

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides low income individuals and families with an electronic benefits card that can be used to purchase groceries, plants or seeds to grow food. SNAP is the largest federal nutrition program administered by the USDA. Individuals interested in receiving SNAP benefits must submit an application with required supporting documents and participate in an interview to determine if they are income eligible. The benefit amount an approved applicant receives is based on the number of people within their household and the household income. Benefits are added monthly to card (called EBT) which is used in the same fashion as a debit card. SNAP/EBT cards can be used at any approved food retailer. Benefits not used within the month carry over to the following month.

### SNAP Outreach Process

One way the Food + You program works to increase food resources for students and their families by teaming up with Second Harvest Heartland SNAP Outreach to connect families to SNAP benefits. Second Harvest Heartland has a whole team of dedicated staff members and volunteers trained to help people successfully apply for this program. They help with the entire application process. The diagram below describes the outreach process.



1. **Accurate prescreening to determine *likely* eligibility**  
Prescreening can be done by trained school staff or Second Harvest Heartland SNAP outreach staff. The screening process takes only a few minutes and simultaneously screens for multiple programs including SNAP, childcare assistance, energy assistance, etc.
2. **Application assistance and submission**  
SNAP outreach staff will help families fill out the SNAP application over the phone and even submit the completed application on their behalf.
3. **Supporting information for next steps (interview, document submission)**  
assistance in ensuring that applicants have all of the required documentation and gets required an interview scheduled with county officials.
4. **Application follow up and case management**  
Staff will follow up with applicants to see if they received benefits or need additional assistance to finalize the process.
5. **Recertification(s)**  
Outreach staff will connect with families shortly before the six month recertification period to fill out and submit recertification documents to ensure benefits do not lapse.
6. **Referrals**  
Staff can provide information about additional resources and legal aid.

## Ways for Schools to Engage

You can help assist your families access SNAP by serving as the connector between the families and our SNAP outreach team. The table below outlines some of these methods. An example for event-based outreach is for you to determine a school event in which many families will be present and there will be an opportunity for them to engage with SNAP outreach staff. You share that date with the Nutrition Navigator or the Food + You SNAP Outreach Specialist who will coordinate to have SNAP outreach staff at that event.

## There are several ways to set up an outreach and referral process for SNAP:

	<b>SHH STAFF</b>	<b>SCHOOL STAFF</b>	<b>CAPACITY NEEDED</b>	<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>
<b>TOOLS</b>				
Bridge to Benefits	X	X	Moderate	Families, School Staff
Interns	X		Low	Families
Paper Referrals		X	Moderate	Families
Event-based	X	X	High	Families
Training	X	X	High	School Staff

- **Bridge to Benefits**

Bridge to Benefits screening is an exciting online tool that can prescreen individuals and families in need for programs that can help financially stabilize them, including SNAP (the program formerly known as food stamps), WIC (Women, Infants and Children), Medical Assistance, Child Care Assistance and Energy Assistance. We use Bridge to Benefits as our prescreening tool, a program run by the Children's Defense Fund. You can find their website here: <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org>. The prescreening takes only about 3-5 minutes and then clients who might qualify for such programs are directly referred to Specialists who can help them apply (for example, if a client qualifies for SNAP they are referred to our services here at Second Harvest Heartland). The layout of the program ensures that only clients that will likely be approved take the time to fill out the application and that they are assisted by professionals who can advocate for them.

- **Interns**

Second Harvest Heartland can provide an intern(s) to screen clients via Bridge to Benefits onsite during major school events, food distributions, and/or during food shelf hours.

- **Paper Referrals**

During registration for your Food + You distribution have families complete a simple paper form to be submitted (emailed, faxed) to Second Harvest Heartland for screening.

- **Event-based Outreach**

Trained Second Harvest Heartland staff can be on-site for complete application assistance at major school events like: registration, welcome night, conferences, etc.

- **School Staff Training + Capacity Building**

Second Harvest Heartland can train school staff on how to conduct screening, application assistance and provide technical assistance to partners.

- **Tailored Opportunities**

If these general referral opportunities don't fit into your workflow, we will work with you to find a method that fits.

## SNAP Outreach Best Practices

There are many ways to reach out to potential SNAP participants. However, there are a few things to keep in mind when having conversations, especially choosing the language you use carefully. Here are some best practices that our experienced outreach team shared when reaching out to families about SNAP:

- When distributing materials about SNAP say “take this information and use it yourself or pass it on to a neighbor or a friend who could use it.”
- Instead of describing the program as providing free food, describe it as a way to “help stretch your food budget” or “free up money to use for other expenses.”
- Instead of asking if families have SNAP benefits have a visual of the Minnesota EBT card and ask if they have this card in their wallet. Many people are not familiar with the name SNAP and this can make the conversation easier.

