

# SNAP Benefits and the Federal Government Shutdown

Community Stakeholder Webinar

January 14, 2019



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# DHS Food Programs Overview – SNAP

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps) helps Minnesotans with low incomes get the food they need for nutritious and well-balanced meals.
- Federally funded from US Department of Agriculture (USDA), supervised by Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), and administered by counties and tribal governments
- SNAP benefits issued monthly via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to a debit card for use at 260,000 retailers nationwide



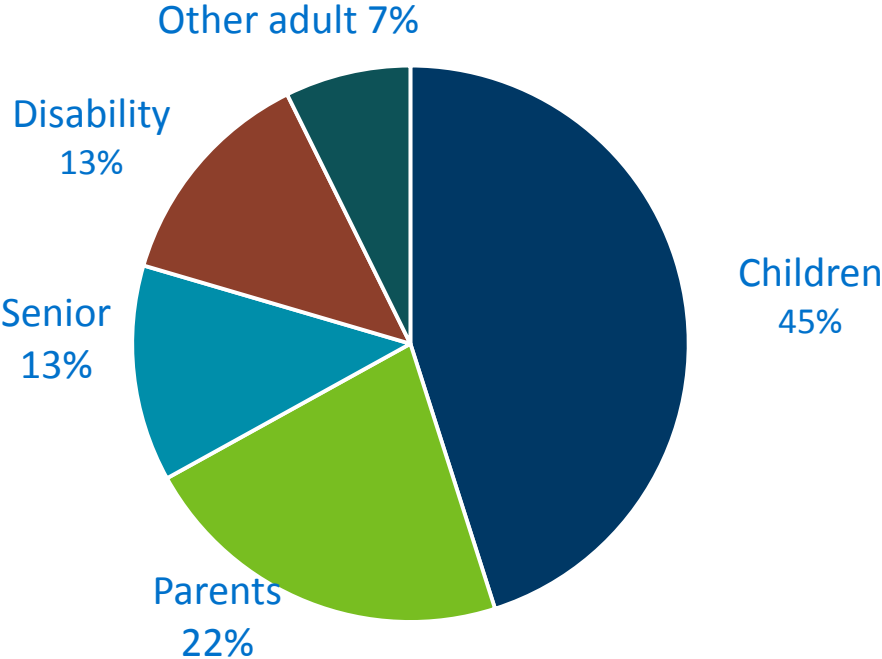
# DHS Food Programs Overview – SNAP

## SNAP Fast Facts:

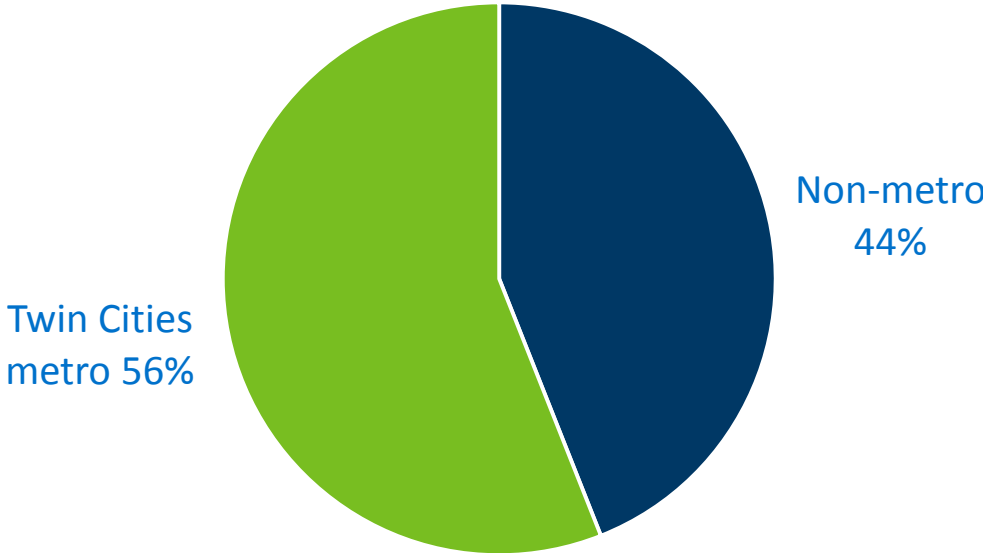
- 400,000 Minnesotans receive SNAP each month. Their incomes are below 165 percent of the federal poverty level, about \$34,000 a year for a family of three.
- More than 70% of SNAP participants are children, seniors, and people with disabilities .
- 67 percent of families with children participating in SNAP are working
- The average monthly SNAP benefit for each household member is \$110.
- The average SNAP benefit per person per meal is \$1.22.

# DHS Food Programs Overview – SNAP

### Populations of people served



### SNAP recipients in Twin Cities metro area vs. non-metro area



# DHS Food Programs Overview – TEFAP

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides nutritious food for community food shelves and meal programs that serve Minnesotans with low incomes.
- DHS distributes federal TEFAP food and funds in partnership with Hunger Solutions Minnesota and the statewide network of seven regional food banks to 400 food shelves and meal programs.
- The federal government's funding allocation to MN was just over \$1.2 million for 2018. Funds are used to cover TEFAP costs associated with program administration and food storage and distribution.



# DHS Food Programs Overview – TEFAP

## TEFAP Fast Facts:

- In 2017, Minnesotans made over 3.4 million visits to food shelves, a record high.
- Children and seniors make up nearly half of food shelf visits. Seniors are the fastest rising group of food shelf visitors.
- Minnesotans living on very low incomes received nearly 9.6 million pounds of TEFAP food in 2018.
- DHS expects to receive 10 million pounds of TEFAP food in the first six months of fiscal year 2019.





# What We Know

- USDA announced on 1/8/2019 that February SNAP benefits issued by January 20<sup>th</sup> will be covered. This is because the Continuing Resolution in December authorized federal agencies to use their resources for 30 days to meet program needs.
- Food benefits on EBT cards can continue to be used through February. Grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers markets, and other authorized SNAP retailers are still able to accept SNAP benefits.
  - Some retailers (about 1% nationwide) have been unable to renew their authorization to accept SNAP through USDA
- New SNAP applications are still being accepted at local county and tribal government offices.

# What We Know (continued)

- Cash assistance is not affected. Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) food benefits will be treated like other SNAP cases.
- TEFAP food deliveries planned for February will continue. States have received no additional administrative funds since the shutdown began, and none can be made available until the shutdown ends.
- USDA's Midwest Regional Office in Chicago has two people working. All others have been placed on furlough.

# What remains uncertain

Should the shutdown continue.....

- We do not have information from USDA about what will happen in March
- This lack of information includes both SNAP benefit issuance and TEFAP deliveries.
- We are concerned about impact to Minnesota communities, especially Tribal Nations affected by close ties to multiple federal agencies.

# What we are doing

- Connecting with our Congressional delegation in Washington to urge a resolution soon
- Working with the USDA to clarify guidance and ensure Minnesotans get their food benefits beyond the next month
- Exploring Minnesota options in case the federal government does not provide funding for SNAP benefits in March or beyond
- Keeping counties, tribes, other partners and key legislators apprised of all the information we have
- Preparing notices and announcements to send SNAP participants. If needed, we will issue notices to participants to let them know if their benefits being suspended.
- Hosting video conference calls with counties and tribes as well as our Congressional delegation
- Meeting with community stakeholders.

# Upcoming actions

- We expect that about 84% of MN SNAP cases are ready for early issuance
- About 32,000 SNAP cases (16%) need attention due to early issuance
  - DHS, county and tribal eligibility workers have been working through the weekend
- Ongoing communication to clients, communities stakeholders, counties and tribes.

- Minnesota Food Helpline – operated by Hunger Solutions Minnesota  
**1-888-711-1151** or [www.mnfoodhelpline.org](http://www.mnfoodhelpline.org)
  - Received over 4000 calls in 2018. Call volume up 43% from 2018 to 2019 for the period January 1-10
- Provides information such as program eligibility, application assistance, eligibility and pre-screening.
- Makes referrals to food programs and resources such as local food shelves, dining sites, Meals on Wheels, Fare For All, farmers markets, and more.

# Take Action – How to help

- Stay Informed!
  - DHS website <https://mn.gov/dhs/> has updates with latest information about program benefits and services.
  - MN Food HelpLine can help connect to local food resources 1-888-711-1151 or [www.mnfoodhelpline.org](http://www.mnfoodhelpline.org)
- Spread the Word!
  - Early SNAP benefit is not added or extra.
  - SNAP participants need to turn in any required paperwork to local county or tribal government office ASAP.
  - Help inform others. Talk about how the shutdown is impacting your community.
- Support Food Shelves!
  - Check in with your local food shelf to support their specific needs.
  - Publicize local food shelf hours, location, and services.
  - Pull in partners. Connect with other nonprofits, local businesses, faith groups, etc. to work together.

Thank you for joining us today!

Send comments, questions and shutdown stories to

[oeo.info@state.mn.us](mailto:oeo.info@state.mn.us)