Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps people with low incomes buy food

With proper nutrition, children learn more easily, adults work more productively, and seniors are healthier and more apt to maintain their independence. Federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps people with low incomes buy food, and buy plants and seeds to grow food to eat. The program was formerly called food stamps by the federal government; in Minnesota it was once called food support.

Impact and funding

- In state fiscal year 2018, more than 416,000 Minnesotans were receiving nutrition assistance through the program every month, down from the average of 453,000 in state fiscal year 2016.
- The average monthly benefit in state fiscal year 2018 was $110 per person.
- In state fiscal year 2018, more than $550 million in federal nutrition assistance benefits were paid in Minnesota.

Eligibility

- Candidates complete an application and are interviewed by phone or in person by a county human services worker to determine nutritional assistance.
- Household size, income, and other factors determine program eligibility and benefit amounts.
- Legal noncitizens, age 50 and older, who are not eligible under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can receive state-funded nutrition assistance from the Minnesota Food Assistance Program.
- Families with children who receive financial assistance also receive supplemental nutrition assistance as part of the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Access to benefits

- Food benefits are issued by Electronic Benefit Transfer, cards that are similar to debit cards.
- Cards allow food purchases from authorized grocers, farmers markets and Meals on Wheels.

Program outreach

- Statewide, 36 Community Action Agencies and hunger relief organizations provide outreach and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program application assistance.

mn.gov/dhs
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education provides statewide education and nutrition-based services to program recipients.

The Minnesota Food HelpLine (888-711-1151) is answered 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

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