

MENU OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Fresh policy approaches to improve nutrition in SNAP

1. Protect Current Funding Levels for SNAP

A reduction in SNAP spending would jeopardize the health and well-being of the 1 in 7 Americans for whom SNAP is a food lifeline—nearly half of whom are children. Cuts would hurt the working poor and would also harm the economies of low-income communities.

2. Collect Data on SNAP Purchases

Require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to collect and make public data on SNAP product purchases to help improve participants' nutritional quality as well as to increase the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency.

3. Identify a Set of Integrated Strategies that Would Help Align SNAP Purchases with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

As a complement to other USDA nutrition assistance programs, especially WIC and the National School Meal Program, identify and test a set of transformative improvements for SNAP to promote more nutritious diets and prevent obesity among low-income Americans.

4. Focus Attention on Children's Health in SNAP

Half of all youth in the United States will have been enrolled in SNAP at some time before their 19th birthday. As currently structured, SNAP is a missed opportunity for improving children's nutritional health and preventing obesity. Adequate nutrition is essential to children's development, scholastic performance, social functioning, and growth. A strategy to strengthen children's nutrition in SNAP would be to consider pilot-testing a defined food package for youth.

5. Use Incentives to Make Fruits, Vegetables, and Whole Grains the Easy Choice

Encourage public and private support for programs that incentivize the purchase and/or reduce the price of nutrient-dense foods in grocery stores and farmers' markets.

6. Establish Stronger Food Stocking Standards for SNAP Retailers

To expand SNAP participants' access to fresh produce and other healthy options in low-income communities, require retailers to stock a variety and better quality of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other recommended foods in order to be certified as a SNAP retailer.

7. Provide States with Flexibility to Evaluate Fresh Approaches to SNAP

The USDA should grant states greater flexibility for waivers to pilot test and evaluate program changes in SNAP that would improve nutrition (e.g. pilot projects to assess the feasibility of incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods and/or limiting the purchase of high-calorie, nutrient-poor products with SNAP benefits).

8. Promote Innovation in SNAP

Establish a Center for Health and Nutrition Innovation at the USDA, headed by a Chief Public Health Officer, to develop novel strategies and support pilot projects that enhance healthy nutrition for SNAP beneficiaries. Apply information technology and social media to promote healthy food choices by program participants.

9. Create a Partnership to Move SNAP towards Health

The USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should establish a strong partnership to increase the involvement of health professionals in the design, implementation and administration of SNAP.

10. Establish a National Strategy of Fresh Approaches to Strengthen SNAP

Create a National SNAP to Health Strategy for strengthening the program under the auspices of a Federal Interagency Taskforce. The plan should identify the actions needed to promote research, technological innovation, and evaluation to improve nutrition and prevent obesity.

