Closing the Senior SNAP Gap
Best Practices from the Field
NANASP Conference
June 2, 2016

About NCOA
Our Mission:
Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling

Our Social Impact Goal:
Improve the health and economic security of 10 million older adults by 2020
I. What is SNAP?

SNAP is a federally funded, means-tested entitlement program that provides certain low-income individuals and families with a monthly benefit that they can use to buy food.

It is administered by the US Department of Agriculture, but has slightly different rules in every state.

It used to be known as the Food Stamp program.
Quick SNAP Facts

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$129  The median SNAP benefit for households with an elderly person in 2014 ($110 for elderly living alone)

17.5%  Proportion of all SNAP households with at least one person age 60 or older

11.7%  Proportion of all SNAP households with the minimum benefit in 2014 ($15/month)

1.3  Average size of a SNAP household with at least one person age 60 or older in 2014

Low Participation Rates

However, only 42% of eligible seniors age 60 or older were enrolled in SNAP in 2012. This is much lower than the total SNAP participation rate of 83%.

Source: USDA FNS

II. Results From NCOA’s 2014 Senior SNAP Initiative
Where Our Partners Were

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What Our Partners Accomplished

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- 113,233 people screened
- 31,513 applications submitted
- $44,261,564 estimated value of applications
- $76,572,506 estimated macroeconomic aggregate demand added
III. NCOA’s 2015 Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative

Where Our Partners Are

What Our Partners Accomplished

283,494 people screened
36,730 applications submitted
$49,914,172 estimated value of applications
$86,351,517 estimated macroeconomic aggregate demand added
IV. Steps to Successful Outreach and Enrollment

Step 1: Assessing your Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aging network</td>
<td>Strong relationships with seniors</td>
<td>May lack expertise in SNAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic-focused</td>
<td>Highly trusted, multilingual</td>
<td>May not have broad reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-hunger network</td>
<td>Already doing outreach for SNAP</td>
<td>Often child focused, not holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food banks</td>
<td>Direct access to most in need</td>
<td>Outreach often difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith-based</td>
<td>Highly trusted</td>
<td>May not have broad reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior centers</td>
<td>One-stop shop for seniors</td>
<td>Funding and outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call centers</td>
<td>Very high volume</td>
<td>Highly complex, expensive model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: Assessing your Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American FactFinder</td>
<td>Census data drawn from American Community Survey. Best resource for city, county, and neighborhood level data.</td>
<td>factfinder.census.gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council on Aging</td>
<td>Visualizations of data, including senior SNAP participation.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncoa.org/visualizations">www.ncoa.org/visualizations</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Screening for Eligibility

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We recommend screening for benefits using BenefitsCheckUp®, NCOA’s free online screening tool, because it screens for many benefits all at once.

www.benefitscheckup.org

But in your state, there may be a SNAP screening tool or online application system. Use whatever tool works best for you and your population.

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Step 4: Providing Application Assistance

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- In-person application assistance is often best, though not always practical or applicable for every model.
- If possible, helping with applications at a client’s home is most effective, as it prevents delays due to forgotten documentation.
- Clients who were mailed a blank application after a screening instead of a pre-filled application that simply needed a signature were less likely to ultimately submit the application.
- Building a relationship with your local SNAP office is critical to work out any potential pitfalls in the interviewing process, such as lack of translators or clients receiving notification letters after their scheduled interviews.

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Step 5: Following Up

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Follow up with clients to

- Make sure they have received their benefits
- Note when they will need to apply for redetermination so your organization can remind them and help with the process
- Make sure they know how to use their benefits! EBT cards are similar to debit cards, but...
  - Seniors may not know that they can lend it to a caregiver to buy groceries for them.
  - Seniors may discard cards after using them.
  - Some seniors have a difficult time understanding how to use cards.
Overcoming Stigma

“Other people are worse off than me.”
“I was always taught you live off what you have.”
“I don’t need that.”
“It’s too much work for too little money.”

“You paid taxes your whole life, and those taxes fund SNAP. Like Social Security, you’re just claiming what you earned.”
“Even if it’s just $15 per month, that can help you afford your prescriptions.”
“It’s through the USDA, not HHS, and it helps local farmers and business.”
Using Volunteers

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Volunteers used by SNAP Initiative partners include...

- SHIP counselors
- Americorps VISTA
- SeniorCorps volunteers
- RSVP volunteers
- SCSEP employees
- Promotoras
- Volunteers recruited and trained by a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator on staff

Promotora Model

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The promotora model is used by community health workers in Hispanic communities throughout the United States and Latin America. In this model, the people doing outreach and application assistance are members of the community who can serve simultaneously as an advocate, educator, outreach worker, and mentor. It helps break down the barriers of distrust that often prevent first- and second-generation immigrants from seeking help from local government agencies.

While this model is particularly useful in immigrant communities, finding volunteers from within target populations who can serve as voices for outreach is a model that can be replicated everywhere.

Example from Senior Community Outreach Services
Rio Grande Valley, TX

Building Partnerships

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Ideas for partnerships...

- State agencies
- A strong relationship with your state agency is an absolute necessity!
- Other community-based organizations
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program distributors
- Community organizing groups
- Domestic careworkers
- Hospitals and other medical providers
- Local businesses
DC Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign

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The DC Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign is an existing partnership between the District of Columbia government and nonprofits that provide free filing assistance services during tax season. Utilizing hundreds of volunteers from the community and a central site at the Martin Luther King Library, the DC EITC Campaign reaches thousands of low-income DC residents each year.

At the same time, through training by DC Hunger Solutions, DC EITC’s volunteers were able to identify people potentially eligible for SNAP but not receiving benefits and provide extensive application assistance.

Example from DC Hunger Solutions
Washington, DC

Phlabundance

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Phlabundance is a nonprofit that serves about 75,000 people per week in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley of Pennsylvania and New Jersey who are struggling with hunger through a food bank and direct distribution programs with over 400 partners.

BenefitsDataTrust created an outreach flyer to distribute to seniors whom Phlabundance served as part of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and an outreach letter sent to seniors who participate in other Phlabundance services, inviting them to contact BDT’s call center for screenings and benefits assistance. This partnership generated 1,065 applications for 609 food-insecure seniors, including 228 SNAP applications, over 14 months.

Example from BenefitsDataTrust
Philadelphia, PA

Outreach Materials

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NCOA has a large collection of templates at www.ncoa.org/SNAPoutreach

Among the most helpful materials are those which clearly indicate what documentation is necessary to apply for SNAP.
Birthday Cards

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Elder Law of Michigan (ELM) designed a birthday card to be sent to people over 60 on their birthday that gives targeted households basic information about SNAP. The birthday card explains that high medical expenses affect eligibility.

The card is designed to address barriers to SNAP by providing correct information and build trust in ELM by sharing its history of serving seniors as well as its additional services available at no charge. The card specifically targets seniors who live in low-income census tracts and seniors who are likely eligible for SNAP based on past participation in other benefit programs like Medicaid, but who are not currently enrolled in SNAP.

Example from Elder Law of Michigan
Lansing, MI

VI. SNAP Advocacy for Community-Based Organizations

Federal Policy

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The 2014 Farm Bill...
- Cut $8.6 billion over 10 years, much of which came from states using heating and energy assistance to provide a boost to SNAP benefits.
- Placed additional restrictions on SNAP outreach and enrollment for community-based organizations.

In the current Congress, proposals have been made to...
- Require photo IDs for use of SNAP, in order to combat trafficking in benefits, which the USDA estimates occurs at a rate of just 1.3%.
State Policies

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Options states have to streamline SNAP eligibility include...

- Implementing the Elderly Simplified Application Project
  - 36-month cert, waived recert interview, shorter app, passive verification
- Implementing a Standard Medical Expense Deduction
  - Simplifies medical expense verification procedures for low-income seniors and people with disabilities and eases state administration
- Instituting broad-based categorical eligibility
- Setting up state call centers for application assistance
- Requiring re-certification less often than every 12 months
- Instituting an online application
- Creating a data bridge that allows counselors to track applications

NCOA’s Advocacy Toolkit

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NCOA has created a toolkit for community-based organizations who want to advocate for their clients at the federal and state level

www.NCOA.org/Toolkit

VII. Resources
SNAP Best Practices Handbook

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The full 28-page handbook, along with links to additional resources, can be found at www.NCOA.org/SNAPHandbook

Additional Resources

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BenefitsCheckUp® SNAP Homepage
www.benefitscheckup.org/GetSNAP

State-specific information for older adults and SNAP
www.NCOA.org/SNAP

NCOA Senior Hunger homepage
www.NCOA.org/SeniorHunger

State senior participation rates
www.NCOA.org/SNAPvisualization

Phase 3

Phase 3 Request for Proposals
will be released soon!

Check for updates at:
www.ncoa.org/SeniorHunger
Improving the lives of 10 million older adults by 2020

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Presenter and Contact

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