1,567,582; in 2011, 1,584,985. The 3-year average is 1,566,122. Given a food insecurity rate of 13.7% over those three years, the number of food-insecure residents is approximately 214,558. Data from: Indicators Northwest. “Indicators Idaho: Population.” University of Idaho, Office of Community Partnerships. April 2012.

<http://www.indicatorsnorthwest.org/DrawRegion.aspx?RegionID=16000&IndicatorID=1>

Low-income residents throughout the state could significantly benefit from SNAP, which serves as both a nutrition assistance program and a work support program. SNAP addresses food insecurity by enabling participants to purchase the foods they need. On average, receiving food stamps has been shown to reduce the likelihood of being food insecure by 30%.<sup>11</sup> As a work support, SNAP provide an important income supplement for those who are facing pay reductions or unemployment.<sup>12</sup> Though there is a misperception that many SNAP participants receive benefits for long period of time, half of new food stamp recipients leave the program within nine months of the date on which they begin participation.<sup>13</sup> During participation in the program, SNAP helps these individuals and families make ends meet.

### **Celebrating Idaho's Successes**

Acknowledging that poverty and food insecurity remain significant in Idaho, the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) has made several improvements in its distribution of SNAP in order to better serve low-income families. One of the areas in which DHW has recently excelled is timeliness in processing SNAP applications. Across the nation, states are required to process applications within 30 days, and Idaho consistently processes applications far more quickly. All of the regional DHW offices have an average processing time of only two days for SNAP applications.<sup>14</sup> When compared with all other states and territories in 2010, Idaho was ranked second for timeliness, and received a bonus from the USDA as a result.<sup>15</sup> Idaho's proficiency in this area ensures that eligible families are able to quickly receive food stamps.

In addition to having excellent timeliness, Idaho has a very low negative error rate and payment error rate. The negative error rate represents the percentage of food stamp applications that are wrongfully denied, terminated, or suspended. These cases result in an applicant or participant being rejected for SNAP or losing SNAP benefits even though that applicant or participant is, in fact, eligible.<sup>16</sup> Payment errors, instead, result in a participant receiving an overpayment or an underpayment of the benefit they should have received under program rules. Idaho fares very well in comparison to other states under both of these error rate measurements, and is consistently below the national averages. In 2011, Idaho was recognized with USDA bonuses awarded for having both one of the lowest payment error rates and one of the lowest negative error rates in the nation.<sup>17</sup> These statistics indicate that the vast majority of eligible Idaho residents who apply for food stamps will receive them in the correct amount for their household.

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<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe, C. and McKernan, S. "How Much Does SNAP Reduce Food Insecurity?" The Urban Institute, March 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Parrott, Sharon, and Stacy Dean. "Food Stamps Can Help Low-Income Working Families Put Food on the Table." March 1999. <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1771>

<sup>13</sup> USDA, FNS. "USDA Food Stamp Program: Food Stamps Make America Stronger." November 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/FactSheets/SNAP.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. "Self-Reliance Performance Review: Benefit Operations." PowerPoint Presentation, November 2012.

<sup>15</sup> USDA, FNS. "FY 2010 Application Processing Timeliness." January 2013. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/qc/pdfs/2010-processing.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> USDA, FNS National Payment Accuracy Work Group. "You vs. Negative Errors: Strategies for a Winning Approach." PowerPoint Presentation, October 2010. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/pdf/toolbox-2.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> USDA, FNS. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Quality Control: Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2011*. December 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

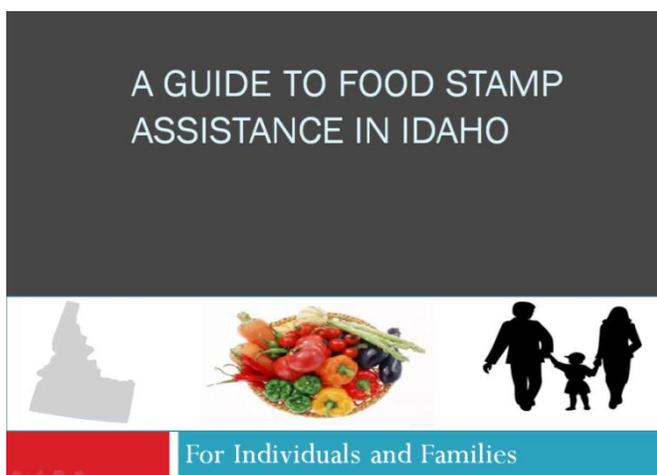
DHW has also modified its operating procedures to increase the availability of SNAP to all Idahoans. Applicants can have an interview with a Self Reliance Specialist (SRS, or caseworker) over the phone if they cannot apply for food stamps in person.<sup>18</sup> For recertification, DHW accepts telephonic signatures in place of written ones.<sup>19</sup> Both of these options significantly expand access to SNAP by enabling individuals who face transportation barriers to receive benefits without leaving their homes.

These successes and changes demonstrate DHW's capacity to improve SNAP access. In addition to this state agency, Idaho has several private anti-hunger organizations that are committed to increasing SNAP participation. While DHW cannot perform SNAP outreach activities due to legislative constraints, private entities have no such restriction, and several private nonprofits in the state are engaged in outreach. In recent years, outreach activities of these organizations have included:



- developing presentations about SNAP tailored to seniors that dispel misinformation, address perceived stigmas, and spread awareness about the application process in Idaho (AARP Idaho)<sup>20</sup>

- creating the Train the Trainer curriculum, a guide to SNAP that is publicly available online (Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force)



<sup>18</sup> Idaho Administrative Procedures Act (IDAPA). "16.03.04—Rules Governing the Food Stamp Program in Idaho." 2011. <http://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/16/0304.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Bencken, Lois. "Agenda: Senate Health and Welfare Committee." Boise, ID. January 2012.

<sup>20</sup> McDougall, Cathy. SNAP Outreach Materials. AARP Idaho. January 2013.



- participating in SNAP-Ed, a federal nutrition program, by offering nutrition education for food stamp recipients (Eat Smart Idaho- formerly the University of Idaho Extension Nutrition Program, and The Idaho Foodbank)<sup>21</sup>

- organizing Cooking Matters courses that help participants learn how to prepare healthy meals on a budget (The Idaho Foodbank)<sup>22</sup>



## Spotlight: The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network

*SNAP Into Action* is a privately funded and implemented effort that is guided by **The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network**. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is prohibited from engaging in outreach by the state legislature. Consequently, several organizations established the Advisory Network to engage in coordinated outreach activities with the goal of increasing participation in SNAP. The objectives of the Advisory Network are: to dispel misinformation and address stigmas about SNAP; to spread awareness of SNAP as a work support and nutrition support program; and to promote knowledge of the benefits of SNAP for individuals as well as for entire communities.

The Advisory Network is convened by the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force. Other member organizations include:

- AARP Idaho
- Blaine County Hunger Coalition
- Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho
- Community Council of Idaho
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare—Food Stamp Program
- The Idaho Foodbank
- Eat Smart Idaho

<sup>21</sup> Hansen, Kristen. Interview, Eat Smart Idaho. October 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Valk, Karen. Interview, The Idaho Foodbank. January 2013.

Outreach efforts of both public and private entities have greatly increased access to SNAP for Idahoans, particularly in the past few years. Only 61% of eligible residents in 2008 and 63% of eligible residents in 2009 were receiving food stamps. By 2010, 81% of residents who qualified for this nutrition and work support program were participating.

### **Opportunities for Growth**

The aforementioned successes demonstrate significant improvements in the state of hunger and SNAP participation in Idaho. Still, 19% percent of residents who qualify for food stamps are not receiving them, which indicates the continued need for outreach to improve access to the program. Certain populations have particularly low levels of participation in SNAP. Only about 23% of eligible Idaho seniors are receiving food stamps.<sup>23</sup> Although Latino households in Idaho and throughout the nation are more likely to be food insecure than white, non-Hispanic households,<sup>24</sup> they are also less likely to receive SNAP.<sup>25</sup> More than 26% of Latino households are food insecure, and yet only 1 in 10 households receiving SNAP is Latino.<sup>26</sup>

Investment in SNAP outreach can effectively increase SNAP participation and reduce food insecurity, yet Idaho does not currently have many mechanisms in place to spread knowledge about food stamps and encourage greater participation. As mentioned earlier, a state SNAP Outreach Plan is quite helpful in improving access to SNAP. A plan documents and structures outreach activities, allowing for evaluation and revision of strategies to ensure statewide progress. A plan also unites public and private agencies, facilitating partnerships and promoting coordination of efforts.

Realizing the importance of outreach plans, FNS reimburses each state for 50% of administrative costs for the outreach activities that are outlined in an official plan submitted by its state SNAP office.<sup>27</sup> As the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) is not permitted to conduct any outreach, Idaho cannot submit such a plan. Idaho is one of only nine states without a formal, state-sponsored SNAP Outreach Plan.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, DHW's inability to participate in outreach not only eliminates a potential avenue for stronger cooperation to fight hunger; it also eliminates an opportunity to receive federal funding.

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<sup>23</sup> Cunnyngham, Karen (Mathematica Policy Research). "State Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Eligibility and Participation Among Elderly Individuals." USDA, FNS. September 2010.

[http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/nutrition/SNAP\\_elderly.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/nutrition/SNAP_elderly.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Bread for the World. "About Hunger." 2013. <http://www.bread.org/hunger/immigration/>

<sup>25</sup> Feeding America. "Latino/Hispanic Hunger." 2013. <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/hispanic-latino-hunger.aspx>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Note: The statistics for Latinos are nationwide, and there is no Idaho-specific data. Still, considering access issues and the fact that the poverty rate of Hispanics in the state is more than twice that of whites, this report assumes low participation in Idaho as well. For poverty rates, see: Kaiser Family Foundation. "Idaho: People in Poverty." 2010. <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?cat=1&sub=2&rgn=14>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Espinosa, Nick. Interview, USDA, FNS, Western Region. 28 November 2012.

In addition, Idaho is one of fourteen states that does not allow potential recipients of food stamps to complete their SNAP applications online.<sup>29</sup> While Idaho has been developing the capacity for this type of system, an online application is still not available to applicants.<sup>30</sup> Though low-income individuals and families may apply by mail, a working online system would expand accessibility, enabling anyone to use a computer in their home or at their local library to apply.

Idaho also has a significant problem regarding churning of SNAP applications. Churning occurs when a SNAP recipient does not complete the re-evaluation process although they are still eligible for SNAP and would like to continue to receive the benefit. The recipient must then repeat the application process in its entirety. In 2012, 33% or greater of all SNAP applications in Idaho were a result of churning; these applications were completed by individuals and families who had to re-apply for the program.<sup>31</sup> Idaho's monthly churning percentage translates into extra, unnecessary work for families, who must complete an entire SNAP application once again. Processing a new SNAP application requires more time and attention than approving or denying recertification of a family currently receiving SNAP. Thus, churning diverts energy from DHW as well.

Idaho is an efficient and effective state in many program areas, and yet seems to lag behind in several other areas. Why? The link appears to be that many of the innovations that have helped other states involve greater state government involvement in SNAP. Idaho, however, is known for widespread conservatism and anti-government sentiment.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, stigma against government programs and federal assistance is quite prevalent throughout the state. In recent focus groups performed by the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force, the perceived stigma of receiving public benefits was cited as one of the most common reasons that low-income residents did not apply for food stamps.<sup>33</sup> Especially in light of these realities, SNAP outreach in Idaho is of the utmost importance.

### ***Organizing SNAP Outreach in Idaho***

#### **Targeted Needs**

Having an organized, coordinated plan for SNAP outreach will be essential in successfully translating ideas into action. The Outreach Plan for the Idaho SNAP Advisory Network will organize outreach activities by utilizing targeting by region and by sectors of the population. Targeting will allow the Advisory Network to track outreach by location as well as by demographics to ensure that all Idahoans receive important information about the benefits of SNAP.

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<sup>29</sup> As of January 2013, thirty-six states allow potential recipients of food stamps to complete their applications online. Data from: USDA, FNS. "SNAP: To Apply." January 2013.

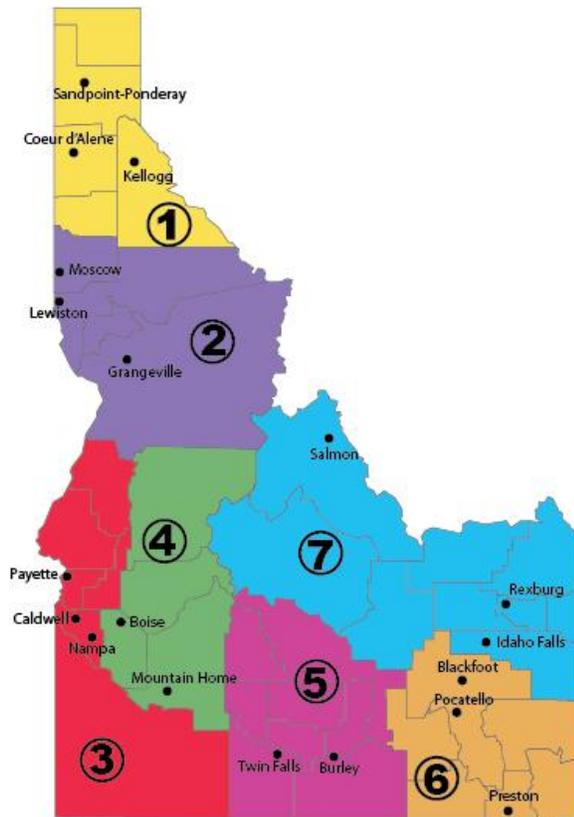
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant\\_recipients/apply.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/apply.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Also as of January 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. "Self-Reliance Performance Review: Benefit Operations." PowerPoint Presentation, November 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, Micah. "Romney's Faith May Help in Idaho, Where He Doesn't Need It." *The New York Times*. 30 September 2012. <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/romneys-faith-may-help-in-idaho-where-he-doesnt-need-it/>

<sup>33</sup> Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force. SNAP Focus Groups. Spring 2010.



Map of Idaho delineating the seven regions as utilized by the Department of Health and Welfare. Image from: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. "Contact Us." 2013. <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/contactus/tabid/127/default.aspx>

Regionally, SNAP outreach in Idaho has largely taken place in urban communities. Since many major anti-hunger advocacy groups in the state are based in more densely populated, metropolitan areas,<sup>34</sup> most food stamp outreach is being performed in these areas. More rural areas must be targeted in order to truly increase participation throughout the state. Seeing as the more rural, less populated areas of the state are located in the northern and southeastern regions,<sup>35</sup> outreach efforts must emphasize these regions in order to accomplish rural and regional equity.

In terms of specific sectors of the population, seniors and Latinos throughout Idaho are particularly vulnerable to barriers to SNAP participation. While 81% of the overall eligible population and 78% of the working poor participate in SNAP, the most recent estimate of participation among eligible seniors was a mere 23%.<sup>36</sup> Seniors often face decreased access to SNAP due to medical issues, transportation barriers, and misinformation about eligibility for SNAP.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, Latino households are less likely to receive SNAP than white, non-Hispanic households.<sup>38</sup> As most informational materials about federal assistance programs are widely disseminated in English, primarily Spanish-speaking households could be less likely to learn

about such programs.<sup>39</sup> Though the SNAP application is available in Spanish, the availability of Spanish language materials is not always in public discourse. Moreover, some Latino families

<sup>34</sup> Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force. "About the IHRTF." 2010. <http://idahohunger.org/about.html>

<sup>35</sup> Indicators Northwest. "Population, County Data for Idaho." U.S. Census 2009-2011. <http://www.indicatorsnorthwest.org/DrawRegion.aspx?RegionID=16000&IndicatorID=1>

<sup>36</sup> The most recent estimate of SNAP participation among seniors was in 2006. Data from: Cunyningham, Karen (Mathematica Policy Research). "State Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Eligibility and Participation Among Elderly Individuals." USDA, FNS. September 2010. [http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/nutrition/SNAP\\_elderly.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/nutrition/SNAP_elderly.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Hunger Free Communities Network. "Senior Citizen Focus Groups, Summary of Findings." Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force. April 2008. <http://www.hungerfreecommunities.org/resource-library/oregon-hunger-relief-task-force-senior-citizen-focus-groups-summary-of-findings/>

<sup>38</sup> Feeding America. "Latino/Hispanic Hunger." 2013. <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/hispanic-latino-hunger.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> USDA, FNS. "Reaching Low-Income Hispanics With Nutrition Assistance." February 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/factsheets/reaching.htm>

are reticent about applying for SNAP due to misinformation about how receiving SNAP interacts with immigration status. In a survey of potentially eligible families that did not apply for SNAP, nearly a quarter of Hispanic families<sup>40</sup> cited concerns about citizenship status as a reason they did not contact a SNAP office.<sup>41</sup> Meaningful outreach to and by Latino organizations in Idaho will be key to ensuring that barriers are addressed at all levels—through outreach materials, application information, and public discourse.

### **Next Steps**

Outlining next steps for outreach in Idaho will help forge the path to increased SNAP participation. Idaho-specific successes can reveal approaches to build upon, while successful strategies in other states can provide insight in areas where Idaho lags behind the curve.

The formation of The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network has already been fruitful. The Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force has been convening meetings of the Advisory Network, and members of this group led an entire workshop track devoted to SNAP outreach during the 2012 Hunger Summit. Advocates at AARP Idaho and the Task Force have performed trainings in several regions of the state to spread awareness and dispel myths about food stamps. The Advisory Network continues to meet monthly, discussing issues at hand and ways to ensure long-term progress in the fight against hunger. The ability of DHW to process food stamp applications in a timely manner has ensured that individuals who do apply for the program can begin receive the food they need as soon as possible.

Still, the participation gap in Idaho has not been sufficiently addressed. As we mentioned above, barriers to SNAP access are particularly acute among those in rural areas, seniors, and the Latino population. Targeting rural areas through food stamp trainings and dissemination of outreach materials will be essential in promoting rural equity. Idaho can look to Oregon in tackling senior hunger, as this state's approaches have proven very successful. Oregon has demonstrated one of the highest overall SNAP participation rates in the nation,<sup>42</sup> and continues to maintain a strong public-private partnership to improve access to the program.<sup>43</sup> Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon has employed a variety of outreach methods specifically targeting senior hunger. These methods include: conducting senior-specific focus groups; distributing outreach materials at senior centers; operating online prescreening tools and application assistance; and circulating articles about SNAP in newsletters and church bulletins.<sup>44</sup>

Arizona's outreach strategies can serve as a model for SNAP outreach targeting the Latino community. For instance, the Arizona Community Action Network has published a report dedicated to SNAP Outreach to Latino households in the state, and the Arizona Association of

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<sup>40</sup> The National Council of La Raza report from which this data comes uses the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' interchangeably due to the use of these terms interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data from: National Council of La Raza. "Profiles of Latino Health: A Closer Look at Latino Child Nutrition." 2010. [http://www.nclr.org/images/uploads/pages/Jan12\\_Profiles\\_Issue\\_11.pdf](http://www.nclr.org/images/uploads/pages/Jan12_Profiles_Issue_11.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Cunnyngham, Karen E. (Mathematica Policy Research). "Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2010." USDA, FNS. December 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2010.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Weed, Nancy (Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon). Email Communication. January 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. "SNAP and Senior Hunger." 2013. <http://www.oregonhunger.org/node/518>

Food Banks has also written reports focused singularly on Latino hunger.<sup>45</sup> Even before the creation of these documents, the Arizona Community Action Network’s outreach activities included more than a dozen presentations about SNAP to majority-Latino audiences in a single year.<sup>46</sup> While Idaho’s Train the Trainer curriculum and presentations are a good start, expanding the number of presentations as well as performing trainings focused on Latino hunger are necessary next steps.

### **Potential Outreach Activities**

The following two pages display a template from the USDA with examples of potential outreach activities.<sup>47</sup> The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network will seek to create a similar list of outreach activities that delineates the organizations responsible for each project.

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<sup>45</sup> Martinez, Christina. “Closing the Gap: Enhancing the Client Experience at Food Banks.” Arizona Association of Food Banks. 2012. <http://www.azfoodbank.org.php5-11.dfw1-1.websitetestlink.com/images/uploads/Closing%20the%20Gap%20-%20Enhancing%20the%20Client%20Experience%20at%20Food%20Banks%2002-12.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> C. Marie Lawrence. “Around a Common Table: Advancing Community-Based SNAP Outreach for Latino Households in Arizona.” Arizona Community Action Network. 2011. <http://hungercenter.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SNAP-Outreach-for-Latino-HHs-in-AZ-Lawrence.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> This template describes ‘allowable activities’ to indicate activities that are eligible for 50% reimbursement from the USDA. However, since Idaho is ineligible for any reimbursement due to the circumstances described in the “Purpose” section, all activities can be considered allowable.

Figure 1: Example of Outreach Activities:<sup>48</sup>

<b>Allowable Activity</b>	<b>Example</b>
Eligibility pre-screening	Use of a paper or electronic tool to inform potential applicants that they may be eligible and potentially, how much they could receive.
Application assistance	Assistance completing the application, including delivery of the application to the local SNAP office.
Assistance obtaining application verification documents	Informing potential clients which documents may be needed and making copies of verification documents.
Information dissemination in locations where low income people gather	Distribution of information at the employers of low wage workers.
Outreach exhibit or booth at community event	Set up and staffing of outreach booth at the annual community fair.
Conducting outreach workshops with community organizations at their locations	SNAP outreach fair at a senior center.
Placement of advertisements on radio, television, print or electronic media	Purchase time for SNAP advertisements on the local radio station.
Production and distribution of public service announcements (PSA) to radio, television, print or electronic media	Distribute USDA produced television PSA to local cable company for airing as a public service.
Toll free information line to provide information to potential clients	A Statewide 1-800 information number for potential clients to connect to their local office.
Development of printed educational or informational materials for clients	Development and printing of a brochure outlining the benefits of participation in SNAP.
Use or customization of FNS outreach materials for clients	Hiring a graphic shop to customize and print the FNS posters with the phone number of the local office.
Training or train-the-trainer programs for SNAP outreach workers	Training of local community partners to run outreach seminars by the primary outreach contractor.
Translation of materials and bilingual accommodation to convey eligibility requirements and assist persons with limited English proficiency during the application process	Translation of an outreach envelope into the predominant non-English language in the community.
Program access activities	Reminder calls to enrolled clients regarding their recertification responsibilities.

<sup>48</sup> USDA, FNS. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): State Outreach Plan Guidance." May 2009. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/Outreach\\_Plan\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/Outreach_Plan_Guidance.pdf)

Figure 2: Sample Outline for Description of Each Project:<sup>49</sup>

#### **4. Outreach Project Details**

*Project Table: Complete this section for each project listed in the Summary of Projects Table in Section 3 above. (Suggested length: Not more than 2 pages for each project)*

<b>Project Number</b>	<i>List the project number as noted in the table in Section 3.</i>			
<b>Goal</b>	<i>List the goal of the project. The goal should be measurable (a numeric goal, if possible). Likely, the goal will focus on increasing SNAP participation. Indicate if the number of people is contacts, applicants, approved applicants, etc.</i>			
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Start</b>	<i>Month and year, quarter, or annual/ongoing.</i>	<b>End</b>	<i>Month and year, quarter, or annual/ongoing.</i>
<b>Description of Activity</b>	<i>Provide a description of the activity and how it will be implemented.</i>			
<b>Contractor</b>	<i>If a contractor will be hired, list the name of the contractor. If there is no contractor, indicate so.</i>			
<b>Role of the Contractor</b>	<i>Describe the role of the contractor. Add rows for additional contractors, if necessary.</i>			
<b>Partner 1</b>	<i>List the name of partner 1. Partners may be community or faith-based organizations, local SNAP offices, food banks or pantries, retailers, or other community organizations. Obtaining a letter of commitment from your partners is good project management. It is suggested that you obtain such a letter from each partner and maintain the letter in your files. Add rows for additional partners, if necessary.</i>			
<b>Role of Partner 1</b>	<i>Describe the role of partner 1. Add rows for additional partners, if necessary.</i>			
<b>Evaluation</b>	<i>Explain how the project will be evaluated. Include your data collection and analysis plan. Note if your evaluation will be able to assess how many people reached by the outreach activities were certified or denied for SNAP benefits.</i>			

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## **Outreach Partners**

The above USDA template provides examples of some of the innovative outreach activities that have proven beneficial in states across the country. In order to begin planning and performing these types of activities, though, Idaho organizations must unite as partners in the outreach effort. This document seeks to solidify the duties of partners in The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network. Partners will not only discuss outreach strategies, but will also **act** to ensure that all Idahoans understand the benefits of SNAP for individuals and communities. Thus, an Advisory Network partner will be defined as a group committed to increasing SNAP participation by working in collaboration with the rest of the Advisory Network as well as by conducting SNAP outreach. Partners will meet regularly, collectively decide on objectives and action steps, and evaluate their activities so as to maintain accountability for increased SNAP participation. In order to become a partner, the Advisory Network asks that each agency or organization compose a letter of intent. This letter will state the group's commitment to partaking in the Advisory Network and to performing SNAP outreach.

## **Sustainability**

Outlining partners is an important benchmark for sustainability. This provides clarity regarding who is at the table in outreach efforts, as well as who is responsible for specific activities. In addition to establishing partners, developing evaluation and funding mechanisms are essential to sustaining outreach. Program evaluation is encouraged by FNS in order to measure whether outreach efforts are achieving the goal of increased SNAP participation.<sup>50</sup> Yearly evaluation of activities and results will enable partners to understand which strategies are successful, and subsequently, to make the most efficient use of resources for outreach.

Regarding monetary support, the prospective partners have yet to secure a plan for funding as of January 2013. As mentioned previously, the inability of DHW to perform outreach prevents the Advisory Network from accessing the 50% federal match for administrative costs of outreach as outlined in an official state SNAP Outreach Plan. Still, the Advisory Network may apply for SNAP Participation Grants from the USDA,<sup>51</sup> and may also seek out national anti-hunger organizations for funding. Acquiring financial support will be essential to the Advisory Network's ability to increase SNAP participation.

## **Conclusion**

### **Summary**

Idaho is a state of hard-working, resourceful, and compassionate individuals, and yet tens of thousands struggle to feed their families every day. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can provide nutrition and work support in a manner consistent with Idaho values, and yet about 19% of eligible residents do not currently participate in the program. Utilizing available resources as outlined in this outreach plan, The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network can dramatically increase SNAP participation and fight hunger in Idaho.

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<sup>50</sup> USDA, FNS. "SNAP Community Partner Outreach Toolkit: A Guide to Evaluating Your Local Outreach Project." April 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/toolkits/2011/evaluating-local-outreach-project.html#overview-project-evaluation>

<sup>51</sup> USDA, FNS. "FY 2012 SNAP Participation Grants: Request for Applications." March 2012. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/grants/Grant\\_Announcement-2012.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/grants/Grant_Announcement-2012.pdf)

## **Recommendations**

Given the information presented in this plan, recommendations for proceeding with outreach efforts include:

- *The member organizations of The Idaho SNAP Advisory Network write letters of intent stating their commitment to the Advisory Network and to addressing the SNAP participation gap in Idaho.*
- *The Advisory Network creates a structure for program evaluation of outreach efforts.*
- *The Advisory Network creates a structure for funding of outreach efforts.*
- *The Advisory Network examines the impact of state legislative policies on SNAP participation, and advocates for policy changes when doing so would likely result in expanded participation in SNAP.*
- *The Advisory Network creates a list of outreach activities to be accomplished by February 2014, including but not limited to:*
  - *Train the Trainer presentations in all regions of the state.*
  - *An information campaign regarding the SNAP re-evaluation process.*
  - *Focused outreach in rural areas.*
  - *Focused outreach to the senior community.*
  - *Focused outreach to the Latino community.*

*Appendices*

<b>SNAP Flier</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Train the Trainer Orientation Toolkit</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Train the Trainer, Module 1</b>	<b>24</b>

# Do You Qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Idaho?

## Are you eligible to receive food stamps?

In addition to meeting other characteristics, households may be eligible to participate in SNAP if their income is below the following income limits:

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income (130% of federal poverty guideline)
1	\$ 1,211
2	1,640
3	2,069
4	2,498
5	2,927
6	3,356
7	3,785
8	4,214
Each additional household member	+ 429

\*Accurate gross monthly income limits as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

Idahoans who receive TAFI, SSI or ABBD are **automatically income-eligible** to receive food stamps.

To apply for the SNAP, visit your local Department of Health and Welfare office, or access an application at <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/>.

# Fact or Fiction? Myths About Access to SNAP

**MYTH:** I can't apply for food stamps because I live far away from a Department of Health and Welfare office.

**FACT:** Applicants who cannot come to an office can download the application from the Department of Health and Welfare website and have an eligibility interview by

**MYTH:** Other people need food stamps more than I do, so I shouldn't apply.

**FACT:** Anyone who is eligible for food stamps can receive them; participating in the program does not take away someone else's opportunity to receive benefits.



**MYTH:** I don't qualify for food stamps because I have a job.

**FACT:** Idahoans who are employed can still qualify for food stamp if their income is below the limits.

**MYTH:** I am not eligible for food stamps because I own a house or a car.

**FACT:** There is a \$5000 asset limit per household for food stamps, but the applicant's home of residence and one car per adult household member do not count toward that limit.

# Train the Trainer Orientation Toolkit

An overview of guidelines, expectations, and resources for training and advocacy using:

## A GUIDE TO FOOD STAMP ASSISTANCE IN IDAHO



For Individuals and Families

## *About Train the Trainer*

### **Background**

This guide to food stamp assistance was created in response to the clear gap between the level of Idahoans eligible for food stamps and the number who are receiving them. Many people do participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—over 1 in 7 Idaho residents are receiving food stamps each month. Still, about 19% of those who qualify for the program are not participating.<sup>52</sup>

Concerned about why many eligible Idahoans are not accessing SNAP, the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force conducted focus groups across Idaho with recipients or potential recipients of food stamps. They found that the two most overarching barriers to participation were misinformation about eligibility and application, and the perceived stigma of receiving public benefits.

Thus, the Train the Trainer program was developed to ensure that advocates and leaders can access important information about SNAP in order to, in turn, increase awareness in communities throughout the state. The guide aims to break through misinformation, foster leadership, and ultimately, alleviate hunger by increasing participation in SNAP by low-income Idaho residents.

### **Purpose**

The central purpose of the guide is to:

- *To provide accurate, timely and consistent information* about SNAP to service providers, advocates, and community groups
- *To create a network of leaders* in the aging, faith, family, immigrant, tribal and emergency food sectors who can dispel myths at the client, community and legislative levels.

### **Access**

[http://idahohunger.org/train\\_trainer.html](http://idahohunger.org/train_trainer.html)



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<sup>52</sup>Cunnyngham, Karen E. (Mathematica Policy Research). "Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2010." USDA, FNS. December 2012.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2010.pdf>

## ***Use of Train the Trainer***

### **Levels of Curriculum Use**

The Train the Trainer guide can be utilized in several ways:

- *Independent Learning*  
View curriculum independently online
- *Staff Trainings*  
View curriculum online; utilize training tool to train others (i.e. new employee orientation)
- *Community Presentations*  
View curriculum online, self-train; present information in a legible way, engaging audience; design interactive activities

### **Trainer Expectations**

Trainers are responsible for relaying very important information about SNAP. All trainers are expected to:

1. Contact the Task Force to discuss objectives and goals of becoming a trainer
2. Review all curriculum modules thoroughly
3. Go over relevant resources to further understanding of SNAP (i.e. USDA; Idaho Department of Health and Welfare)
4. Seek information specific to target population (i.e. for seniors, consult AARP resources; for the tribal community, look into the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations [FDPIR])
5. Revisit the curriculum. Design a presentation that provides vital information about the Program while remaining legible to intended audience
6. Incorporate any updated data as disseminated by the Task Force to ensure that information remains current
7. Contact the Task Force with any questions or points of clarification

### ***Resources***

For more information about Train the Trainer, contact:

The Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force

(516)-660-4461

(208)-855-4003

[info@idahohunger.org](mailto:info@idahohunger.org)

<http://www.idahohunger.org/>

For more information about SNAP, visit:

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/>

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Food/Cash Assistance:

<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/FoodCashAssistance/FoodStamps/tabid/90/Default.aspx>

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), SNAP/Food Stamps: <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/snapfood-stamps/>

# A GUIDE TO FOOD STAMP ASSISTANCE IN IDAHO



For Individuals and Families

## Acknowledgements

The Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force gratefully acknowledges the help of Aleta Sprague and Gemma Donofrio, Emerson National Hunger Fellows from the Congressional Hunger Center, and Sarah Graham, AmeriCorps VISTA. Their efforts were supported by funding from AARP-Idaho, and by guidance from members of the Food Stamp Curriculum Committee of the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force.

# Purpose

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- The purpose of this “train the trainer” outreach guide is to fight hunger by increasing participation in the Idaho Food Stamp Program.
- This curriculum aims to:
  - provide accurate, timely, and consistent information
  
  - create a network of leaders who are able to dispel myths so as to facilitate participation

Date of Publication: October 2012

# Table of Contents

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- Introduction
- Module 1 – Overview of the Idaho Food Stamp Program
- Module 2 – Eligibility
- Module 3 – How to Apply
- Module 4 – Using Food Stamps in Idaho
- Module 5 – Nutrition Education
- Module 6 – Rights and Responsibilities

# MODULE 1

## Overview and Quick Facts

### Purpose

- The Food Stamp Program is a federal nutrition program that helps people with low incomes buy more food and improve their diets.
- Purpose: to promote health by improving nutrition



## Program Information

- Over **1 in 7** Idaho residents benefit from food stamps each month, which enable them to purchase more fresh foods for their families
- In 2010, 81% of eligible Idahoans participated in the Food Stamp Program
- **Misinformation** and **perceived stigma** deter some people who are eligible for the program from participating

## Administration

- Costs: USDA pays the full cost of the benefits; the administrative costs are funded equally by the USDA and Idaho.
- In 2008, the federal food stamp program was renamed SNAP, or "**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.**"
- Idaho still refers to SNAP as the Food Stamp Program.



## Receiving Benefits

EBT cards are accepted at most grocery stores and corner stores, as well as some farmers markets.

- Participants receive their benefits on Electronic Benefit Transfer (“**EBT**”) cards, which are similar to debit cards.



*In Idaho, EBT cards are referred to as **Quest** cards.*

## Benefits of Participation

### Individuals and Families



- Move to self-sufficiency
- Healthier diets
- Childhood nutrition

### Communities



- Every \$5 in new food stamp benefits results in an average of \$9 in community spending in Idaho

## Idaho's Participation Rates

- ▣ 81% of all eligible Idahoans participate (national average: 75%)
- ▣ 78% of the eligible working poor in Idaho participate (national average: 65%)
- ▣ Participation is especially low among eligible seniors and documented immigrants

## Quick Facts: Who receives food stamps?

- ▣ Low-income U.S. citizens and certain qualified documented immigrants are eligible to receive food stamps
- ▣ Nationally, almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  recipients are children; 76% of participating households contain a child, a senior, or a disabled person
- ▣ Anyone who is eligible for food stamps can receive them

## Quick Facts: How much do participants receive?

- Benefit levels are calculated based on household size, income, and expenses
- In 2011, the average monthly food stamp benefit in Idaho was \$132 per person.

People In Household	Maximum Monthly Allotment
1	\$200
2	\$367
3	\$528
4	\$688
5	\$793
6	\$952
7	\$1,052
8	\$1,202
Each additional	\$150

## Quick Facts: Income limits

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income (130% of federal poverty guideline)
1	\$ 1,211
2	1,640
3	2,069
4	2,498
5	2,927
6	3,356
7	3,785
8	4,214
Each additional household member	+ 429

## Quick Facts: How to apply



- **A resident can apply:**
  - **In person:**
  - **By mail or fax:**
    - An applicant who submits their application by mail or fax can have an interview over the phone.

## Quick Facts: Assets

- Having a home or a car does NOT prevent someone from qualifying for food stamps
- In Idaho, there is a \$5000 asset limit per household
- Certain assets - including the home of residence, one car per adult household member, and educational and retirement funds - do not count toward the \$5000 limit



## Quick Facts: Nutrition Education

### ***Are there any resources about nutrition for participants in the Food Stamp Program?***

- **Yes!** There is a nutrition education component to the Food Stamp Program, which includes classes about cooking, shopping for healthy food on a budget, food safety, and maintaining an active lifestyle.



For more information, see the "Nutrition Education" module

## Quick Facts: Efficiency

- Idaho's payment accuracy rate is over 97%
- Nationally, the SNAP payment accuracy rate is at its highest ever
- Fraud has been consistently declining
- Anyone can report fraud by calling 2-1-1 or accessing a form on the DHW website

