

IMPACTS OF SNAP IN ALASKA



What is SNAP?

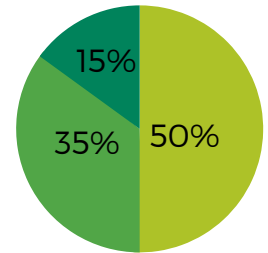
SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), formerly called food stamps, is a government program that helps people buy the food they need for healthy lives. It is the largest program fighting hunger in the United States, providing more food than the entire Feeding America food bank network. Households receive SNAP benefits on electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, which can be used only to purchase food at authorized retail locations. SNAP is a federal program administered by the Alaska Division of Public Assistance (DPA), housed at the Department of Health (DOH).

- SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded
- SNAP administration is a 50/50 split between the state and federal government
- SNAP is a federal program, but states have a lot of latitude in how it is administered.

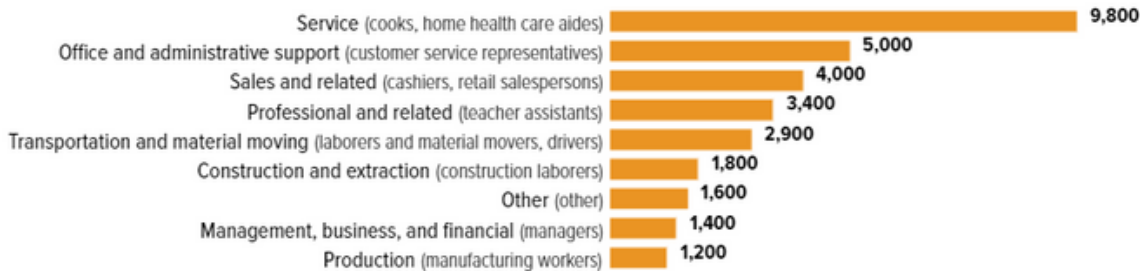
Who uses SNAP?

Thousands of Alaskans work in jobs with low wages, inconsistent schedules, and no benefits such as paid sick leave – all of which contribute to high turnover and spells of unemployment. SNAP allows them to stretch their budgets, using money for medical bills, utilities, and rent that would otherwise pay for food.

Most SNAP Participants in Alaska Have Incomes Below the Poverty Line



Alaskans Participating in the Food Stamp Program Most Commonly Work in Service, Office, and Sales Jobs



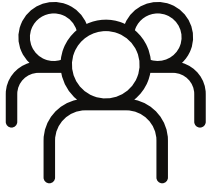
- Income at or below 50% of the poverty line
- Income between 51-100% of the poverty line
- Income above 100% of the poverty line

In fiscal year 2021, SNAP helped 82,900 (1 in 9) Alaskan residents, more than 67% of whom are in families with children. 30% of households receiving SNAP are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled and almost 42% have children.

Economic Benefits of SNAP

- SNAP acts as major economic engine for local stores and businesses, particularly in rural Alaska. Alaskans in highly food insecure areas depend on SNAP for food and their stores depend on SNAP for revenue.
- The United States Department of Agriculture reports that in Alaska, \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity.
- In 2020, economists estimate that \$171,091,672 was distributed through SNAP generating \$290,855,842 in economic activity in Alaska.

LEGISLATIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE SNAP IN ALASKA



- **Provide funding to hire and train staff and update and upgrade technology.** DPA is frequently understaffed and overworked. Many positions are currently vacant. The state database housing public assistance programs, including SNAP and Medicaid, is woefully outdated and requires manual entry of information. The DOH currently cites the antiquated system as the predominant obstacle to efficient SNAP administration. Adequate staffing and technology infrastructure upgrades are critically needed.

ADMINISTRATIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE SNAP IN ALASKA



- **Permanently stop unnecessarily verifying housing, utility, and dependent care costs.** DPA has temporarily paused this verification to expedite processing. Eliminating this verification reduces workload, creates better efficiency, and simplifies the process for clients.



- **Extend recertification periods to 24 months for elderly/disabled households and to 12 months for all other households.** Alaska is one of only four states that use six month recertification periods for all households. All SNAP recipients must currently submit paperwork and DPA must process the paperwork and recertify their eligibility every six months. The state is currently working to extend certification periods but it is IT dependent. Adequate funding would better support DPA's ability to implement this recommendation.



- **Reduce the number of interviews required and eliminate recertification interviews.** DPA has received a waiver from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) granting flexibility for recertification and has temporarily eliminated unnecessary interviews until September. DPA can reduce required interviews and allow clients to recertify using the paper form. This curtails administrative work and simplifies the process for clients.

- **Implement Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE).** Alaska is one of only six states that does not take advantage of this SNAP state option. BBCE will provide the State of Alaska with a no-cost avenue to increasing caseworker efficiency, while helping clients to become self-sufficient. With BBCE, the state could eliminate the resource limit and save administrative time used for verification in addition to reducing confusion from clients.
- **Extend one month of SNAP benefits to clients who are delayed.** The state cannot implement this until it clears the backlog and determines who is currently eligible. It would provide immediate relief to those with delayed applications.

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