

A Guide to
Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program
Outreach
in Nebraska.



Nebraska Appleseed Center
for Law in the Public Interest



About Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest

Nebraska Appleseed is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law firm and advocacy organization that works for equal justice and full opportunity for all Nebraskans. Appleseed uses litigation, public policy reform, and community education to positively impact low-income families, immigrants, children in foster care, and access to health care.

Nebraska Appleseed is a part of the Appleseed network of independent, state-based, public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism, and policy expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implications. For more information, visit www.appleseednetwork.org.

Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
941 "O" St. Suite 920
Lincoln, NE 68508
www.neappleseed.org

Thank You

Nebraska Appleseed would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who assisted in the development of this guidebook. First, thanks to the ConAgra Foods Foundation for their generous support of this work. Second, thank you to the Food Research and Action Center for their ongoing support and technical assistance. Also, we would like to thank Kelly Dunlap with the Food Bank for the Heartland, Mariana de Schell with the Food Bank of Lincoln, Teri Chasten with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and many others. Finally, we would like to thank volunteer Ken Smith for his assistance in developing this guide.



Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. SNAP Overview	3
a. SNAP Basics	3
b. Benefits of the SNAP Program	4
c. Myths and Facts about SNAP	4
3. SNAP Outreach for Organizations	5
a. Need for Outreach	5
b. Barriers to Participation	5
c. Issues to Consider for Organizations	6
d. Outreach Options and Ideas	7
4. Understanding the Program	9
a. Basic Information about SNAP	9
b. Applying for SNAP	10
c. Qualifying for SNAP	11
d. Receiving SNAP	12
5. Helping Clients Apply for Benefits	13
a. Starting the Conversation with Clients	13
b. Information the May be Needed for Application	14
c. Understanding ACCESS Nebraska	16
d. SNAP Application: A Step by Step Guide	17
e. Resources for Assistance	21
f. Sample Cases	21
6. Learning about Public Benefits Programs	25
a. Overview of Public Benefits Programs	25
b. Summary of Public Benefits Programs	26
Appendices	30
a. Details about Different Types of Applicants	30
b. Details about Difficulties with the Process	31
d. Helpful Materials	31
c. Helpful Resources	32
d. References	33

1) Introduction

Welcome to the Nebraska volunteer guide to outreach for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps). In this simple guide, you will find tools and resources to help connect Nebraskans to public benefits, with a special focus on the SNAP program. SNAP is a federally funded program that offers food and nutrition assistance to eligible people.

In these difficult economic times, the demand for SNAP benefits in our state has increased steadily, and many people find themselves in a

daily struggle to put food on the table. People are in need of the benefits that SNAP provides, yet over a third of eligible Nebraskans are not participating in the program. This handbook can help you to share helpful information with people seeking food assistance.

This handbook is intended to: 1. Help you understand the SNAP program; 2. Provide you with information about how to connect people to the SNAP program; and 3. Serve as a resource and a guide to conducting outreach for SNAP and other public benefits.





2) SNAP Overview

This section provides an introduction to the SNAP program including program basics, benefits of the program, and myths and facts about SNAP.

This section covers: a. SNAP Basics; b. Benefits of the SNAP Program; and c. Myths and Facts about SNAP.

a) SNAP Basics

2a1) What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP (formerly called Food Stamps) provides eligible individuals with access to food and nutrition assistance. The use of SNAP benefits is restricted to the purchase of food. Alcohol, tobacco products, pet food, and all other non-food items are not able to be purchased through the program.

2a2) Who is eligible?

Eligible recipients generally include low income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities. (Households with income under 130% of the federal poverty limit.)

2a3) How is the program run?

Funding for SNAP benefits comes entirely from the federal government. State governments help to administer the program. People must apply, provide needed information, have their eligibility determined, and provide ongoing information about changes in their circumstances. Benefits are then provided monthly. Clients will usually contact the Department of Health and Human Services via a Customer Service Center, where a staff person will help with their case.

2a4) How do people apply?

Any person seeking to become a recipient must apply and be found eligible by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services based on income, family make-up, and other factors. People can apply using a paper application or on-line at www.accessnebraska.ne.gov or by calling the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-254-4202 or 1-800-383-4278.

2a5) How do people receive benefits?

To make purchasing easier, the SNAP program uses an automated system in which the user carries an EBT card (Electronic Benefits Transfer) and each purchase is deducted from an electronic account. Benefits are loaded on the card each month.

2a6) How do people use benefits?

SNAP benefits can be used to purchase food at any retailer that accepts SNAP benefits. Most grocery stores accept SNAP.

b) Benefits of the SNAP Program

SNAP helps not only the individuals receiving benefits directly, but also communities in which the recipients live and utilize the benefits. It is estimated that every \$1.00 of local SNAP spending generates approximately \$1.79 in local economic benefits by increasing the purchasing power of consumers at grocery stores and other

food retailers.¹ SNAP has far reaching benefits, including helping children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, taking pressure off of charitable food organizations, helping to provide food assistance to victims of disasters, helping families afford a more nutritious diet, and more.

c) SNAP Myths and Facts

A number of myths exist about the SNAP program. These myths are obstacles that stand between eligible potential participants and the

food benefits they need. Here is a list of common myths about the SNAP program and an explanation of the facts.

2c1) What are Myths and Facts about SNAP?

Myth	Fact
"The SNAP program is a welfare program."	The SNAP program is a nutrition assistance program designed to help individuals and families buy nutritious food when money is tight.
"Some people receive so little in SNAP benefits it's not worth the time to apply."	The minimum monthly benefit is \$16. The average monthly SNAP benefit per person in Nebraska is about \$121 per month. ²
"You cannot receive SNAP benefits if you have a job."	Individuals may work and still have income low enough to receive SNAP benefits, many households do so.
"Other people need SNAP benefits more than I do."	SNAP is an entitlement program, which means that everyone who applies and is determined to be eligible by the state/local eligibility worker will get SNAP benefits. One applicant will not "use up" benefits for someone else.
"The SNAP program is only for families with children."	A person's eligibility is based on his or her status as an individual. Individuals including elderly and disabled adults frequently qualify, as do single adults for shorter periods of time. Having a family will likely affect the amount of benefits received, but it is not a requirement to qualify.
"You cannot receive SNAP benefits if you have been denied in past attempts to apply."	There is no restriction on how many times you can apply for SNAP benefits. When an application is denied, clients have the right to ask why.
"People on SNAP abuse the program."	The SNAP program has many rules in place to prevent abuse. Nebraska has been recognized as one of the most accurate programs in the nation.



3) SNAP Outreach for Organizations

Outreach – educating possibly eligible nonparticipants about SNAP, their likely eligibility, and how to apply for benefits – is an important strategy for increasing access to the program. Organizations ranging from churches to schools can help people connect to SNAP. Findings suggest that a significant number of people who know about SNAP still do not complete an application.³ This suggests that outreach activi-

ties can positively impact the decision to participate by providing needed information about eligibility and how to apply.

This section covers: a. Need for Outreach; b. Barriers to Participation; c. Issues to Consider for Organizations; and d. Outreach Options and Ideas.

a) Need for Outreach

SNAP outreach is needed in Nebraska not only to address the problem of hunger, but also to increase the capacity of families and nonprofit organizations to succeed.

3a1) Hunger in Nebraska

- > One in eight Nebraskans struggles to afford enough food for an adequate, nutritious diet.⁴
- > One in six children in Nebraska is food insecure – meaning they don't always know where their next meal is coming from.⁵

3a2) Lack of Participation in SNAP

- > Only 63% of eligible Nebraskans participated in the SNAP program in 2008 and only 57% of eligible working poor families participated.⁶

b) Barriers to Participation

There are several factors that contribute to the underuse of SNAP. In order to more effectively promote SNAP, it is important to understand why increased outreach is necessary; why some individuals and families who are eligible for these benefits have not yet taken advantage of

3a3) Value for Participants and Nonprofit Organizations

- > Participants not only may gain access to food and resources to purchase a healthier diet, they may also learn about and gain access to other important assistance programs, like health care and child care.
- > Nonprofit organizations cannot always meet community needs. Linking people to the SNAP program can provide them with a consistent source of food and can free up resources for nonprofit organizations to address other community needs.

them. Here are some of the major barriers to SNAP participation:⁷

3b1) Lack of Awareness or Understanding:

- > People are simply unaware that the program exists, or unaware that they may be eligible to

b) Barriers to Participation (continued)

receive the benefits offered by the program.

This is particularly true for working families.

- > SNAP is a government program with many rules that can vary from state to state and year to year. Some people feel intimidated or confused by the application and eligibility determination process.

3b2) Costs or Difficulties Associated with the Application and Participation

- > Clients must commit time to the application process, provide verification materials, and frequently must drive to application sites.
- > Since the demographic served by the SNAP program is a lower-income demographic, it is often much more difficult for potential beneficiaries to begin the application process. Lack of access to computers, inability to use computers, and an inability to access HHS offices are all part of this issue.

3b3) Social Concerns

- > The social stigma that has been attached to SNAP can deter potential applicants.
- > Also, SNAP participation requires one to submit large amounts of very personal information to the government. This creates a sense of fear that oftentimes prevents one from applying in the first place, clients should know that their information will be kept confidential.
- > Sometimes, if documentation and immigration status are in question, clients feel uncomfortable. Client should know that state agencies are not required to report anything unless they "know" an individual is unlawfully present. A federal guidance clarifies that a state agency "knows" of unlawful presence only when that has been formally determined and confirmed by INS.

c) Issues to Consider for Organizations

SNAP outreach can take many forms. In this section, you will find a guide to help you figure out how your organization can most effectively engage in SNAP outreach. This determination starts by assessing the extent to which your organization wants to engage in SNAP outreach. Organizations can participate in activities ranging from simply spreading awareness about the program to helping clients apply. Robust outreach projects are currently coordinated by the Food Bank of Lincoln and the Food Bank of the Heartland in coordination with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Contacting these organizations will allow for greater coordination and efficiency in SNAP outreach. Below you will find contact information for these organizations, issues to consider, and ideas for SNAP outreach.

Lincoln: Mariana Muñoz de Schell
SNAP Outreach Coordinator
Food Bank of Lincoln
mschell@lincolnfoodbank.org\
1-888-789-2615

Omaha: Kelly Dunlap
SNAP Outreach Specialist
Food Bank for the Heartland
kdunlap@foodbankheartland.org
1-855-444-5556

3c1) Questions you may want to consider before you begin are:

Questions about Clients

- > How can we determine if our clients currently participate?
- > What type of assistance do our clients most need?
- > What approaches will be most appealing to our clientele?

c) *Issues to Consider for Organizations* (continued)

Questions about Logistics

- > Where should we place brochures and informational materials so that people will take them?
- > How can we promote SNAP without being invasive and with respect for individual privacy?
- > What are other organizations doing and how can we connect?

Questions about Resources

- > What are we currently doing to promote awareness regarding the SNAP program?
- > Do we have the ability/capacity to hold weekly/monthly/biannual SNAP workshops?
- > Do we have computers available for public use?
- > Do we have staff time to commit to client assistance?

d) *Outreach Options and Ideas for Organizations*

Below are a number of outreach activities for organizations new to SNAP outreach, or with modest resources to engage.⁸

3d1) Entry Level Outreach

Education and Outreach

- > Identify the barriers to SNAP benefits in your community
- > Utilize USDAs free outreach materials and toolkits (<http://snap.ntis.gov/>).
- > Network and communicate with other SNAP advocates, communicate challenges you see for your clients.
- > Show public support of the food banks conducting more advanced outreach activities.
- > Provide application assistance to clients.
- > Make paper applications available to your clients (a printable version is available at <https://dhhs-access-neb-apply.ne.gov/AccessNebraskaApplication/application/publik/ImpMsgDisplay.xhtml>).
- > Invite SNAP outreach workers to your site and/or events.

Funding

- > Consider applying for local grants to do SNAP outreach.
- > Look into national grants, such as those from the United States Department of Agriculture or Feeding America.

3d2) Moderate Outreach

In addition to the entry level outreach recommendations listed above, organizations engaged in moderate outreach efforts should consider the activities listed below.

Education and Outreach

- > Work with food banks serving your state or region to customize an outreach plan that includes specific outreach activities like those mentioned above.
- > Identify and target specific populations who may have specific barriers to SNAP access.
- > Translate materials to convey eligibility requirements to persons with limited English proficiency.
- > Disseminate SNAP information in locations where people potentially qualified for SNAP gather such as...
- > Host an outreach exhibit or booth at a community event.
- > Develop giveaways such as pens, magnets, coloring books, potholders, flying disks, and bags that include your message and contact information.
- > Distribute advertisements on radio, television, print and/or electronic media.

Application Assistance

- > Solicit donations of laptops and wireless cards for use in prescreening and application assistance.

d) Outreach Options and Ideas for Organizations (continued)

- > Provide a self-service prescreening (use the prescreening tool available at www.accessnebraska.ne.gov) and application station for clients where appropriate.
- > Conduct prescreening with staff providing assistance.

Funding

- > Apply for United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service outreach grants, Feeding America grants, and other community and foundation grants to develop a sustainable outreach program. (USDA: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/grants.htm> / Feeding America: <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger.aspx>)

3d3) Aggressive Outreach

In addition to the entry and moderate level outreach recommendations listed above, organizations engaged in aggressive outreach efforts should consider the activities listed here.

Education and Outreach

- > Solicit local office workers to work out of food bank agencies.
- > Offer trainings to partner agencies to increase the number of outreach workers across the state or region (train-the-trainer programs for SNAP outreach workers).
- > Solicit and identify liaisons for food banks, agency partners and government throughout your region to ease communication.
- > Develop a partner agency training plan and schedule.
- > Provide mentorship and guidance to other agencies serving in your community.

- > Conduct an outreach workshop with/for other community organizations.
- > Expand retailer-based outreach efforts and partner with the Food Marketing Institute (<http://www.fmi.org>) and local food retailers.
- > Expand outreach efforts to assist more clients.
- > Act as the main contact in your state or region with regard to the outreach plan with state, county and partner agencies.

Application Assistance

- > Dedicate staff and/or volunteers to conduct hands-on application assistance.
- > Provide assistance obtaining application verification documents.
- > Provide bilingual accommodation to assist persons with limited English proficiency during the application process.
- > Follow-up on applications with the county or state office on behalf of clients as needed or requested.
- > Track the number of materials distributed, the number of people contacted, the number of people prescreened, the number of applications submitted (develop a strategy to address reasons for denial), the annualized benefit amount, and the annual economic benefit to the local economy.
- > Make reminder phone calls to enrolled clients regarding their recertification responsibilities.

Funding

- > Make mini-grants to food banks or other agencies interested in conducting SNAP outreach.



4) Understanding the Program

The following information will help you to understand SNAP by answering common questions that applicants have about the program, including basic information, details about applying, information about qualifying for assistance,

and notes about receiving assistance.

This section covers: a. Basic Information about SNAP; b. Applying for SNAP; c. Qualifying for SNAP; and d. Receiving SNAP.

a) Basic Information about SNAP

4a1) What are SNAP benefits?

SNAP helps people buy food. The amount of benefits you get is based on your income. You do not have to get other public assistance to get SNAP.

4a2) Who can use SNAP?

You can get SNAP if you buy and cook food for yourself or your family. You do not have to have your own address; you can share a place with someone else. SNAP benefits are given to "households." A household can be one person or a group of people who buy food and make meals together. You are eligible for SNAP if you are doing 30 hours of a work activity each week (or you have an exemption from work requirements) and you meet income and asset tests.

3a3) What is the income limit? October 1, 2010 - September 30, 2011

Household Size, Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Standards (130% of Poverty Level)

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1,174.00
2	\$1,579.00
3	\$1,984.00
4	\$2,389.00
5	\$2,794.00
6	\$3,200.00
Each Addl.Member	plus \$406.00

Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Standards for Households Where Elderly Disabled are a Separate Household. (165% of Poverty Level)

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1,490.00
2	\$2,004.00
3	\$2,518.00
4	\$3,032.00
5	\$3,547.00
6	\$4,061.00
Each Addl.Member	plus \$515.00

b) Applying for SNAP

4b1) How can I get SNAP?

Fill out an application with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). You can get the application by calling 1-800-254-4202 or by stopping into your local HHS office. You may also apply on-line at www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov. If you do not have a computer, you can call DHHS to find a Community Based Partner location near you. If you need help filling out your application, you can fill out just the first page and turn it in to get started. After you hand in your application, you will need to do an interview to make sure the information on your application is correct. Typically, the interview is conducted over the phone. You may have a face to face interview if you request one.

4b2) What materials do I need?

When you are setting up your telephone or face to face interview, ask what documents you need to bring with you. Generally, you will want to bring:

- > Proof of identification for each person in your food stamp household;
- > Pay stubs or other proof of income;
- > Proof of your expenses, such as utility bills, rent or mortgage receipts, and proof of child care expenses;
- > Bank statements; and
- > Any other paperwork you are asked to provide.

4b3) How do I go about completing the interview?

If you apply on-line, you will receive a letter with a time to complete a telephone interview. If you prefer to complete the interview prior to

your scheduled date, you can call 1-800-383-4278 to complete the interview. If you choose the early interview option, your application will need to have been received in order for the interview to be completed. You may ask for a face to face interview if you prefer.

4b4) How much might I get?

The average amount is about \$121 per person per month.

Maximum SNAP Allotments

October 1, 2010 - September 30, 2011

Household Size	Maximum Allotment
1	\$200.00
2	\$367.00
3	\$526.00
4	\$668.00
5	\$793.00
6	\$952.00
Each Addl. Member	plus \$150.00

4b5) What if I need food right away?

You should call 211 to learn about help with food in your area. You may also be able to get faster "Expedited Service." You may be entitled to expedited service if your household has less than \$150 in gross monthly income and you do not have more than \$100 in cash or savings or if your household's monthly income and resources are less than your monthly rent or mortgage. If this is the case for you, ask your caseworker about how to get your SNAP more quickly. SNAP benefits are also sometimes available in cases of natural disasters.

c) Qualifying for SNAP

To qualify for SNAP, your income and assets must fall within certain limits.

4c1) What kinds of things count as income?

Income includes wages from a job and certain other work-related payments. Payments from assistance programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Assistance to the Aged Blind or Disabled (AABD), State Disability Program (SDP) or Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) also count. Retirement benefits and child support payments are also counted. Your gross (total) income is used.

Households in which all members receive or are approved to receive ADC, AABD, SDP or SSI payments are usually automatically or "categorically" eligible.

4c2) What if my income is irregular?

If your work hours or income change often, your caseworker can look at your last couple months of income. You should provide check stubs or other proof of your income for several months if you are able.

4c3) What is the asset limit? Will my house or car count?

In 2011, legislation passed to change asset limits. This means that households may be eligible if they have less than \$25,000 in liquid assets (such as money in the bank or in a savings account.) This change will go into effect on October 1, 2011. Asset limits do not include your home, household goods, or personal effects (such as jewelry).

d) Receiving SNAP

4d1) How do I receive SNAP?

The SNAP benefit amount is put in an electronic account, which can be accessed with an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card is a plastic card that works like a debit card and can be used at most grocery stores. You should be able to get your SNAP within 30 days of filing your application.

4d2) What can SNAP buy?

Since SNAP is a public benefits program, it does carry some restrictions as to what can and cannot be purchased. Among the items that CAN be purchased with your EBT card are:

- bread and cereals
- fruits and vegetables
- meats, fish, and poultry
- dairy products
- seeds and plants which produce food for the household to eat

Among items that CANNOT be purchased with your EBT card are:

- certain restricted types of foods and beverages
- food that will be eaten in the store
- prepared hot foods
- alcoholic beverages
- any nonfood items, such as
- pet food
- cigarettes or tobacco
- soaps
- paper products
- household supplies
- vitamins and medicines

4d3) What are some of my Rights in the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program?

Every person has the right to apply for SNAP benefits and turn in a SNAP application. You have the right to have your information be treated confidentially within the Department of Health and Human Services. You should

d) Receiving SNAP (continued)

receive notices and information in a timely manner. You also have the right to be treated in a respectful way.

4d4) What are some of my Responsibilities in the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program?

All SNAP recipient households must provide accurate and complete information, provide documentation when asked, cooperate with quality control and audit processes, provide the Department of Health and Human Service with Social Security Numbers for those who are getting SNAP, and follow reporting requirements. All Persons applying for SNAP must provide a Social Security Number (or non-work Social Security Number (SSN)) for everyone applying for SNAP in the household. If you are an eligible immigrant you can ask for a letter from DHHS indicating you are eligible and need a non-work SSN.

4d5) Do I need to work to get SNAP?

Possibly yes. Most household members age 16 through 59 must work 30 hours a week to get SNAP. But, some people are not required to meet work requirements; they include high school students of any age, people who are physically or mentally unfit to work, people taking care of a child under age six, and persons age 60 and older. There are certain other exceptions as well.

4d6) What if I am unemployed?

If you are someone who is required to work, you must sign a work registration form.

Depending on where you live you may choose to participate in the Employment and Training program. This program will provide job training and job search help. You will get information about this program if you are eligible participate.

4d7) What is recertification?

How do I do it?

You are able to get SNAP for a set period of time. After that you will not keep getting SNAP unless you "recertify," or re-confirm your information to show that you are still eligible for SNAP. DHHS must give you a notice to give you a chance to recertify. Recertification can be completed on-line at www.accessnebraska.ne.gov or by calling DHHS at 1-800-254-4202. If you also participate in the Aid to Dependent Children program, you may be eligible for transitional benefits as your circumstances change.

4d8) What are reporting requirements?

You also need to inform DHHS about certain changes (such as receiving a raise) as they happen. What you need to report and when depends on your household makeup. For example, some households must report only when household income rises above 130 percent of the poverty level (about \$1900 per month for a family of 3). Other households must report only when a member changes jobs, receives a different rate of pay, or has a change in his or her work status, i.e., from full time to part time or vice versa. DHHS must give you a notice telling you what changes you must report and when.



5) Helping Clients Apply for Benefits

This portion of the handbook seeks to simplify and streamline the process of sitting down with a potentially eligible client and quickly finding out if he or she is eligible for SNAP benefits (or any other public benefit), and how to then bring those benefits to the person in need.

This section covers: a. Starting the Conversation with Clients; b. Information that May be Needed for Application; c. Understanding ACCESS Nebraska; d. SNAP Application: A Step by Step Guide; e. Resources for Assistance; and f. Sample Cases.

a) Initiating the SNAP Conversation

One of the hardest aspects of SNAP outreach tends to be initiating the conversation about SNAP with those who may be eligible for but not receiving SNAP benefits. This is due, in large part, to the fact the conversation hinges on the sharing of personal information, such as income level and Social Security Number. Here are some tips to help you begin conversations about SNAP:

5a1) Tips for Talking with Clients

- > It is good to be direct, since often times the conversation time is very limited. Generally a good starting point is to make sure the client knows you are trying to help him or her.
- > "Are you currently receiving food stamp (SNAP) benefits?" is a good initial question to ask.
- > If the answer is no, a good follow-up question is "have you ever looked to see if you qualify?"
- > General note: often, people will prefer to apply over the phone, rather than engage in the application discussion in a public place, due to the social stigma and the personal nature of the information that needs to be provided. If this is the case, simply make sure the client knows who to call, and what will be asked of them.
- > Sometimes, it is easier for a client to accept written information. Be sure to share brochures and handouts with clients who can then learn about the program and apply on their own if they choose.
- > Remember, people frequently need to hear about programs multiple times in multiple ways. Put up posters, share materials, make announcements at food distribution events, and ask people one on one if they would like to apply.
- > When you complete an application with a client, ask him or her what made them apply; this will help you to understand how to motive other clients to apply.
- > Encourage clients to participate in SNAP outreach efforts, sometimes people are hesitant to work with a staff member, but can be encouraged by a friend or family member.

b) Information that May be Needed for a SNAP Application

You may want to share the list of information that may be needed for a SNAP application with your clients. For all of the items below, applicants should answer for themselves and everyone else in their household. A "household" includes everyone who purchases and eats meals together (your household may not

include everyone living at your residence – for example, roommates may not necessarily purchase food together). Parent(s) and their child(ren) who are age 21 and younger and live together must be considered in the same "household." Please note that asset limit rules are scheduled to change on October 1, 2011.

5b1) Information that May be Needed to Apply

Types of Information that May Be Requested		Information You May Need:	
Household	Identity for yourself and everyone in your household (including those who are not applying for benefits). Including parent(s) (who live outside of the home) of children in the household.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name • date of birth • social security # • immigration status & alien # 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	For each student in the household (including grade school, high school, GED, home school, technical school or college)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school name and address • grade/class attending 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	For each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash • Checking Account • Savings Account • Child's Accounts • Real Estate/ Real Property/ Farmland • Trusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Insurance • Burial Funds/Trusts • Burial Spaces • Nursing Home Account • ReliaCard Account • State Debit Account 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 401K • Annuities • Certificates of Deposits • Crops/Livestock • IRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keogh • Machinery • Savings Bonds • Stocks/Investments • Other resources 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	For each licensed or unlicensed vehicle (only when a household member's name appears on the title)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • type, model, year, and value • amount owed on vehicle 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Earned Income	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employer's name, address, and telephone • monthly gross income (before taxes) • # of hours worked per week • how often pay is received 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tips, bonuses, incentive pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of hours worked per week • how often pay is received 	<input type="checkbox"/>

b) Information that May be Needed for a SNAP Application
(continued)

5b1) Information that May be Needed to Apply (continued)

Types of Information that May Be Requested		Information You May Need:		
Other Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSI • SS • Pension/Retirement • Veterans Benefits • Cash Assistance Payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers Compensation • Unemployment Compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount • how often received 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Child Support/Alimony		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • county court order # • amount • how often received 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	For each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annuities • Civil service • claims/Disability • Contributions • Farm Income • Gifts/Money from Relatives or Friends • Insurance/Accident Settlement • Interest/Dividend • Life Estates • Military Allotment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native American Benefits • Partnerships/Corporations • Prizes/ Awards/ Winnings/ Lottery • Railroad Retirement • Rental Income • Striker Income • Trusts/Inheritances • Graduate Assistantships, Fellowship, or Stipend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monthly amount 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing and Utilities	If you pay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent • Mortgage • 2nd Mortgage • Lot rent • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property taxes on home (if not included in mortgage) • Homeowners Insurance • Condominium/ Association fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount currently billed • who pays • how often billed • name and phone number of landlord 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heating and Cooling Suppliers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name and address • account number 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If you have had assistance in paying for heating and/or cooling bills (in last 12 months)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIHEAP or other agency? • name & address of where you lived when receiving this assistance 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Expenses	If you or anyone in your household: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pays child support 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • court order # • state and county issues • amount ordered • amount paid 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is billed for child care or dependent care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name and address of care provider • amount billed • how often billed 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Owes medical bills (from the past 3 months)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • month billed 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Has Medicare		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicare claim number 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Has Medical insurance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy holder • name & address of insurance company • policy/group number • premium paid 	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) Understanding ACCESS Nebraska

5c1) The ACCESS Nebraska System

ACCESS Nebraska is a way to apply for and learn about public benefits (such as food and health care assistance) online. On ACCESS Nebraska's website (<http://accessnebraska.ne.gov>), you can learn about public benefits, see if you might be eligible, apply for benefits, and report important changes in your life. ACCESS Nebraska uses Customer Service Centers, Local Offices, and Community Partners.

- > Local Offices have kiosks or "stations" where you may fill out an application. You may also drop off proof of your bills, income, and other information at local offices.
- > Community Partners are community organizations like libraries, shelters, food banks, or social service offices, where you can access a computer to apply for benefits. For example, some partners have computers that anyone can use. Other partners may be able to help with applications. Each community partner location may provide different services. You can find Community Partner locations by calling the Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-254-4202 or looking on-line here: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/ACCESSNebraska/CommunityPartners/ACCESSNE/PartnersGrid.aspx>
- > Customer Service Centers provide information about benefit programs, do eligibility interviews, handle customer concerns, and process changes. Customer Service Centers will be open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

5c2) How it works

You do not have to apply online or by phone. You can still fill out a paper application. You can request one by calling 1-800-254-4202, 1-800-343-7278, or print one here: <https://dhhs-access-nebmenu.ne.gov/start/?tl=en>

However, you can apply on-line for assistance with health care, food, basic needs for your family, home energy bills, and child care. You

can apply for the following programs:

- > Medicaid- Health care for people who are elderly, disabled, or parents and children in low-income families.
- > Kid's Connection- Health care program for children 18 and younger.
- > Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD)
- > Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) - Benefits for buying food.
- > Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) - Cash assistance to help with basic needs.
- > Child Care Subsidy- Help with child care expenses for children under age 12 and children with special needs up to age 19.
- > Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) - Help with heating or cooling expenses.

5c3) Some helpful hints about applying on-line are:

- > You will be asked to create a user identification name and a password. You should write them down. Keep them in a safe place so no one else can access your application. If you need to get back into your application, you must enter the exact user identification name and password.
- > ACCESSNebraska allows three attempts to log in. If the computer locks you out, you must start a new application. If you forget your user ID or password, you have to start a new application.
- > There are no "back" (previous screen) buttons on the application.
- > Make sure to select ALL benefit programs you want to apply for.
- > You can click the "help" button at any time if you don't know how to answer a question. The "help" button can also help you with moving from screen to screen.

5c4) Next Steps

After you submit your application, someone from the Department of Health and Human Services will contact you on the phone and/or in a letter

c) Understanding ACCESS Nebraska (continued)

after your application is received. You may need to do an interview on the phone about your eligibility for assistance. You may request a face-to-face interview. It should take about 45 days to receive Medicaid and 30 days for SNAP.

If you want to check on the status of your ben-

efits (including applications and recertifications), you can call the Automated Voice Response system toll free at 1-800-383-4278. Information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also check your benefits online using a DHHS issued PIN number and the user ID and password you created when applying.

d) SNAP Application: A Step by Step Guide⁹

STEP 1) Complete Pre-screening (optional):

You can use the pre-screening tool to determine if you may be eligible for SNAP benefits before beginning the application process.

Go to: ACCESSNebraska >
www.accessnebraska.ne.gov.

You may need to look up the amounts of your earned (jobs/self-employment) and unearned (SSI, social security, child support, unemployment comp., etc.) income, rent or mortgage, utility bills, day care expenses, child support payments, and recent medical bills (if you are 60 or older or disabled).

Click: ENTER in English

Click: Do I Qualify?

Complete the pre-screening tool. If the results indicate that you may be eligible for SNAP benefits, continue onto Step 2. If the results do not recommend that you apply for SNAP, but you believe you will qualify, you still have the right to apply.

STEP 2) Submit Application:

Complete an online application that you can submit electronically. (Online applications are recommended over paper applications – they may be processed more quickly than paper applications, won't get lost in the mail, and provide a confirmation number.)

If you just completed the pre-screening tool, simply click Apply Now.

OR Go to: ACCESS Nebraska >

www.accessnebraska.ne.gov.

Click: ENTER in English

Click: Apply

Follow the instructions and fill out the application as completely as possible.

The only information absolutely necessary to submit the application is your name, address, the benefits for which you wish to apply, and a 'signature' on the last page of the application. This information must be submitted to trigger the 30 day time limit that the state has to determine eligibility. However, the more thoroughly you complete the application ahead of time, the quicker the interview process will go. For a list of helpful information to have when filling out the application, see 'Information You May Need for a SNAP Application.'

Make sure to hit the 'Submit' button on the last page of the application.

Save the confirmation number from the submitted online application. This may be needed at a later date to locate your application.

OR, Complete a paper application. Either: Pick up an application at your local Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services office.

For a list of DHHS offices, go to www.dhhs.ne.gov/map/mapindex.htm. Or call the DHHS Helpline at 800-254-4202. Call your local DHHS office and request an application be mailed to you, OR Print an application at ACCESSNebraska > www.accessnebraska.ne.gov

d) SNAP Application: A Step by Step Guide ⁹ (continued)

Click: ENTER in English
 Click: Printable Application
 Follow the instructions and fill out the applica-

tion as completely as possible.
 Then mail, fax, or personally deliver the applica-
 tion to your local DHHS office.

Instructions, Clarifications, and Definitions from Selected Questions in the Application

Application Questions	Special Instructions
Start	
Program Selection:	Find out which programs you may qualify for with the prescreening tool on ACCESSNebraska (it doesn't hurt to apply for as many programs as you think you may be eligible for – you can withdraw your application at a later date).
Applicant Information: Where do you live?	Board & Room = you are receiving meals and lodging for one price
Do you need us to provide you with an interpreter?	For the interview.
Emergency Contact	Contacted if state can't reach you at your telephone number.
Household Information	
Add another person: Are there other persons living in your household?	Include EVERYONE who lives at your address, even if you don't buy or prepare your food together. Include people who are not US citizens or others who do not wish to apply but are living at the same residence.
Noncitizen I am a qualified alien under the Federal Immigration and Nationality Act.	Generally anyone who has a 'qualified' or valid immigrant status will have an I-94 card. For more information on who is defined as a 'qualified alien,' refer to section 3-001.03C in the Nebraska SNAPManual.
Alien number and Immigration status	Can be found on the I-94 card.
Meals Select all persons who eat most of their meals with you or share your food.	For each person selected as "yes" – his/her resources will be considered in eligibility determinations selected as "no" – not counted as a member of the "household" as defined for SNAP.
School Is anyone in the household attending school?	Including grade school, high school, GED, technical school, or college.
Program Disqualification Have you or anyone in your household ever been disqualified in one of the following programs: (Example of disqualification: intentionally providing false information, etc.)?	Not including if you have been denied benefits for which you were not eligible (i.e. over income limits).
Migrant Worker Information Are you or is anyone in your household a migrant or seasonal farm worker?	Migrant or seasonal farm worker = A person who travels away from the place s/he calls home on an overnight basis in order to seek or perform agricultural work at one or more locations. A person who works on a farm or ranch on a seasonal basis when the work is generally within commuting distance of his/her home. A person who works on his/her own or leased or rented farmland on a year-round or seasonal basis is neither a seasonal farm worker nor a migrant.

Instructions, Clarifications, and Definitions from Selected Questions in the Application (cont.)

Application Questions	Special Instructions
Resources	
	Must include resources of everyone in the "household" = those who eat together or share food (including children). Include all resources which are in the name of any household member, even if they cannot access them.
Vehicles Does your name or anyone in the household's name appear on the title of any licensed or unlicensed vehicles?	Include unlicensed vehicles, vehicles licensed in other states, vehicles which are "junked" out and/or wrecked, and vehicles not in your possession
Other Resources Have you or has anyone in your household sold, traded or given away anything of substantial value within the past 3 months?	Substantial value = \$500 or more
Income Job/Self Employment Have you or has anyone in your household left a job or reduced work hours in the last 60 days?	Including jobs left voluntarily OR involuntarily.
Is anyone in your household self employed? Self-employment could be farming, odd jobs, providing child care, housekeeping, etc.	Including seasonal income or if no income at the present time.
Have you or has anyone in your household applied for or are you or is anyone in your household receiving any of the following income? SSI	SSI = Supplemental Security income: monthly payments to people who have low income and few resources and are age 65 or older, blind, or disabled. SSI provides additional income when Social Security is not sufficient (i.e. you have not worked enough years, or when a parent or spouse passes away).
Expenses	
Is anyone in your household billed for the following expenses?	Bills do not have to be in your name if you can show you are responsible for paying them
Home Owners Insurance	Not including renter's insurance.
Finish Up	
Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your household's situation?	If you do not want HHS to contact your employer, landlord, doctor, etc. - make note of it here. Also note which days/hours you are most likely to be available for the interview.

STEP 3) Complete Interview:

interview. If the worker is unable to reach you by telephone you will be sent a letter with an interview date and time. If you wish to complete your interview earlier than the time assigned, you may call 1-800-383-4278 to ask about the possibility of an earlier interview. During your interview, the worker will gather any additional information that is needed to determine your eligibility. The worker will then give you a list of necessary documents that you must send in to show proof of residency, income, and expenses.

STEP 4) Submit Documents:

Once you have collected all of the necessary documents that your worker has requested, mail, fax, or deliver them to the DHHS office immediately so that your application can be processed. In the near future, you will also be able to upload documents to the ACCESSNebraska website.

When sending in requested documents:

- > Send all documents in one packet.
- > Send copies, do not send originals. Documents that you mail in are not guaranteed to be mailed back to you.

d) SNAP Application: A Step by Step Guide ⁹ (continued)

- > Label each document with your name and your master case # (found on the top right-hand corner of each DHHS document sent directly to you, if you have one). It is also helpful to include your social security number and/or your birth date.

What to expect next:

- > Timeline: From the day you submit your application, Nebraska DHHS has 30 days to complete an interview with you and determine your eligibility.
- > If you have less than \$100 in cash and less than \$150 in monthly income, or if your housing expenses (rent and/or mortgage plus utilities) exceed your monthly income DHHS is required to review your application and make a decision within 7 days. (As long as you complete your interview within this time period.)

STEP 5) Respond to Approval or Denial

If you are approved:

The benefit amount is placed in an electronic account which can be accessed with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT cards are accepted by most supermarkets and grocery stores. Some "Meals on Wheels" services may accept them and recipients over age 60 and their spouses may be able to use them to pay for congregate meals.

What you can buy: SNAP benefits can only be used to buy food and for plants and seeds to grow food for your household to eat. Benefits cannot be used to buy alcoholic beverages, pet food, tobacco, paper products, or other nonfood items. For more information on what you can buy and how to use your SNAP benefits, go to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/eligible.htm.

If you are denied benefits (or if your benefits are reduced or terminated):

If you do not qualify but are still struggling to

purchase food, call the United Way of the Midlands by dialing 2-1-1. They will direct you to a food pantry in your area.

If you feel you were wrongly denied, you have a right to appeal. Contact your caseworker or go to your local DHHS office to request an appeal form. If you were previously receiving benefits, the form must be completed and returned to DHHS within ten days of the notice of action denying you future benefits, in order for your benefits to continue. Be aware that if you lose your appeal, you are responsible to pay back any benefits received while awaiting the appeal decision.

You can also choose not to have your benefits continue during the appeal process. You will receive a letter in the mail stating the date of your hearing (usually about 3 to 4 weeks after your appeal is submitted). At the hearing you will have a chance to present your case. In approximately 3 weeks following the hearing, the legal division will determine if you will receive, or continue to receive, benefits.

If you experience difficulties with the appeal process, you may contact the Food Bank for the Heartland or one of the legal resources listed below.

STEP 6) Recertifying for SNAP

You must recertify for SNAP to keep receiving benefits. The Notice of Action alerting you of your approved application will state how often and when you must report changes and recertify (typically every 12 months, or every 2 years if you are a senior). Within a few weeks of your recertification date, you will receive a reminder in the mail informing you of how and when to recertify. You can recertify online at www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov.

e) Resources for Assistance

For questions about SNAP and application assistance, contact:

Lincoln: Mariana Muñoz de Schell
SNAP Outreach Coordinator
Food Bank of Lincoln
mschell@lincolnfoodbank.org
1-888-789-2615

Omaha: Kelly Dunlap
SNAP Outreach Specialist
Food Bank for the Heartland
kdunlap@foodbankheartland.org
1-855-444-5556

For questions regarding a submitted application, contact your caseworker. If you don't know who your assigned caseworker is, contact your local DHHS office:

Local office contact information can be found at:
<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/map/mapindex.htm>
Or call the DHHS Helpline: 800-254-4202

For legal assistance, contact:

Legal Aid of Nebraska
AccessLine®
877-250-2016

Nebraska Appleseed
Intake Line
1-800-845-3746, ext. 105

f) Sample Cases

This portion of the handbook provides several sample cases in which different families or individuals are living in an array of different circumstances, and applying to receive SNAP benefits. These are examples of households that may apply. Read the sample cases and think about factors relating to their eligibility. While all interested parties have a right to apply and should be encouraged to do so, it is helpful to understand the factors that relate to eligibility and the reasons why certain questions might be asked.

5e1) Eligibility Factors

- > Income: The household must fall within income limits including both earned and unearned income in order to qualify.
- > Household Make-up: The household make-up, including the number of household members and the presence of members who are elderly or disabled, impacts eligibility.
- > Assets: The household must not have cash on hand or savings over \$25,000.
- > Immigration status: Only qualified immigrants, such as immigrants with humanitarian status (refugees and asylees for example) may receive public benefits (see appendix b:

Details for different types of applicants).

- > Criminal history: Certain crimes, including drug felonies or a history of abuse of public benefits programs may exclude an individual from benefits.
- > Emergency situations: Households in emergency situations may have special rights.
- > Cooperation with child support: Most households must cooperate with child support enforcement to be eligible, though there are exceptions for individuals with experiences with domestic violence.
- > Participation in work activities: Household members who are able must participate or be willing to participate in work activities.

5e2) Example 1: Household with an elderly or disabled member

THE SMITHS

Ms. Smith lives with her daughter Jane, age seven, and her Uncle Walter, age sixty. All three purchase and prepare food together and are U.S. citizens. Uncle Walter is physically disabled. Ms. Smith earns \$1,200 per month in her job as a Certified Nurses Assistant. Uncle Walter receives \$200 in SSI (Supplemental Security Income). Uncle Walter has a bank account with a balance

f) Sample Cases (continued)

of \$500. Ms. Smith owns a car with a fair market value of \$7,000, which she uses to take Walter to the doctor. She also has a bank account with a balance of \$2,000. Ms. Smith pays \$700 in rent including utilities. She also pays \$100 per month for someone to watch Jane after school. Uncle Walter has \$50 per month in non-reimbursed medical expenses.

The Smiths apply for the SNAP program, they want to receive SNAP benefits as one household.

Is all the income in the household countable income?

Yes, both the earned income (\$1,200 from Ms. Smith's job) and the unearned income (\$200 in SSI) count towards the gross income limit. However, they are under the limit of \$1,984 for a household of three with income of \$1,400 per month.

Are all three household members eligible?

Yes, they all live in a low-income household and are U.S. citizens.

Is the household over the asset limit?

No. The asset limit will be raised to \$25,000 in liquid assets on October 1, 2011. Until then, they are still under the asset limit for a household with an elderly or disabled member which is \$3,000.

The Smiths are likely to be an eligible household.

5e3) Example 2: Household with legal immigrants

THE LEES AND HUANGS

Mr. and Mrs. Lee are legal immigrants asylees who entered the United States in January 2005. Mr. Lee is 30 years old and Mrs. Lee is 28 years old. They currently have permanent resident status. The Lees have a baby named Kim, who

was born just two weeks ago. The three Lees live with Mrs. Lee's sister, Ms. Huang and her son Suser who are both naturalized citizens. The household buys food and eats separately – Ms. Huang and Suser buy food and eat together, as do Mr. and Ms. Lee and baby Kim.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee and Ms. Huang have been working steadily in the United States since they arrived. Mr. Lee earns \$1,300 a month before taxes. Mrs. Lee is now staying home with the baby. Ms. Huang earns \$1,200 a month. They have no other income. The only assets they have are a college fund started in Baby Kim's name with \$500 and a checking account with \$300.

The Lees and Huangs apply for the SNAP program, they want to receive SNAP benefits as one household.

Is all the income in the household countable income?

Yes, both the \$1,300 from Mr. Lee's job and \$1,200 from Ms. Huang's job count towards the gross income limit. However, they are under the limit of \$2,794 for a household of five with income of \$2,500 per month.

Are all five household members eligible?

Yes, they all live in a low-income family and are in the U.S. legally. The Lees have been in the United States for five years prior to the implementation of new laws about legal permanent residents and qualify. Ms. Huang and Mr. Lee work and are eligible; Ms. Lee is exempt from work requirements because she has a newborn baby.

Is the household over the asset limit?

No. The asset limit will be raised to \$25,000 in liquid assets on October 1, 2011. Even so, they are under the asset limit of \$2,000 for SNAP.

The Lees and Huangs are likely to be an eligible household.

f) Sample Cases (continued)

5e4) Example 3: Household in crisis

THE CONWAYS

Stacy and Matt Conway have two sons, Jason who is six and Andrew who is eleven. They lost all of their belongings when their apartment building burned down three weeks ago and they did not have rental insurance. Stacy is a stay-at-home mom and Matt had a job as a painter. He had a job painting water towers but he lost it because he could not travel on the next job after the fire. They have been staying in the basement of Stacy's mom's house. They have spent down their savings and they are running out of money. They only have a few dollars left in their checking account and have been relying on credit cards.

The Conways apply for SNAP as a separate household from Stacy's mother.

Is all the income in the household countable income?

The household does not have any income.

Are all the household members eligible?

Yes, this is a low-income household where all members were born in the U.S.

Is the household over the asset limit?

No, the household has no savings and very little cash on hand.

The Conways are likely to be eligible for "Expedited SNAP" because they are in a financial crisis situation, they have no income and less than \$100 in cash. They are likely to be eligible for benefits within 7 days.



6) Learning about Public Benefits Programs

In addition to SNAP, people can receive other kinds of assistance from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. This section provides basic information about other public benefits programs.

This section covers: a. Overview of Public Benefits Programs; and b. Summary of Public Benefits Programs.

a) Overview of Public Benefits Programs

The State of Nebraska offers many programs that help families with child care, food, and other expenses. Many different kinds of families qualify for these programs.

6a1) Public Benefits Programs

SNAP is a program that helps people buy food. The food stamp amount is placed on an EBT card (like a debit card) that can be used at most grocery stores. Eligibility is based on household income.

THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) helps people pay for heating and cooling costs. It can also help cover the costs of making your house more energy efficient. Eligibility is based on household income.

MEDICAID is a program that provides health care to people who are elderly, disabled, or parents and children in low-income families. The Medicaid program pays for most medical services.

KID'S CONNECTION is a health care program for children under the age of 18. Eligibility is based on household income.

AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN (ADC) provides cash assistance to help families care for their basic needs. In some cases this program can also help people to find jobs or get other kinds of help. Single parents, two-parent households, grandparent households, and other family types can qualify. Many adults must meet a work requirement in a program called "Employment First" in order to get ADC.

THE CHILD CARE SUBSIDY program helps parents cover child care expenses for children under the age of 12 and children with special needs up to the age of 19. Parents are allowed to choose the provider as long as the provider is licensed or meets other standards. Eligibility is based on family income and a specific 'need for service,' for example work or school. Parents participating in the ADC "Employment First" program are automatically eligible.

(AABD) provides financial aid and medical assistance to people in need who are 65 and older or who are under age 65 and blind or disabled according to Social Security program definitions. To be eligible, an individual or household must have monthly income and resources less than the program's guidelines. If determined eligible, the individual is also eligible for

a) Overview of Public Benefits Programs *(continued)*

medical coverage.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM (RRP) helps refugees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, asylees, and other beneficiaries to establish a new life and economic self-sufficiency.

SPECIAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC): provides nutritious foods to pregnant women and families with young children.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE: Emergency Assistance helps with money and/or services for needy children and other household members when there's an emergency situation. The program helps when the situation is threatening to the health or well-being of an eligible child and family.

Eligibility is based on many factors. If people are interested in these programs, they should apply.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs

General Guidelines: In general, people must cooperate with child support enforcement and must abide by program guidelines or be subject to removal of benefits. Special rules for people facing domestic violence or in emergency situations apply.

Below you will find a summary of the public benefits programs addressed in the ACCESS

Nebraska Application including SNAP, Medicaid, Kid's Connection, Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled, Refugee Resettlement Program, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Child Care Assistance, Aid to Dependent Children, Emergency Assistance, and the Special Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

6b1) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) provides food assistance. http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/fia/fstamps.htm	Families, the elderly, people with disabilities. In limited cases, able bodied adults without dependents may qualify for a limited period of time.	Monthly Income Limit: 130% of the Federal Poverty Line 1 - \$1,174 / 2 - \$1,579 / 3 - \$1,984 / 4 - \$2,389	\$25,000 liquid asset limit. Homes, vehicles, personal effects, and other qualifying assets are allowable.	Clients receive an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card, which is loaded with benefits each month. People can purchase food at retailers that accept SNAP.	Clients may purchase non-prepared food at food retailers that accept SNAP. Benefit amounts are based on family expenses, income, size, and make up.	Benefit levels can be impacted by certain deductions, such as child care or medical expenses.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs (continued)

6b2) Medicaid

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Medicaid: provides medical assistance to providers for approved services. http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/med/medindex.htm	Nebraska Medicaid is available to certain low income persons including persons who are aged, blind, disabled, children, parents, and pregnant women.	Varies. ADC recipients are eligible to receive Medicaid, as are recipients transitioning off of ADC. People with disabilities who receive Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled are eligible if they meet certain income requirements. Pregnant women earning under 185% of the Federal Poverty Line are eligible and children born to Medicaid eligible mothers are eligible for 12 months as long as the child remains with the mother.	\$4,000 for one person, \$6,000 for two or more. Homes, one vehicle, personal effects, and other qualifying assets are allowable.	Participants receive a Medicaid card that can be used at health care providers that accept Medicaid. Providers are paid directly for approved services.	Nebraska Medicaid covers many medically necessary services from health providers who participate in the Nebraska Medicaid program. Services such as hospital and doctor visits, hearing and vision services, and others are available.	Some specialized services, such as mental health services, are available for children and adolescents. http://www.hs.state.ne.us/med/medprog.htm . Alternative options are also available for people with disabilities. Emergency services, such as child birth, are covered if applied for, even if the patient did not previously have Medicaid and/or is an immigrant.

6b3) Kid's Connection

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Kid's Connection: provides medical assistance to providers for approved services for children under 18. http://dhhs.ne.gov/med/kidsconx.htm	Children age 18 and under.	Monthly Income Limit: 200% of the Federal Poverty Line 1- \$1,806 / 2 - \$2,430 / 3 - \$3,052 / 4 - \$3,676	There is no resource test.	Participants receive a card that can be used at health care providers that accept Medicaid. Providers are paid directly for approved services.	Kid's Connection provides well care for children, such as check ups and immunizations, as well as medical care for illness and injury. Specialty services for children with chronic health conditions, disabilities, and mental health concerns are available.	Deductions for child care are considered when determining eligibility.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs (continued)

6b4) Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/hcs/programs/aabd.htm	Provides financial aid and medical assistance to persons in need who are age 65 and older, or who are age 64 and younger and blind or disabled according to Social Security program definitions.	Monthly income limit: 1/\$398, 2/\$653, 3/\$807, 4/\$966	Asset limit for 1 person: \$2,000 / Asset limit for 2 people: \$3,000	Clients partner with a Service Coordinator or a Social Services worker to get the services s/he needs. They will assess the client's needs and determine eligibility for programs and services.	Services provided help people who are aged or have disabilities to meet their needs, such as chore services and respite care.	Children with disabilities are eligible.

6b5) Refugee Resettlement Program

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Refugee Resettlement Program helps refugees resettle in Nebraska http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/refugees/	Eligible populations to receive services through the RRP:Refuges, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, Amerasians, Victims of Severe Forms of Trafficking.	Participants must be low income. Contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for details. 1 (402) 471-3121	Participants must be low-income. Contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for details. 1 (402) 471-3121.	Refugee Social Services are provided or contracted for by the State and are designated to meet resettlement needs of refugees such as employability services, English language training, and case management. These services are made available for the first (5) years after arrival in the United States. Contracted agencies in Nebraska are: Catholic Social Services, Lutheran Refugee Services, and Southern Sudan Community Association	Refugee Cash Assistance provided to refugees who are ineligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Old Age Assistance (OAA), Aid to the Blind (AB), Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled (APTD), Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Refugee Medical Assistance - (a) Medical assistance provided under section 412(e) of the Refugee Act to refugees who are ineligible for the Medicaid program; and (b) services provided for medical screenings.	Newly arrived refugees are eligible for all public assistance programs offered by the Office of Economic & Family Support. If refugees are determined ineligible for public assistance programs, eligibility will be determined for the following funds, which are made available for the first eight (8) months after arrival in the United States.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs (continued)

6b6) Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: provides heating and cooling assistance. http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/financial/energy.htm	Families, the elderly, people with disabilities.	Annual Income Limits: 1 - \$12,570 / 2 - \$16,913 / 3 - \$21,242 / 4 - \$25,585	The resource limit is \$5,000. Some resources, like your home, one car, and personal belongings are not counted.	In most instances the LIHEAP payment will be sent to the utility providers.	Grant amounts are based on your income, type of residence, and the type of fuel used. The minimum LIHEAP payment per fuel type is: Electricity, Natural Gas and Coal/\$121; Fuel Oil and Kerosene/\$202; Propane/\$211; Wood/\$165.	If you've been threatened with a utility shutoff, or have received a shutoff notice, you may be eligible for up to \$500 in additional assistance. To be eligible for crisis assistance you must meet the resource and income guidelines, have attempted to keep your utility bills current but unforeseen circumstances have created the crisis.

6b7) Child Care Assistance Program

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Assistance Program: provides child care assistance to low-income working families and families receiving ADC. http://dhhs.ne.gov/chc/ccsubsypa.htm	Families receiving ADC, transitioning off of ADC, or who are ineligible to receive ADC because of earnings, but are still low-income.	Monthly Income Limits: 2 - \$1,457 / 3 - \$1,830 / 4 - \$2,205	\$6,000. Homes, one vehicle, personal effects, and other qualifying assets are allowable.	Child care providers are reimbursed for care of children during approved hours. Sometimes clients pay a co-pay. When this is required, clients must pay first to trigger the state payment.	Generally, families with children who are 12 or younger may receive help through the Child Care Subsidy Program. However, a family may receive Child Care Subsidy for a child up to the age of 19 if the child requires extra care due to an acute or chronic physical or mental condition.	Participants may choose their care provider as long as the provider is approved by the state. Slightly different rules exist for families with disabilities.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs (continued)

6b8) Aid to Dependent Children Program

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Aid to Dependent Children. http://dhhs.ne.gov/fia/adc.htm	Low income families with children age 18 or younger.	Monthly Income Limits: 1 - \$485 / 2 - \$597 / 3 - \$710 / 4 - \$823	1 - \$4,000 / 2 - \$6,000. Homes, one vehicle, personal effects, and other qualifying assets are allowable.	ADC recipients who are able to work are referred to the Employment First Program, run by two contracted agencies in Nebraska: Arbor and PSI. These agencies help participants to engage in education, training, and employment activities that contribute to their self-sufficiency. Participants may receive supportive services, like transportation assistance, to complete their employment activities.	This program provides cash assistance to low income families to help pay for basic needs. Participants who are able to work also participate in Employment First, a program that helps people gain and retain employment leading to self-sufficient earnings for families.	Participants in Employment First may pursue higher education, including an associates or bachelors degree, while receiving assistance.

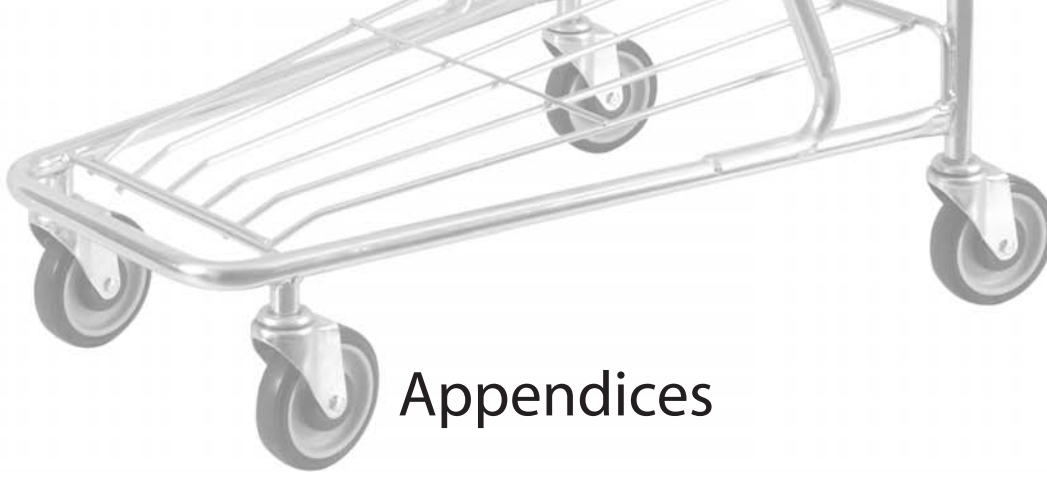
6b9) Emergency Assistance

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Emergency Assistance http://dhhs.ne.gov/fia/emergencyassist.htm	Needy children and other household members.	Monthly Income Limits: 1 - \$860 / 2 - \$1,060 / 3 - \$1,260 / 4 - \$1,462	The purpose of Emergency Assistance is to provide money and/or services to or on behalf of a needy child(ren) and other members of the household to meet needs that have been caused by an emergency situation when they cannot be met because of destitution. Emergency	Assistance helps with money and/or services for needy children and other household members when there is an emergency situation. The program helps when the situation is threatening to the health or well-being of an eligible child and family.	In emergency situations, this program may provide rent or mortgage payments, home furnishings, emergency food and special diets, clothing, and items such as cleaning supplies, moving costs, transportation, medical payments, and/or emergency telephone installation.	Assistance may be given only once in a 12 month period.

b) Summary of Public Benefits Programs (continued)

6b10) Special Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Description	Population	Income Eligibility	Asset Limits	How the Program Works	Services Provided	Additional
Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): provides nutritious foods to pregnant women and families with young children. http://dhhs.ne.gov/wic/	WIC serves pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and children under age five that are considered at nutritional risk.	Monthly Income Limits: 1 - \$1,670 / 2- \$2,246 / 3 - \$2,823 / 4 - \$3,400	There is no resource test.	People apply at local WIC clinics, and receive services as well as coupons to purchase approved nutritious foods. Find a clinic here: http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/wic/WICApp.htm	WIC provides nutrition and health education, breastfeeding education, promotion, and support, supplemental foods, and service referrals. WIC clients work with nurses and nutritionists.	People are automatically income eligible while participating in: Medicaid, Food Stamps, Kids Connection, or Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). Foster Children under five years old that are receiving Medicaid are also income eligible for WIC.



Appendices

a) SNAP for Different Kinds of People

Aa1) Different kinds of people ARE eligible for SNAP

If you currently do not have a home, you can get SNAP;

If you are elderly or disabled you may fall under higher income eligibility categories and may be able to do an interview over the phone;

If you are a single adult ages 18-45 you may receive SNAP for three months or more if you meet work requirements.

Aa2) SNAP for people who have been convicted of crime

Most criminal convictions will not stop you from getting SNAP. But, there are three cases where a criminal history will prevent you from getting SNAP:

- 1) crimes that involved selling or misusing your SNAP,
- 2) fleeing felons are ineligible, and
- 3) certain drug-related crimes. There are three situations where a person's drug related crimes will cause ineligibility. One, a drug related violation and a felony conviction regarding drug sale or distribution. Two, less than three drug possession felony convictions and you have not participated in substance abuse treatment. And finally, three or more drug possession felony convictions. BUT, if you have less than three possession convictions and participate in a substance abuse treatment program, then you are still eligible. Other members of your household may still apply for and get SNAP even if one member does not qualify because of a criminal history. The income of the person who does

not qualify is still added to your household income.

Aa3) SNAP for non-English speakers

Applications are available in other languages. All paperwork will be given to you in your language and an interpreter will be available for free. A toll free information line is available in English and Spanish (1-800-221-5689.)

Aa4) SNAP for immigrants

There are special rules for immigrants. Only "qualified" immigrants are eligible, which includes some green card holders, refugees, and some other lawful immigrants. Other temporary immigrants are not eligible, such as student visa holders and people with Temporary Protected Status.

All persons applying for SNAP must provide a Social Security Number (or a non-work Social Security Number (SSN)) for everyone applying for SNAP in the household. If you are an eligible immigrant you can ask for a letter from DHHS indicating you are eligible and need a non-work SSN.

But it is important to note that SSNs and immigration status information does not need to be provided for household members that are not applying. This means that households with mixed immigration status can be eligible even if some household members are not eligible immigrants. At the same time, the whole household must submit reasonable documentation of finan-

a) SNAP for Different Kinds of People (continued)

cial information. If you have questions about applying for SNAP, you should call Nebraska Appleseed at 1-800-845-3746 x 105.

Aa5) SNAP for households with expenses
SNAP applicants must not have income over the gross income guidelines. However, certain expenses will be considered when calculating

benefit levels. Some standard deductions are taken for expenses such as telephones and utilities. Some expenses, like rent, have a maximum deduction. Other expenses, such as child care or dependent care, will be considered based on the full cost. All of these factor into the SNAP benefit level.

b) Difficulties with the Food Stamp Program

Ab1) What can be done when problems arise?

Clients should call their caseworker or the Customer Service Center first. They may ask to speak with a supervisor. They may also ask for mediation or an appeal. Mediation is a free service provided by a neutral outside person. An appeal is a formal review of a decision. Clients may appeal a decision they don't agree with. Clients may get an appeal form from the DHHS office and fill it out to start the process. For more information, call the Nebraska Appleseed intake line at 1-800-845-3746 and

ask for the Nebraska Appleseed Appeals and Mediation Brochure. You may also access the brochure at neappleseed.org.

Ab2) Where can more information be found?

Contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-254-4202. If you have questions about your rights in the Food Stamp Program, you can call Nebraska Appleseed at: 438-8853 (in Lincoln) or 1-800-845-3746 (outside Lincoln.)

c) Helpful Materials

Many fliers, brochures, and educational pieces are available regarding the SNAP Program. Below you will find a list of materials that may be helpful in your outreach work.

Ac1) Materials Used Nation-Wide

"10 Steps to Fill Your Grocery Bag" and "Food Stamps Make America Stronger" fliers, brochures, posters, public service announcements, and more: <http://snap.ntis.gov/>

Ac2) Nebraska Specific Materials

Basic Questions and Answers about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: <http://neappleseed.org/publications>

ACCESS Nebraska brochure, flier, and computer tips: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/accessnebraska/learnmore.htm>
Frequently Asked Questions about ACCESS Nebraska: <http://neappleseed.org/publications>

"Making Public Programs Work for You" flier: <http://neappleseed.org/publications>

d) *Helpful Resources*

A wide variety of resources are available to help you with SNAP outreach and in serving your clients. Suggested resources are below:

Ad1) Resources Used Nation-Wide

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Outreach Toolkit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/>

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Store Locator: <http://www.snapretailerlocator.com/>

Ad2) Nebraska Specific Resources

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services website:

<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/index.htm>

ACCESS Nebraska Community Based Partner list:
<http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/ACCESSNebraska/CommunityPartners/ACCESSNE/PartnersGrid.aspx>

Nebraska SNAP Nutrition Education Program:
<http://nep.unl.edu/about-nep>

References

- 1 Economic Research Service, The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and the Stimulus Effects of SNAP, 2010 http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR103/ERR103_ReportSummary.pdf
- 2 United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS Program Data 2010 [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg\\$PP.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/18SNAPavg$PP.htm)
- 3 Food Research and Action Center, "Access and Access Barriers to Getting Food Stamps" 2008 <http://frac.org/access-and-access-barriers-to-getting-food-stamps/>
- 4 Economic Research Service / United States Department of Agriculture, Food Insecurity in the United States, 2009 <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/err108/>
- 5 Feeding America, "Child Food Insecurity in the United States," 2006-2008 <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/~media/Files/research/state-child-hunger-2010.ashx?.pdf>
- 6 United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Reaching those in Need," 2010 <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2008.pdf>
- 7 Food Research and Action Center, "Access and Access Barriers to Getting Food Stamps" 2008 <http://frac.org/access-and-access-barriers-to-getting-food-stamps/>
- 8 Derived from Feeding America Outreach Guide
- 9 Courtesy of the Food Bank of the Heartland and the Food Bank of Lincoln



**Nebraska Appleseed Center
for Law in the Public Interest**

941 O Street, Suite 920
Lincoln, NE 68508

402.438.8853
402.438.0263 Fax
info@neappleseed.org

www.NeAppleseed.org