

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program

Combating Senior Hunger

Through Outreach and SNAP Enrollment

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A Brief Overview of SNAP

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program is a federally funded program providing assistance to families, children and seniors who are food insecure purchase healthy food.

Problem

Senior SNAP participation amongst seniors remains low due to isolation, stigma, limited technological skills and the application process is too long and overwhelming for a majority of seniors.

Studies show that food insecure seniors are linked to chronic illnesses and a lower quality of life. The threat of hunger is more than three times higher among disabled seniors. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that number has increased.

Nevada ranks 10th in the nation for food insecure seniors. Low-income seniors cannot afford adequate food to sustain their physical health.

A majority of seniors suffer from chronic diabetes, cognitive issues, macular degeneration, severe arthritis, malnutrition, obesity and a history of stroke and heart attack along with other ailments.

Seniors often eat cheap and prepared meals including ramen noodles, which are extremely high in sodium and preservatives and contributes to the high numbers of seniors with high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Most seniors do not have enough money to purchase nutritious foods proven to increase their physical and mental health. Basic nutrition is essential to good health. Nevada seniors living in underserved and rural areas lack access to vital resources to sustain wellbeing.

Potential Roadblocks

- Lack of computer/phone
- Lack of information
- Lack of people that are equip with to assist with the application process
- Lack of accessibility

Who Needs SNAP?

- In Nevada, 18.8% of seniors are deemed food-insecure to some degree.
- In 2011, nearly one in five seniors (18.8%) age 60 and over, living in Nevada reported being marginally food insecure
- Since 2007, the number of seniors experiencing the threat of hunger has increased by 34%.

Effects of COVID

- Data suggests that the economic issues facing Americans has had more enduring effects relevant to food insecurity for older Americans.
- Federal funding for these programs is insufficient to meet the need, leaving many older Nevadans without the necessary nutrition to keep them healthy and active and involved in their communities.
- NSS services a majority of seniors that live alone. 12% of the population of Nevada are seniors and 25% of those seniors live alone.
- Seniors report limited social networks, family and friends have passed away and poor health limits them from leaving their homes.
- NSS senior staff participate in a bi-weekly Senior Hunger meeting to encourage policy change and collectively share ideas to reduce senior hunger in Nevada.
- While Nevada agencies are working hard to combat hunger, SNAP has low enrollment rates in 10% in metro areas, 8% in small towns and 7% rural areas.

Outreach Methods

- Distributing flyers in person to senior apartment complexes across Clark County
- Holding weekly information sessions with community partners to encourage use of SNAP
- Speak at conferences, town halls, support groups, coalition meetings and more to promote the
 - importance of SNAP among our senior population
 - Post on social media outlets
- Creating opportunities to be featured among statewide published works
- Reach out to Spanish speaking communities through our established

Goals

Nevada Senior Services goal is to utilize a person-centered approach to help low-income seniors recognize the benefits of signing up for SNAP and reduce the stigma and barriers in order to increase enrollment.

Assist each senior with developing a person-centered plan tailored to their needs and initiate the SNAP application process from beginning to end.

Conclusions

- Review and finalize application and establish a follow-up plan to ensure seniors receives their SNAP benefit. Through the utilization of outreach techniques Nevada Senior Services will be able to sign up 1,000 Nevada residents for SNAP before the year 2022.
- As the pandemic goes on, we will adapt our efforts to reach more NV residents.
- Through trial and error our SNAP outreach will focus on reaching out to underserved populations that have been difficult to reach in the past
- Through working together with rural community members we can help rural Nevadans get much needed SNAP benefits.