

March 2023

## Reduced Administrative Burden for SNAP

Administrative burden refers to the barriers that increase the costs—time, money, and psychological distress—of applying for and maintaining enrollment in any public assistance program. Reducing administrative burden can help more caregivers and children access the assistance and benefits they need to keep their families healthy. Policies that reduce administrative burden for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) increase participation rates among eligible households, which can lead to greater household food security.

Authorization of longer certification lengths is the most effective individual policy for increasing participation. However, implementing one policy alone is not as effective as implementing a set of policies that work together to reduce administrative burden related to SNAP enrollment and recertification. Research shows that **the combination of longer certification lengths, simplified income reporting, and the availability of online services—were most commonly included in effective low-burden policies.**

Below is a list of policy considerations for state leaders to help reduce the administrative burden for SNAP and increase participation rates among households. **States should consider the implications of these policy choices and their collective impact on equitable access to SNAP for eligible families in their state.**

We use the following symbol to highlight where policy choices can promote greater equity. 

Does your state assign 12-month certification lengths to families enrolled in SNAP? **YES / NOT YET**

Does your state assign households with children to simplified reporting? **YES / NOT YET**

Does your state offer online services for:  Initial application  Change reporting  Renewal

This checklist covers the following policy levers that can impact the administrative burden for SNAP:

PAGE 2	PAGE 3	PAGE 4	PAGES 5-6
<b>RECERTIFICATION</b>	<b>REPORTING REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>ONLINE SERVICES</b>	<b>MAXIMIZING BENEFITS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification length</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplified reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of online services available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad-based categorical eligibility</li> <li>• Outreach and awareness</li> </ul>


To see how many eligible families in your state are not receiving SNAP, please visit our website.



## Recertification

### 1. What is the standard certification length for SNAP?

Households enrolled in SNAP are routinely required to recertify their eligibility for the program. States may determine how long they certify households for benefits. Research indicates that certification lengths of at least 12 months are associated with increased SNAP participation. As of October 2022, certification lengths ranged from 3 to 12 months, with 33 states having standard certification lengths of 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

 **Longer certification lengths promote equity and access to services by reducing the financial and psychological costs of recertifying eligibility and ensuring more eligible families receive the benefits.**

Standard certification length: \_\_\_\_\_

There is no standard certification length for SNAP.

### 2. Are all households with children assigned the standard certification length?

State SNAP agencies typically offer one standard certification length to at least most eligible households. However, unique, often shorter, certification lengths are given to households with seasonal or migrant farm workers, those experiencing homelessness, those who are self-employed, or those generally considered by the state SNAP agency to have “unstable circumstances.” Sixteen states offer 12-month certification lengths to most families with children while also offering different, often shorter, certification lengths to households with more variable income. Earning characteristics of the heads of households determine these certification lengths.

Yes, all households with children are assigned the standard certification length.

No, certain households with children have different certification lengths. The varying certification lengths for each household type:

Are elderly with no earned income

Live with disabilities and have no earned income

Are migrant farm workers

Are seasonal employees

Are self employed

Have unstable circumstances

Experience homelessness

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> This does not pertain to households where all members are elderly or disabled with no earned income.

## Income Reporting Requirements

### 1. What reporting systems are used in your state?

SNAP households are required to notify the state agency of changes in household circumstances throughout the certification period. States may assign different reporting requirements to different types of households. Households are typically assigned to either simplified reporting or change reporting.

- Simplified reporting
- Change reporting
- Both
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Are all households with children assigned to simplified reporting?

States have the option to adopt simplified reporting for SNAP. Households assigned to simplified reporting are only required to report their income if it increases above the eligibility threshold. All states except one assign simplified reporting for at least most eligible families with children.



**Simplified reporting reduces families' time and cost to participate in the program, which ensures eligible families maintain access to SNAP benefits.**

- Yes, all households with children are assigned to simplified reporting.
- Certain, but not all, households with children are assigned to simplified reporting. The household types assigned to simplified reporting:
  - Are elderly with no earned income
  - Live with disabilities and have no earned income
  - Are migrant farm workers
  - Are seasonal employees
  - Are self employed
  - Have unstable circumstances
  - Experience homelessness
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- No households with children are assigned to simplified reporting.

## Online Services

### 1. How can households apply for SNAP?


States may choose the method by which a household can apply for SNAP benefits. Research suggests that online case management services, including online applications, for SNAP may reduce administrative burdens and therefore increase participation among eligible households with children. All states except three have an online application process.

 **Allowing families to apply for benefits through a variety of methods, especially online applications, can promote families' access to SNAP by allowing them to choose the application option that best fits their needs.**

- Online
- In-person
- Phone
- Mail
- E-mail
- Other method: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. What other case management services for SNAP are accessible online?

In addition to online applications, states have the option to provide SNAP participants access to their full case information online. States may determine which services are accessible online.

 **States might consider adopting additional accessibility features to improve access to online SNAP services. Online services designed to be as inclusive as possible promote equitable access to SNAP for all families.**

- Reporting changes
- Recertification of benefits
- Uploading verification documents
- Eligibility screening tools or benefit calculators
- Checking the status of your application
- Access to e-notices
- Other services: \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Considerations to Maximize Benefits

SNAP benefits are determined by a household's income and certain expenses. The formula used to determine SNAP benefits is based on the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan and assumes that families will spend 30% of their monthly income on food. In general, SNAP income and eligibility rules are set at the federal level. However, states have the authority to expand eligibility to ensure more families have access to the program.

### Expanding Eligibility

#### 1. Does your state use broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE)?

States may adopt broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) to expand eligibility for SNAP and simplify administration of the program. BBCE makes households categorically eligible for SNAP because they qualify for a non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or a state maintenance of effort (MOE) funded benefit. BBCE allows states to raise the gross income eligibility limit and remove the asset test for SNAP. Categorically eligible households must still apply and be fully reviewed by the state agency to determine their SNAP benefit allotment. As of January 2023, 42 states (including the District of Columbia) have adopted BBCE for SNAP.

- Yes, the state uses BBCE.
- No, the state does not yet use BBCE.

#### Gross Income Limit

SNAP households must meet both gross and net income limits to be eligible for SNAP. The regular gross income eligibility limit is 130% of the federal poverty. BBCE allows states to align the gross income limit for SNAP with other programs, up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

- The gross income limit is \_\_\_\_\_ % of the federal poverty level.

#### Asset Test


The regular federal asset limit for SNAP is \$2,750 for households without a member who is elderly or disabled. BBCE allows states to raise or eliminate the SNAP asset limit.

- The SNAP asset limit has been removed.
- The asset limit for SNAP is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .

## Outreach and Awareness

### 1. Does your state have a SNAP outreach plan? If so, what outreach activities are included in the current plan?

Federal funds are available to states to cover up to 50% of approved SNAP outreach activities. Each year, state SNAP agencies must submit outreach plans to the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) for approval.

 **SNAP outreach can help increase equitable access to SNAP by addressing common barriers families experience in accessing the program and tailoring activities to meet the specific needs of the community.**

- Yes, the state has an approved SNAP outreach plan. Outreach activities include:
  - Targeted outreach to specific populations: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Application assistance
  - Developing and distributing SNAP information
  - Translating materials and providing bilingual accommodations
  - Partnering with community-based organizations
  - Other activities: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- No, the state does not have an approved SNAP outreach plan right now.