

The Potential Impacts of Proposed SNAP Eligibility and Work Requirement Changes on Food Insecurity

Executive Summary and Key Highlights

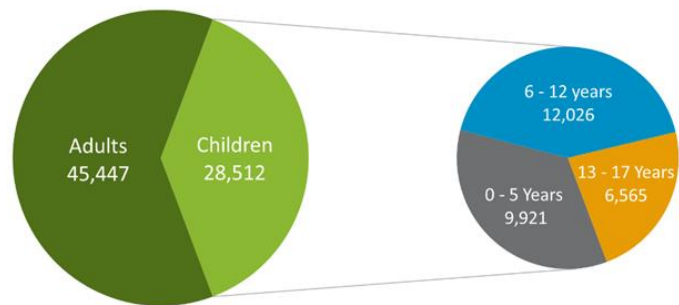
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enhances the ability of individuals and families with low incomes to purchase healthy and nutritious food. This federal program, which is known as the Food Stamp Program in New Hampshire, benefits nearly 40 million people nationwide. Over two-thirds of participants are families with low incomes. The remaining beneficiaries include individuals with low incomes, those with temporary or permanent disabilities, and older adults on fixed-incomes. About one in eight children across New Hampshire benefit from SNAP, and 73,959 individuals were enrolled as of August 2019. The main goals of this program are to reduce food insecurity and assist households at or near the poverty line with obtaining healthy and nutritious food.

By design, SNAP is responsive to economic conditions and helps the most vulnerable individuals supplement their food costs. As SNAP is an entitlement program, households in New Hampshire and across the nation that face difficult economic circumstances brought on by recessions, economic shocks, or long-term economic hardship, may be immediately eligible to receive benefits. These benefits provide a stable source of supplemental income specifically for food. National research has shown that SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger program for low-income individuals.

As part of the partnership between the federal government and states, all expenses for SNAP benefits are covered by the federal government. Approximately half of the administrative costs are paid by the federal government, with the remaining portion of administrative costs covered by each respective state. Depending on income and asset criteria, benefits are distributed based on the size of each eligible household.

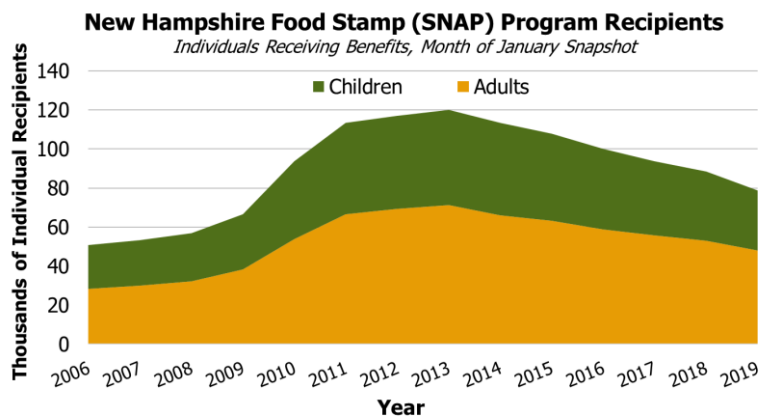
Recently, federal officials have proposed increasing the scope of work requirements mandated in order to receive benefits. Additionally, proposed policy changes to SNAP eligibility guidelines, which would affect households with children, are being introduced at the federal level. These changes would make it difficult for many households to access sufficient food. Changes to the eligibility criteria are projected to result in an estimated 3,500 New Hampshire households losing benefits, including up to 18 percent of all New Hampshire SNAP-enrolled households with children. Research into increased work and eligibility requirements of SNAP beneficiaries have come to similar findings surrounding the effects on individuals and children. Decreases in enrollment are projected if such changes are implemented, at a cost of possibly disenrolling the neediest households and increasing levels of poverty. Children are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of losing SNAP benefits, as studies have shown food insecurity to be characteristic of decreased development and economic opportunity later in life.

New Hampshire Food Stamps (SNAP) Recipients by Age
Enrollment, Month of August 2019



Source: N.H. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Family Assistance, Data Provided September 2019

Decreases in overall enrollment in SNAP since the period immediately following the last recession is an indicator that the program is responsive to economic conditions and helps lift people out of poverty by supplementing their income for food. Imposing more stringent work and eligibility requirements may subsequently push many needy households off the program, thus reversing the positive trend of decreasing poverty among SNAP recipients across the country and in New Hampshire. The most recent New Hampshire enrollment data from August 2019 shows that over 45,000 adults and over 28,000 children benefitted from SNAP, with most of those children under the age 13.



Source: N.H. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Family Assistance, Data Provided September 2019

Existing program requirements and eligibility guidelines are in place to promote work among individuals receiving assistance who can work, and to reach the most households in need. Enrollment in SNAP has been declining since 2013, both in New Hampshire and nationally. Current proposals surrounding the reduction of work requirement waivers and changes to eligibility guidelines threaten the effectiveness of SNAP. Proposals from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for changes to work requirements would have a large effect on individuals without dependents. In addition, a proposed rule from the USDA would eliminate broad-based categorical eligibility. Research modeling the potential effects of this proposed change found about 10 percent of households nationwide that receive SNAP benefits would become ineligible. Around 3,500 households are estimated to lose SNAP benefits in New Hampshire with this proposed rule change, nearly all of them with children. Of all households with children in New Hampshire that receive SNAP benefits, about 18 percent would lose those benefits.

Learn more about current SNAP eligibility requirements and the potential effects of proposed rule changes in NHFPI's report, *The Potential Impacts of Proposed SNAP Eligibility and Work Requirement Changes on Food Insecurity*, available online at: <http://nhfpi.org/research/health-policy/the-potential-impacts-of-proposed-snap-eligibility-and-work-requirement-changes-on-food-insecurity.html>

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