



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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PATH Projects for Assistance in
Transition from Homelessness

Technical Assistance Resource Page

Food and Nutrition



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Additional SAMHSA Resources

For more information about SAMHSA resources and programs, contact the SAMHSA Health Information Network at 1-877.SAMHSA.7 (1-877.726.4727).



Technical Assistance Resource Page:

Food and Nutrition



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Introduction

Access to nutritious food is essential to a person's health and well-being. For individuals who experience homelessness, obtaining healthy food is a challenge. The most vulnerable individuals within the homeless population—children, individuals who are elderly, and people with ongoing health problems—face additional hardships and barriers to accessing the food necessary to maintain health.

The three main Federal programs that provide food to people who are homeless and/or who have a low income are:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
- **Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)**
- **Nutritional Programs for the Elderly**

States and communities often have additional programs, (e.g., school food programs, food pantries, and soup kitchens) that provide help with food. This report reviews resources and documents related to food and nutrition. It also provides specific information on the three main Federal programs.

Web Sites

Direct Link:
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/firststep/content/foodcategory.html>

FirstStep—On the Path to Benefits for People who are Homeless

This comprehensive product is designed to assist case managers in helping consumers access benefits. The link below takes you directly to the food assistance resource section.

Direct Link:
http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=4

Food and Nutrition Information Center (2009)

Direct Link to Food and Nutrition Resource Guide for Homeless Shelters, Soup Kitchens and Food Banks:
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/bibs/gen/homeless.pdf>

Food and nutrition resource guide for homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks. Beltsville, MD: National Agricultural Library.

PATH Record:
<http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45903>

This Information Center provides resources for a variety of audiences and includes a Food and Nutrition Resource Guide for Homeless Shelters, Soup Kitchens and Food Banks. This guide lists educational materials for clients, staff, and volunteers. Some of the topic areas include: general nutrition, pregnancy, infant and child feeding, nutrition for older adults, managing food resources, food safety, and food security research.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/2008-hurricanes.htm>

Food and Nutrition Service—Hurricane Response and Disaster Assistance

This web site provides information on current disaster assistance rules related to food assistance programs.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fags.org/nutrition/Hea-Irr/Homelessness.html>

Homelessness

This web site reviews homelessness and malnutrition. It elaborates on the consequences of malnutrition and provides information about government programs and organizations.



Direct Link:
<http://www.nhchc.org>

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

Direct Link to Healthy Foods Chart in English and Spanish:
<http://www.nhchc.org/ShelterHealth/ToolKitB/B9MCNHealthyFoods.pdf>

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council web site provides articles and resources related to homelessness, health, and nutrition. Healthy Foods is a printable chart that provides nutritional guidance in both English and Spanish.

Direct Link:
<http://www.nutrition.gov>

Nutrition.gov—Smart Nutrition Starts Here

Nutrition.gov includes an extensive network of food assistance programs that deliver nutritious meals, education, and health care referrals. The web site links to nutrition programs for all ages.

Direct Link:
<http://www.nourishamerica.org>

Nourish America

This web site describes the program Nourish America, whose goal is to provide individuals and families who are impoverished with nourishing foods and vitamins.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns>

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Programs

Direct Link to Emergency Food Assistance Program:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/pfs-tefap.pdf>

This web site reviews food and nutrition programs and provides links to information on USDA products and resources. Resources include the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), Woman Infants and Children (WIC), and the Elderly Nutrition Program. Additionally, an Emergency Food Assistance Program fact sheet provides information on program eligibility for people experiencing homelessness.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), is designed to alleviate hunger and malnutrition by providing individuals and households with low-incomes with coupons or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards.

The Coupons or EBT cards can be used to purchase food in authorized retail food stores. In some areas, restaurants can be authorized to accept SNAP from people who are homeless, elderly, or disabled in exchange for low-cost meals. The benefits may be used for food alone and may not be exchanged for cash.

Application requirements for SNAP vary from state to state. These include requirements regarding identification and proof of homeless/housing status. Generally, applications for SNAP are processed in 30 days. For people with very low income (less than \$150/month in income and no more than \$100 in resources or shelter costs that exceed income and resources), expedited services can result in receiving

benefits within seven days of applying. Identification is generally required for this expedited process, but staff may be able to vouch for the person's identity.

A 2006 study found that only 67 percent of people eligible for the Food Stamp Program were enrolled (Food and Nutrition Service, 2008). Among people who are experiencing homelessness, this rate may be even lower. Continuums of Care report multiple challenges associated with the unpredictability of life on the streets or in shelters as a barrier to accessing SNAP.



Web Sites

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

USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

This is the official web site for the new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program. This site includes information about eligibility and how to apply. This web site provides general information on the national program, eligibility, immigrant status eligibility, and links to state and local offices. This information is available in 32 languages. The SNAP screening tool is also available in English and Spanish.

Direct Link:
<http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Pre-Screening Eligibility Tool

This web site contains a pre-screening tool to determine eligibility to receive SNAP benefits. It also contains state office information.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/published/SNAP/SNAPPartState.htm>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Studies

This web site contains links to reports related to SNAP.

Direct Link:
http://www.results.org/issues/supplemental_nutrition_assistance_program

Results.org: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

This web site contains information regarding the effectiveness of SNAP.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/tool-kits.htm>

USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Outreach Tool Kits

The tool kits on this web site help increase program participation and work with community partners.



Other Resources

Direct Link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2006.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45904>

Direct Link:

http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/firststep/content/word_docs/Food%20Stamps.doc

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32879>

Direct Link:

<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10100.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33367>

Cunyngham, K.E., Castner, L.A., & Schirm, A.L. (2008). *Reaching those in need: State food stamp participation in 2006*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture.

One important measure of program performance is the ability to reach the intended population. This report presents estimates of the percentage of eligible persons who participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by state.

FirstStep—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Fact Sheet

This web site provides a printable information sheet on how to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Social Security Administration. (2008). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other nutrition programs*. (SSA Publication No. 05-10100). Washington, DC: Author.

This document provides information about eligibility, resources, and the application process, as well as where to find more information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other nutrition programs. It includes information on eligibility related to homelessness and describes the services provided at the Social Security offices.



Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/state-chart.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45906>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2009). From food stamps to SNAP: State name change tracking chart. Washington, DC: Author.

This chart gives an overview of the names that each state uses for SNAP.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/FSP/roll-out/snap-fact-sheet.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45907>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2008). SNAP Fact Sheet. Washington, DC: Author.

This fact sheet reviews policies and information regarding the new Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.



Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) Program

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is intended for women, infants, and children with low-income who are nutritionally at-risk. The program supplies supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition education, and limited assistance with referrals to other services. WIC is a Federal grant program that receives a specified amount of funding each year. WIC is not an entitlement program. The program is administered under the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Eligibility for WIC includes being a resident of the state, meeting income requirements (set from state to state), being pregnant or having young children (under one year), and having nutritional risk. Homelessness may be considered as a nutritional risk under the pre-disposing conditions criteria.



Web Sites

Direct Link: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic> **U.S. Department of Agriculture— Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**

The WIC web site provides fact sheets in English and Spanish, eligibility information, and other general information about the program.

Direct Link: <http://www.frac.org/WIC/index.htm> **Food Research and Action Center**

An overview of WIC is provided on this web site. Program eligibility, participation, and benefits are included.

Direct Link to Fact Sheet on WIC:
<http://www.frac.org/pdf/cnwic.pdf>

Direct Link: <http://www.mamashealth.com/help/communityhelp/wicprogram.asp> **Mamma's Health.com: WIC Program**

This web site gives an overview of WIC, including an interactive map to find state locations.

Direct Link: <http://www.feedthechildren.org> **Feed the Children**

This Christian international non-profit organization provides food and other necessities to children and families.



Other Resources

Direct Link:
<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/93/1/145>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32881>

Buescher, P., Norton, S., Devaney, B., Roholt, S., Lenihan, A., Whitmire, J., et al. (2003). Child participation in WIC: Medicaid costs and use of health care services. *American Journal of Public Health, 93*(1), 145–150.

Data from birth certificates, Medicaid, and WIC were used to examine the relationship of child participation in WIC to Medicaid costs and use of health care services in North Carolina.

Direct Link:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/WIC-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45908>

Food and Nutrition Service. (2009). WIC fact sheet. Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture.

This fact sheet contains information about WIC availability, eligibility, and benefits.

Direct Link:
<http://www.journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/jned/article/PIIS0022318299704449/abstract>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=45909>

Hamm, L.A. & Holden, E.W. (1999) Providing WIC services to homeless families. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 31*(4), 224–229. (fee)

This study evaluated the effectiveness of outreach programs on the nutritional value of food served in shelters and soup kitchens. Findings show that outreach services can be effective in ensuring that key nutrients are available to pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under 5.



Direct Link:
<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/reprint/92/5/799>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=32882>

Direct Link:
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118533686/abstract>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=26465>

Kowaleski-Jones, L., & Duncan, G.J. (2002). Effects of participation in the WIC program on birthweight: Evidence from the national longitudinal survey of youth. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(5), 799-804.

This study finds that healthier birth weights are associated with participation in a WIC Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for pregnant women.

Yousey, Y., Leake, J., Wdowik, M., & Janken, J.K. (2007). Education in a homeless shelter to improve the nutrition of young children. *Public Health Nursing, 24*(3), 249–255. (fee)

An educational program for mothers of children who are homeless and shelter cafeteria staff was tested in this study. Limited effects were found on the nutrition of children who were homeless.



Elderly Nutrition Program

The Nutrition Services Incentive Program, administered by the U.S. Administration on Aging, provides grants to ensure nutrition services for people who are older, either in congregate settings or as home-delivered meals.

Meals are provided at various locations, including senior centers, schools, and individual homes. Meals offered in this program must meet at least one-third of the daily-recommended dietary needs for individuals. In addition to providing food, the program also provides nutritional screening, nutrition education, and assessment. Services also help individuals learn how to shop for, plan, and prepare nutritional meals.

Eligibility for this program does not include a means test, but is intended for people who are older and have low-income. Many of the individuals served live alone and have ongoing physical health problems. Nutrition resources can be especially helpful for older adults at risk of homelessness or who are recently housed. Information on eligibility can be obtained through the local Agency on Aging or by calling the Eldercare locator at 1-800.677.1116.



Web Sites

Direct Link:
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/
nsip/nsip_eligibility.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/nsip/nsip_eligibility.htm)

U.S. Department of Agriculture—Food and Nutrition Service—Nutrition Services Incentive Program

This web site reviews the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (formerly the Nutrition Program for the Elderly), including a summary of eligibility and application requirements for elderly persons.

Direct Link:
<http://www.eldercare.gov>

Eldercare Locator

This web site, sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Resources, provides assistance for locating resources for the elderly.

Direct Link:
<http://www.mowaa.org>

Meals on Wheels Association of America

This web site provides information about Meals on Wheels and a search tool for locating participating agencies. It also includes information on food assistance for the pets of seniors.

Direct Link:
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/
SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm)

Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program

This web site provides links to information regarding the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program.



WHAT IS PATH?

The PATH Program—or Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness—was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990. PATH funds community-based outreach, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and limited housing services for people experiencing serious mental illnesses—including those with co-occurring substance use disorders—who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

PATH funds stimulate state & local contributions

PATH funds are worth more than their face value because they are matched with state and local resources. For every \$3 in federal funds, state or local agencies must put forward \$1 in cash or in-kind services. At a minimum, a \$52 million Federal allocation would result in a \$17 million match. In some states PATH funds and the state and local match are the only resources specifically for serving people experiencing homelessness and mental illnesses.



PATH providers deliver innovative services

PATH providers work with service delivery systems and embrace practices that work. These include:

- Partnering with housing first and permanent supportive housing programs
- Providing flexible consumer-directed and recovery-oriented services to meet consumers where they are in their recovery
- Employing consumers or providing consumer-run programs
- Partnering with health care providers, including Health Care for the Homeless to integrate mental health and medical services
- Assertively improving access to employment
- Improving access to benefits, especially through SSI/SSDI Outreach, Advocacy, and Recovery (SOAR)
- Using technology such as PDAs, electronic records, and HMIS

PATH providers are strong community partners

PATH providers and State Contacts are involved in local and regional planning efforts to end homelessness, including Continuum of Care, 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness, and other planning efforts. PATH providers and State Contacts work to ensure that services are coordinated and available to people experiencing homelessness.

For more information about PATH, please visit <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov/>