



FOODBANK
FOR THE HEARTLAND

FY 2023 SNAP OUTREACH PROGRAM REPORT

JULY 1, 2022–JUNE 30, 2023



Grateful for You

Food Bank for the Heartland is grateful for the dedicated partnership from our community to combat food insecurity. It is through this support that our SNAP Outreach Program helped submit 6,327 SNAP applications in Nebraska and 12,352 applications in Iowa in FY 2023. On behalf of our team and those we serve, thank you!

How Your Support Makes a Difference

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program, is one of the most effective and efficient programs for food distribution at the Food Bank.

County estimates indicate that, on average, 2 in 3 individuals who live in food-insecure homes may be eligible for SNAP, the nation's largest food assistance program. The fact that not everyone who qualifies for SNAP is enrolled further underscores the importance of the Food Bank's SNAP Outreach Program and the need to protect and strengthen federal nutrition programs, as well as increase enrollment to support families.



For every 1 meal that Feeding America provides, SNAP provides 9

The Feeding America network of 200 food banks (which includes Food Bank for the Heartland) provides over 4 billion meals a year to help the 41 million food insecure people in the United States. This won't solve food insecurity alone. SNAP is a critical piece in assuring families with low income have enough resources to put nutritious food on the table.

Making a Direct Impact in the Heartland

433,960 INDIVIDUALS
ACROSS NEBRASKA AND IOWA
ARE FACING FOOD INSECURITY.

18,679 SNAP APPLICATIONS
SUBMITTED THROUGH OUR SNAP
OUTREACH TEAM.

192 COUNTIES IN 2 STATES
SERVED BY THE SNAP OUTREACH TEAM.
FOOD BANK STAFF ASSISTS THOSE IN
NEED IN ALL 93 COUNTIES IN NEBRASKA
AND ALL 99 COUNTIES IN IOWA.

**159,764 NEBRASKA
INDIVIDUALS**
ENROLLED IN SNAP.

281,423 IOWA INDIVIDUALS
ENROLLED IN SNAP.

\$1.54 BILLION
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY GENERATED BY
SNAP SUPPORT AT LOCAL RETAILERS AND
COMMUNITIES IN NEBRASKA AND IOWA.



How SNAP Works

SNAP is the largest anti-hunger program in the country, helping thousands of Nebraskans and Iowans afford quality food. SNAP provides important nutritional support for low-income families and individuals. It's intended to fill the gap between the funds a household has available to buy food and the cost of a "thrifty" food budget as set by the USDA.

Food Bank for the Heartland's SNAP Outreach team assists families and individuals understand eligibility, navigate the application process, become familiar with program benefits, and get connected to other community resources.

SNAP reduces hunger and food insecurity by providing very low-income individuals and families targeted assistance to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other regular commercial food outlets. This is accomplished through an effective and efficient Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system, in which SNAP funds are loaded monthly onto an EBT card, which is used like a debit card.

Recipients of these benefits can use their card to purchase food at one of about 254,400 authorized retail locations nationally—including nearly 1,400 in Nebraska and 3,000 in Iowa—to purchase nutritious foods such as:



- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, poultry, and fish
- Dairy products
- Bread and Cereals
- Other food such as snacks and non-alcoholic beverages
- Food-producing seeds and plant



I live on a small social security check each month, and that barely covers my necessary bills. When I was receiving SNAP benefits it allowed me to eat something other than sandwiches for most of my meals. SNAP has allowed me to eat healthier meals each day.

— Former SNAP benefit recipient



Double Up Food Bucks

Double Up Food Bucks is a public-private partnership that gives SNAP recipients bonus dollars to use when they purchase fruits and vegetables from local farmers and retailers—an initiative that benefits our communities, our farmers, and the health of our citizens.

SNAP recipients can earn up to \$20 in Double Up Food Bucks per day in NE and \$10 per day in IA when they spend the equivalent amount on fresh produce at participating retailers. Double Up Food Bucks is fueled by Fair Food Network, a national nonprofit whose mission is to grow community health and wealth through food. Today, Double Up is offered at several grocery stores and farmers markets in dozens of states, including Nebraska and Iowa.

The Effects of Food Insecurity

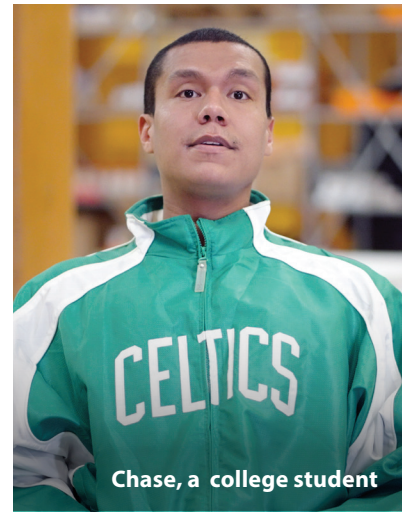
In addition to the mental and emotional anxieties of food insecurity, the physical adverse health effects of a poor diet are clear. Food insecure individuals are at higher risk for developing diet-related chronic illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. Food insecurity is also associated with higher healthcare costs. Feeding America estimates that there is \$1,621 in excess health care costs per food-insecure persons in Nebraska and \$1,489 in excess health care costs per food-insecure person in Iowa. Research has also shown that children in families which received SNAP support have improved high school graduation rates, increased adult earnings, and improved overall adult health.

SNAP Affects all Demographics

While families and children continue to navigate rising costs on everyday essentials, college students across the country—and here in the Heartland—are struggling to make ends meet. Declining resources for students, inflation, and limited part-time job opportunities are all contributing factors to the rising issue of hunger on college campuses. Chase, a college student in Omaha—can attest to these hardships.

“I was using COVID-19 grants to pay for tuition, but I still couldn’t afford books, everyday necessities, and groceries. Part of the reason I’m in this position is because of how high everything is.”

Fortunately, Chase qualified for SNAP benefits and was able to use his benefits for supplemental food. Food Bank for the Heartland is committed to ensuring that our neighbors in need—including college students—have consistent access to healthy nutrition.



Three Reasons College Students Are Struggling To Afford Food

1. Rising tuition costs.

Adjusted for inflation, the cost of college increased by more than 25% in the last 10 years.

2. College meal plans are expensive.

The average meal plan costs about \$4,500 per year for a three-meal-a-day plan. Many colleges require students to have a meal plan if they live on campus.

3. The “traditional” college student is changing.

Students are delaying college. 1 in 5 students is caring for a child and many are single parents.



My boys were going to bed hungry. SNAP gave me the ability to feed them!

—Former SNAP benefit recipient



By using SNAP benefits, I am able to use my cash for bills and utility payments.

—SNAP benefit recipient

A Team of Experts

Navigating the process of applying for SNAP benefits and understanding the program qualifications can be time consuming and confusing to potential consumers. Food Bank for the Heartland’s SNAP Outreach team is extremely well versed in eligibility requirements and the various benefits and programs offered to Heartland residents who qualify. Every day, residents across Nebraska and Iowa call our team through a dedicated “Food Resource Hotline.” Food Bank staff then provide the following services for individuals and families:

- Ease the overwhelming process by providing education and application assistance.
- Help families and individuals apply over the phone in as little as 15 minutes.
- Use expertise to ensure applications are filled out correctly, decreasing the time it takes for recipients to qualify, receive federal benefits, and access food for their families.
- Access additional community resources.

Food Bank SNAP Outreach staff members can also be found on-site at certain community resource centers, such as shelters and meal provider sites during the week—offering live application assistance. They frequently work alongside state DHHS workers who can immediately interview applicants and enroll them for benefits. Training and compliance checks for agencies are offered across the state by the SNAP Outreach team to those who partner with the Food Bank in this work. These partners can complete applications with their clients and stay up to date on policies and processes.

This outreach assistance would not be possible without the support of our donors and community partners.

A Boost to the Economy

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) estimates that \$1 in SNAP support generates \$1.79 in economic activity at local retailers. Once a household has qualified for the program and is in good standing with its compliance guidelines, SNAP funds are loaded onto their EBT card each month.

- The total amount of benefits received in Nebraska for FY 2023, was \$265.9 million, which equates to \$475,961,000 generated by SNAP for Nebraska's economy.
- The total amount of benefits received in Iowa for FY 2023, was \$596.71 million, which equates to \$1,068,110,900 generated by SNAP for Iowa's economy.

SNAP benefits are utilized by over 41 million people nationally, making it the largest program working to fight hunger in America. Because SNAP benefits are so urgently needed by families, they are spent quickly—97% of benefits are redeemed by the end of the month of issuance—thereby bolstering local economies.



Advocacy Efforts

Community support has been instrumental to the Food Bank's SNAP Outreach Program and will continue to be needed as a new Farm Bill is negotiated in Washington, D.C. We continue to keep a close watch on changes to SNAP at state and federal levels, and how those changes will impact the communities we serve. As thousands of families and individuals face unthinkable decisions, we are committed to working with our elected representatives on impactful legislation and strategies for Heartland neighbors in need.

Conclusion

The SNAP Outreach Program addresses a critical need across our two-state area. Through your continued generosity, the Food Bank can make significant strides in the fight against hunger, to ensure low-income neighbors have consistent access to the healthy food they need to grow, live, and thrive.

