

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income families and individuals purchase food. Many households receiving SNAP include workers who do not earn enough to pay for healthy food and other basic living expenses.

Low-Wage Workers Still Live in Poverty

In 2016, **40.6 million people** in the U.S. lived in poverty.¹



Nearly **1 in 5** children is poor.²

Low-wage workers are more likely to have jobs:

- With irregular and unpredictable work schedules.
- Without paid family or medical leave.

A full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage **makes just \$15,080 per year**, which keeps a family of 3 under the federal poverty threshold.³

Among adults living in poverty and working part time, **1 in 3 is involuntarily working part time**.⁴



Nearly **70% of poor children** live with an adult who works. 30% live with an adult who works full time all year.⁵

In one survey, almost **1 in 5** low-wage working mothers reported having lost a job due to sickness or caring for a sick child.⁶

SNAP Fights Hunger and Supports Communities

SNAP helps **42 million people** in nearly **21 million households**.⁷

In 2016, SNAP lifted **3.6 million people** out of poverty.⁸

SNAP participants get an average of **\$126 per month in food assistance**. That's about \$1.40 to spend per meal.⁹

Every \$1 spent on SNAP generates **\$1.73 of economic activity**.¹⁰

SNAP improves health, wellbeing, and academic success for children, adults, and seniors. SNAP can also reduce hospitalizations and improve overall health, which may lead to better employment opportunities.¹¹



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of SNAP participants are children, elderly, or disabled.¹² They are not expected to work.

In SNAP households with at least one working-age, non-disabled adult, **58% were employed but didn't make enough to leave SNAP. 82% were employed prior to or after receiving SNAP.** Work rates are even higher among households with children.¹³

SNAP Encourages Work

As earnings rise, benefits phase out gradually. And because of the earned income disregard, earnings are treated more favorably than other income when benefits are calculated.¹⁴



SNAP Has Work Requirements

Working-age adults receiving SNAP are expected to seek and accept work. Adults without dependent children can only receive benefits for a few months if they are not working or participating in work-like activities part time.

Work Registrants

Working-age adults without disabilities who do not care for young children must accept offers of employment, cannot quit a job of 30+ hours per week without good reason, and must participate in work programs if assigned by the state SNAP agency.

Time Limit

Working-age, non-disabled adults without dependent children (“able bodied adults without dependents,” or ABAWDs) are **limited to just 3 months of SNAP** in a 36-month period unless they engage in work or job training activities at least half time. Even if they’re willing to work, time-limited adults can still **lose their benefits** because many states don’t help them find work or training opportunities. States can waive the time limit when unemployment is high, but not all do.



SNAP Employment & Training (E&T)

SNAP E&T funds help states provide employment, training, and supportive services to SNAP participants. They’re designed to increase employability and reduce the need for SNAP. SNAP E&T funding is critical because the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other mainstream workforce programs are significantly underfunded, preventing millions of low-income people from accessing training and employment services that could support their economic mobility.

SNAP E&T activities include job search assistance, job training, work experience, basic skills and other educational programs, self-employment, and up to 90 days of job retention services. States decide whether their program is voluntary or mandatory and which participants to serve. The most effective state SNAP E&T programs are customized for each participant and provide robust, voluntary services and supports.¹⁵

Additional Work Requirements Do Not Make Sense

Additional requirements would create new burdens on recipients and administrators.

- **Taking food away from people makes it harder for them to work and become economically mobile.** Evidence shows that work requirements **do not** increase employment outcomes or reduce poverty.¹⁶ They only act as a barrier to benefits.
- **Exemptions don’t always protect those who cannot work.** While people receiving disability payments are exempt from work requirements, many more with limitations should be exempt but are not. In an Ohio study, 1 in 3 people subjected to the 3-month SNAP time limit had a physical or mental limitation.¹⁷
- **Federally imposed work requirements burden administrators.** State agencies expend significant resources implementing policy, procedure, and system changes to track work requirements. Instead of helping participants improve their skills or find jobs, mandatory work programs require spending time documenting participation and sanctioning people.

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