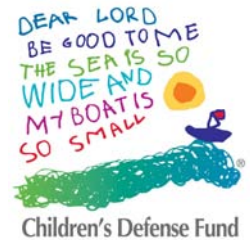


# Children's Defense Fund

## SNAP Works for Children and for America



June 2013

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides targeted assistance for low-income children and families to purchase food when they need help most. Today, more than 1 in 4 households with children in America experiences food hardship.<sup>i</sup> Since the worst recession in decades began in December 2007, millions of parents have lost their jobs and the security of knowing their children will not go to sleep or to school hungry. While these parents work to get their family finances back on track, SNAP serves as a critical support to ensure that their children's daily nutritional needs are met.

### Hunger and malnutrition have particularly devastating consequences for children.

- Children's developmental well-being depends on access to adequate nutrition. Hunger has been linked to low birth weight and birth defects, obesity, mental health problems and oral health problems.
- Hunger and malnutrition also result in poorer educational outcomes. Research has shown that children who were food insecure in kindergarten saw a 13 percent drop in their reading and math test scores compared to their food-secure peers by the third grade.<sup>ii</sup>
- Children who participate in SNAP are less likely to be in poor health, experience fewer hospitalizations, and are less likely to have developmental and growth delays than non-participants with similar incomes.<sup>iii</sup>

### SNAP works where and when it's needed most.

- With record numbers of families living in poverty and food prices increasing more rapidly than in recent decades, SNAP is a lifeline for millions of children and families. Almost half of SNAP recipients are children, and nearly three-quarters of participant households are families with children.<sup>iv</sup> Today, 1 in 7 Americans receives SNAP benefits, including more than 22 million children.<sup>v</sup>
- SNAP serves the families most in need. More than 80 percent of SNAP benefits go to households with incomes below the poverty line (\$23,550 for a family of four), and more than half go to households with incomes below half of the poverty line (\$11,775 for a family of four).<sup>vi</sup>
- A typical working mother with two children on SNAP earns on average \$1,146 per month (\$13,762 per year) and receives \$375 per month in SNAP benefits. Without food assistance, her earnings are not sufficient to meet basic family expenses for food, housing, health and other necessities.<sup>vii</sup>
- The recent recession and high unemployment rate led to SNAP participation reaching a record high in December 2012, an increase of 20 million recipients since December 2007. As the economy improves, SNAP caseloads are expected to decline and program spending as a share of GDP will return to its 1995 level by 2019.<sup>viii</sup>

## SNAP is strong economic recovery policy.

- In a weak economy, getting SNAP benefits and other payments to low-income families is a very effective way to stimulate the economy quickly. Families living paycheck to paycheck spend the money almost immediately on basic necessities, pumping dollars into the local economy.
- Just one dollar of SNAP benefits creates a ripple effect through the economy. Research from the United States Department of Agriculture shows that every \$5 of federal SNAP benefits generates nearly twice that in economic activity.<sup>ix</sup>

## SNAP lifts families out of poverty.

- SNAP lifted 4.7 million people above the poverty line in 2011—more than any other benefit program—including about 2.1 million children.<sup>x</sup> Over the first decade of the 2000s, SNAP benefits reduced the child poverty rate by almost 6 percent, and the severity of child poverty by 21 percent.<sup>xi</sup>
- SNAP is also successful at keeping families—particularly those with children—from falling deeper into poverty. In 2011, SNAP reduced the number of households with incomes less than half of the poverty level from 1.46 million to fewer than 800,000, and cut the number of children with incomes under this threshold by half—from 2.8 million to 1.4 million.<sup>xii</sup>
- SNAP was the federal program most responsive to families in need during the recent recession: the number of households with earnings while receiving SNAP benefits has tripled in the last decade. More than 60 percent of non-disabled, working-age households with children continue to work while receiving SNAP, and almost 90 percent work in the prior or subsequent year.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Any reductions in SNAP funding would hurt millions of children and families who are still recovering from the recession and threaten the program's ability to respond when people in America need help the most.

- An estimated \$25 dollar decrease from the current maximum monthly benefit for a family of four would reduce food purchasing ability equivalent to taking away 14 family meals per month.<sup>xiv</sup>
- Young children are more likely to be in poor health, experience developmental delays, and be food insecure when their families' SNAP benefits are reduced or terminated.<sup>xv</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> [http://frac.org/pdf/aug2011\\_food\\_hardship\\_report\\_children.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/aug2011_food_hardship_report_children.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Frongillo, E., Jyoti, D., Jones, S. Food Stamp Program Participation Is Associated with Better Academic Learning Among School Children. *Journal of Nutrition*: 136; 1077-1080.2006.

<sup>iii</sup> [http://frac.org/pdf/snap\\_and\\_public\\_health\\_2013.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/snap_and_public_health_2013.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3805>

<sup>v</sup> <http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/snapfood-stamp-monthly-participation-data/>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3744>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3717>

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.bos.frb.org/commdev/c&b/2012/fall/role-of-food-stamps-in-the-recession.htm#Endnote8>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2226>

<sup>xi</sup> [http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/478608/err132\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/478608/err132_1_.pdf)

<sup>xii</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3805>

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3744>

<sup>xiv</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3899>

<sup>xv</sup> [http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/upload/resource/snapvaccine\\_report\\_feb12.jpg.pdf](http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/upload/resource/snapvaccine_report_feb12.jpg.pdf)