

## **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Recommendations on SNAP Time Limits**

To protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics opposes any harmful proposals that would change the structure or reduce funding of SNAP. The Academy calls on Congress to ease the time limits on SNAP benefits and the Academy recommends evaluating the impact of work requirements on food insecurity. Additionally, the Academy calls on Congress to ensure that jobless adults are offered meaningful employment and training opportunities that are not funded through cuts to SNAP benefits.

### **What is the current state of play?**

Congress is considering deep cuts and negative changes to SNAP in the 2018 farm bill, including making it difficult for states to waive SNAP time limits in areas with high unemployment. Similarly, the president's Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposed making the SNAP time limit rule affect more people.

### **What is the current SNAP time limit?**

People ages 18 to 49 who are not disabled or living with children are already limited to three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year time period if not employed or in a work or training program for a minimum of 20 hours per week. States are not required to offer people affected by this rule with a work or training program slot. The time limit was created under the 1996 welfare law.<sup>1</sup> States have been able to set additional work requirements for more than 30 years.

### **How does the SNAP time limit impact food security?**

SNAP is our nation's largest and most far reaching anti-hunger program. SNAP helps put food on the table for more than 42 million low-income people each month, including workers who earn wages so low they cannot afford to purchase food, workers with unpredictable schedules and those in-between jobs.<sup>2</sup> Research shows SNAP is effective in preventing food insecurity, and it is linked with improved health outcomes and lower health care costs.<sup>3</sup> However, the time limit prevents people from accessing food assistance benefits after three months even if they want to work and are looking for a job but have not been able to find employment. The

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<sup>1</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. More Than 500,000 Adults Will Lose Snap Benefits in 2016 As Waivers Expire. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/more-than-500000-adults-will-lose-snap-benefits-in-2016-as-waivers-expire>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP Supports Workers in Every State. <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/snap-supports-workers-in-every-state>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP Is Linked with Improved Nutritional Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-nutritional-outcomes-and-lower-health-care>. Accessed March 2018.

restrictive time limit rule undermines the effectiveness of SNAP as a safety net;<sup>4</sup> removing food benefits does not help workers find a better job or find work faster.<sup>5</sup>

States are allowed to suspend the three-month time limit in areas with high and sustained unemployment. During the economic recession, many states qualified for the waiver and opted to waive the rule. As the economy improved, many states dropped the waiver resulting in an estimated 500,000 to 1 million people in 22 states losing their benefits.<sup>6</sup>

### **The position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics on food insecurity:**

It is the position of the Academy that systematic and sustained action is needed to achieve food and nutrition security in the United States. To achieve food security, effective interventions are needed, along with adequate funding for, and increased utilization of, food and nutrition assistance programs; inclusion of nutrition education in such programs; strategies to support individual and household economic stability; and research to measure impact on food insecurity- and health related outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is committed to improving the health of Americans by ensuring access to a nourishing, safe and affordable food supply. The dietetics practitioner and nutrition educators consider the health, safety, and welfare of the public at all times.<sup>8</sup> The Academy's guiding principle is our commitment to improving health for all, especially those most susceptible to and that experience food insecurity; that is the basis for our recommendations.<sup>9</sup>

### **Additional Academy recommendations to protect and strengthen SNAP include:<sup>10</sup>**

- Increasing the SNAP benefit level to prevent hunger and provide resources to help families make healthful food choices.

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<sup>4</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016? <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/who-are-the-low-income-childless-adults-facing-the-loss-of-snap-in-2016>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Center for American Progress. Work Requirement Proposals Would Kick Struggling Workers When They're Down. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2017/11/02/442052/work-requirement-proposals-kick-struggling-workers-theyre/>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. More Than 500,000 Adults Will Lose Snap Benefits in 2016 As Waivers Expire. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/more-than-500000-adults-will-lose-snap-benefits-in-2016-as-waivers-expire>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Food Insecurity in the United States. <https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/position-and-practice-papers/position-papers/food-insecurity-in-the-united-states>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Code of Ethics. [http://www.eatrightpro.org/~/\\_media/eatrightpro%20files/career/code%20of%20ethics/codeofethicsdieteticsresources.ashx](http://www.eatrightpro.org/~/_media/eatrightpro%20files/career/code%20of%20ethics/codeofethicsdieteticsresources.ashx). Accessed March 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Farm Bill recommendations. <https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/legislation/all-legislation/farm-bill>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>10</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Farm Bill. <https://www.eatrightpro.org/advocacy/legislation/all-legislation/farm-bill>. Accessed March 2018.

- Updating and strengthening standards for SNAP retailers that increase the availability of healthful foods by ensuring final regulations and guidance lead to enhanced retail offerings to promote and sell healthy foods.
- Ensuring adequate training and technical assistance are provided to assist transition to updated retail standards.
- Eliminating the requirement that basic allowance for housing for our military members be included in their income calculations to receive SNAP benefits.
- Encouraging coordination of efforts with all USDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention programs to assist retailers with strategies to improve healthier options and drive demand for these healthier options.
- Calling on Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture in continuing their progress with state agencies and all program implementing agencies to facilitate a network of shared resources and best practices, improved technical assistance and nutrition education leadership.