

CLASP's State Recommendations for SNAP COVID-19 Response

Background

As restaurants, bars, co-working spaces, and other public places close down due to the current public health crisis, so many Americans are being left with substantially fewer hours or worse, unemployed. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, enacted on March 18, 2020, prohibits states from terminating nutrition benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's (SNAP's) three-month time limit on SNAP benefits for adults who are unemployed or [underemployed](#) and don't have children or a documented disability unless they have been offered an employment and training slot and have failed to comply. However, there is more that states need to do to ensure that people do not lose access to nutrition benefit.

In order to ensure people can access SNAP during this crisis, we recommend that states:

- **Stop all mandatory [SNAP Employment & Training](#) programs.** These programs take away nutrition assistance from people who fail to participate. In times of emergency and crisis, people shouldn't have to choose between feeding their families and breaking social distance in a public health crisis.
- **Postpone redeterminations while continuing benefits.** People should not be cut from benefits because of failure to process redeterminations.
- **Allow all SNAP appointments to be by phone/computer,** and maximize staffing availability for phone questions in order to minimize waits on the phone. Online only access is not acceptable as many people do not have high-speed internet access at home, and places where they may ordinarily access the internet, such as the library, may be closed. EBT cards should be mailed to participants, rather than requiring in-person pickup.
- **Ensure people who need SNAP can show their change in income through self-attestation,** a method to verify documents by the applicant themselves, rather than requiring documentation from other sources, since employers may not be reachable if businesses are closed.
- **Ask FNS to authorize Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP).** D-SNAP gives food assistance to low-income households who are suffering food loss or damage caused by a natural disaster. States can request D-SNAP to supplement food for people who have experienced a disaster in their state. However, this requires a FEMA declared disaster, which

- **Ask for Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to expand the online grocery pilot**, which could allow people to purchase groceries online with their nutrition assistance benefits (EBT) card.
- **Request emergency benefit increases for all current SNAP recipients and adjust issuance, application and reporting requirements to address temporary food needs.** Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows states to request benefit increases up to the maximum allotment based on household size for SNAP recipients. Furthermore, states can request to change issuance methods and application and reporting requirements to be consistent with what is possible under actual conditions in affected areas.
 - For example, CA, KY and DC have halted terminations

CLASP is continuing to monitor state and federal actions in response to COVID-19. Stay up to date with us at:

<https://www.clasp.org/clasp-responds-covid-19>.