

SNAP: A lifeline for Livingston County in a slow economy

Food assistance is vital to Michigan residents!

1 in 5 Michigan residents receive food assistance to improve access to adequate nutrition.

Michigan SNAP recipients are households with a senior citizen (**17%**), households with a people with a disability (**32%**), and vulnerable families with children (**51%**). **5%** of households have a non-disabled, non-elderly adult.

Source: *Increased Need for Food Assistance Underscores Role of Safety Net*
Michigan League of Human Services, August 2006.

<u>The Need</u>	Livingston Co. Population	Poverty	Food Insecurity
Total individuals	180,967	13,030	23,770
Children	46,237	3,884	10,160

<u>SNAP</u>	Livingston Co.	State of MI	% of State
Total individuals	14,912	1,928,478	.77%
Children	6,111	806,450	.76%
Payments	\$1,882,836	\$260,920,151	.72%

Sources: 2010 Census Data, 2011 Map the Meal Gap, DHS Green Book of 2011 Program Statistics

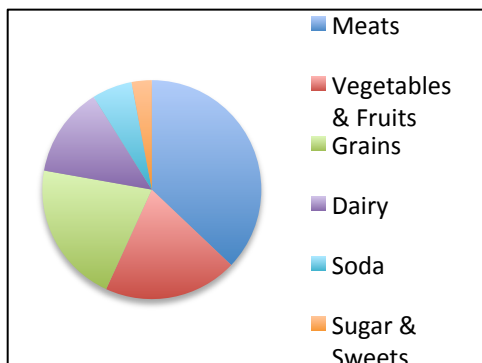
SNAP is critical to alleviate some of the County's struggle with hunger. It provides about \$4 per day per person to supplement nutrition. It is our first defense against hunger, especially for our kids.

SNAP benefits raise 3.5% of individuals in poverty above the poverty line.

SNAP brings in \$1,745,862 per month -- \$20,950,344 annually -- in federal dollars to feed hungry Livingston County families.

SNAP contributes to Michigan's local economy. Every \$5 in benefits spent locally generates \$9 in related job activity. That means our \$20,950,344 in federal dollars provides \$37,710,619 to the Livingston County economy.

"An increase in SNAP participation by 5% would result in 2.1 million low-income Americans receiving \$973 million in SNAP benefits, generating \$1.8 billion in new economic activity". Source: *The Real Benefits of SNAP*, Snapttohealth.org



The National Food Stamp Program Survey reports **34.9%** of SNAP purchases are for meats and meat alternatives, vegetables and fruits account for **18.6%**, grain products account for **19.7%**, dairy products account for **12.5%**. Soft drinks account for only **5.6%**, and sugar and sweets account for less than **3%** of SNAP purchases.

Source: *Michigan Food Assistance Program*, Michigan League of Human Services, November 2011.

Fraud and Misuse

Retail trafficking-the buying or selling of Food Assistance benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food-makes up the majority of all fraud cases.

"DHS reports 5,000 prosecutions a year for fraud in ALL assistance programs – that is **less than 1 in 500 participants.**"

Source: *Bucking the Trend*, Michigan League of Human Services, September 2011.

In 2009, 5,214 fraud investigations from across the state yielded \$18.6 million in fraud, with \$9.3 million recovered, leaving a \$9.3 million net loss. 32% of the original amount, or \$5.17 million, was attributed to SNAP. If .7% of the total fraud that year was attributed to Livingston County, only \$36,190 of the approximate \$14,432,780 in total Livingston County payments, or **.25% was improper** – or 15,532 meals of the 6.2 million total meals purchased with these benefits.

In 2011, anti-fraud efforts were ramped up even further, as an additional 30 state investigators were hired to conduct 1,300 cases on the west side of the state, recovering over \$6 million.

The 2013 budget projections include \$12.4 million to "improve retailer integrity and reduce trafficking".

Policy Changes & Their Impact

Asset testing should be eliminated!

Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia do not require an asset test to receive food stamps, 16 states eliminated the asset test in the past 2.5 years, and Michigan is the only state to reinstitute the asset test despite the trend nationally is to eliminate asset testing to help families get back on their feet during the recession. As a result, enrollment in SNAP has dropped 7.45% during the first quarter, in Livingston County. Those most affected by the asset test are the newly unemployed.

Source: *Michigan puts limits on families seeking food aid*, The Macomb Daily, February 2012.

As SNAP's eligibility requirements become stricter, Michigan food pantries and programs are faced with huge challenges. The 2011 Gleaners Community Food Bank Annual Report indicates a **26%** increase in meals provided to Livingston County for 2011 over one year ago, despite a **2.4%** improvement in local unemployment over the same period.

"Any policy that puts limits on a family's assets gives the message that building assets is bad and ends up having a punitive effect on the families who have managed to create a financial cushion."
-Melissa Smith, MLHS

Source: *Bucking the Trend*, Michigan League of Human Services, Sept. 2011

Decision-makers should vote NO on Senate Bill 904

On January 24, 2012 Senator Hune introduced a bill (SB 904) to amend "**The Social Welfare Act**" by adding section 10d. This section would require an applicant for or a recipient of public assistance to submit to substance abuse testing if the caseworker has a reasonable suspicion regarding substance abuse relating to that applicant or recipient.

The estimated cost to implement drug testing varies based on who administers the test, whether a secondary test is used, the types of drugs screen for, and the type of drug-testing tool. Urine tests are the least expensive tests. They range between \$25-\$44 per applicant where as hair follicle testing costs \$75 to \$150 per applicant. Overall, estimated costs based on an ASPE issue brief which surveyed 12 states and their estimated costs for drug testing, **\$92,487 to \$20 million**.

Some previous plans to drug test welfare applicants have run up against constitutional protections against unreasonable search and seizure.

In 1999, 10% of recipients tested positive for illicit drugs and 3% tested positive for hard drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines. These rates are in line with the drug use rates of the general population.

"The question arises why is the state singling out and punishing poor people. There's a whole range of people who receive government assistance."
-Michael Steinburg, ACLU

Source: *Michigan welfare drug testing proposal debated*, CBS Detroit, January 2012

Source: *MCL 400.571 Reporting Requirement*, Michigan Department of Human Services, January 2012

Access to food is a basic human right

Food assistance must be available for those in need, regardless of the issues that keep them from working themselves out of poverty – mental illness, substance abuse, cognitive impairment, low education attainment, etc. Without adequate nutrition that SNAP provides, our children are at-risk. For example, children from households experiencing hunger are more likely to miss school days, require special education or have to repeat a grade and are vulnerable to long-term deficiencies in social interaction, attention spans and overall learning ability. In addition, children without adequate nutrition face serious health risks such as higher rates of illness, increased chronic diseases, and are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. If decision-makers do not support social policies that extend SNAP eligibility, the cycle of poverty will continue for generations to come.

Source: *Nation Needs to Step Up Fight Against Hunger*, The Columbus Dispatch, November 2011.