

8/16/10

Food Support Outreach Talking Points

- In Minnesota, the name of the Food Stamp program has changed to the Food Support (FS) Program.
 - There are no longer paper stamps or coupons, benefits are issued electronically and are used with an EBT card (like a bank debit card).
 - The new name helps people take a second look at the program
 - The program is intended to support food needs, the new name helps emphasize this.
 - Nationally, the program is known as SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- FS benefits are 100% federally funded through the US Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. Increasing the Food Support participation rate does not increase taxes in your community.
 - FS is a consistent resource to help meet the nutritional needs of persons with low income and eases the burden from local food shelves.
- FS makes America Stronger!
 - A report by the Legal Services Advocacy Project demonstrated that if participation in the Food Support Program increased by just 10%, Minnesota would receive an average of \$2 million more each month in federal funds to help families and individuals weather these challenging economic times. For county specific information go to www.lsapmn.org and look for Food Support Report under Policy and Publications.
- Every \$5 in new FS benefits generates \$9.20 in total community spending.
- The average benefit per case, per month is **\$198**. For those ages 60 and older, the average benefit per case, per month is **\$111**.
- Serious barriers to FS participation in Minnesota as identified at 2002 community forums are lack of transportation, lack of knowledge about the program, pride in not asking for assistance, the cultural stigma associated with FS and welfare and the myth that seniors only get \$10 in benefits.
 - Interviews to apply for food support can take place over the telephone. You no longer need to visit your county human services office to complete the application.
 - \$16 (the minimum monthly benefit) in FS benefits adds up to \$192 per year. \$16 is enough to buy fresh fruits and vegetables for one person.
- FS eligibility opens up other doors of service.

- The Lifeline telephone service credit (<http://www.puc.state.mn.us/consumer/assist/tsd1.htm>) and the free or reduced school lunch program are available to those on FS.
- Schools receive compensatory revenue according to how many children have been approved for free or reduced-price meals.
- “Hunger and malnutrition exacerbate chronic and acute diseases and speed the onset of degenerative diseases among the elderly. This not only leads to an unnecessary decrease in the quality of life for many older people, but also increases the cost of health care in the United States.”
(www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/health.html)
- The FS outreach effort centers on forming community based coalitions with state, county and community partners in order to increase access points for citizens to obtain information and help with connecting to the FS program.
 - Currently, most people get information by contacting their human services office. By expanding access points, information can be provided at a variety of places and staff can incorporate FS information into their regular activities.
 - There are many misconceptions about the FS program, among clients and the general public. Outreach can help dispel myths and provide factual information and encouragement to apply.
 - A screening tool is used to determine if people may be eligible for the program. It includes questions about income and assets and provides information about the maximum amount someone can have and still be eligible.