A. Program Intent and Overview

1. Program intent

The intent of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program is to improve the health and well-being of low-income individuals, elderly and people with disabilities and other groups of people by providing them a means to meet their nutritional needs.

In Oregon, the Department of Human Services (DHS) provides SNAP benefits to eligible persons based on the following expectations:

(A) People have the right to access SNAP as a safety net, when they find themselves in a crisis such as homelessness, or a domestic violence situation or lacking assets to obtain adequate nutrition.

(B) People receiving SNAP are personally responsible for and accountable for achieving their highest level of self-sufficiency.

(C) The department will provide supplementary information as needed to increase the likelihood that people have adequate nutrition. These referrals can be to other food programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Meals on Wheels, free/reduced school lunches, etc. It could also involve referrals to access or information on nutrition education, managing a home budget or other related food issues.

2. Program overview

SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) works with state agencies, nutrition educators and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits. FNS also works with state partners and the retail community to improve program administration and ensure program integrity.

DHS, in partnership with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), provides SNAP benefits to Oregon residents. SNAP recipients include singles of all ages, couples, one-parent families and two-parent families. SNAP is a program for the working poor, people with a low fixed income and people who temporarily find themselves with little money because of a change in their circumstances. Contrary to popular belief, people need not be totally impoverished to qualify for SNAP.

(A) To receive SNAP benefits, people apply either online or in an office, and provide proof of their living situation. Generally, people who buy and prepare food together must apply for SNAP together. To qualify for SNAP, the applicants
must meet several nonfinancial eligibility requirements, such as being residents of Oregon and providing or applying for Social Security numbers. They also must have assets and income within program limits.

(B) People who are eligible for SNAP with no countable income receive the maximum amount of benefits each month. People can receive a partial benefit to supplement their available cash when they have countable income. People are certified to receive SNAP benefits for a period of up to one year. People must report certain changes that occur during the certification period, because those changes affect their eligibility for benefits.

(C) **How SNAP benefits are received**

(1) Most SNAP benefits in Oregon are issued via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. This is also known as the *Oregon Trail Card*. These cards can be used for food purchases at grocery stores, convenience stores, some authorized facilities, and some homeless meal providers.

(2) SNAP recipients who are at least 65 years old or are SSI recipients and reside in Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah or Washington counties, receive their SNAP benefits through the “SNAP Cash-Out” program. This is a special demonstration project allowable by FNS. The recipients may receive their SNAP cash food benefit in several ways:

   (a) Via EBT card, allowing them to access their accounts via ATM machines;

   (b) Via a check; or

   (c) Via direct deposit.

(D) **What SNAP benefits are for**

(1) SNAP benefits have a value equivalent to cash, but can only be spent on food intended for people. FNS determines what food can be purchased with SNAP benefits. Alcohol, tobacco, pet food and other nonfood items are not allowed. More information about eligible foods can be found at: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items)

(2) Households CAN use their SNAP benefits to buy:

   (a) Foods for the household to eat, such as:

      (i) Bread and cereals;

      (ii) Fruits and vegetables;

      (iii) Meats, fish and poultry; and

      (iv) Dairy products.
(3) Households CANNOT use SNAP benefits to buy:

(a) Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco;

(b) Any nonfood items, such as pet foods, soaps, paper products or household supplies;

(c) Vitamins and medicines;

(d) Food that will be eaten in the store;

(e) Hot foods.

(E) **SNAP and eligibility for other benefits**

Families and individuals may qualify for other benefits due to their eligibility for and receipt of SNAP benefits. Some of these benefits are:

(a) Eligibility for Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP) or Link UP America to obtain telephone assistance which helps reduce the costs of telephone installation or monthly service rates.

(b) Eligible for the WIC nutrition program. Clients may go to any local County Health Department to apply for WIC. Click [here](#) for a list of WIC clinic locations.

(c) Eligible for School Lunch and Child Care food programs.

Homeless as well as the elderly and clients with disabilities may purchase prepared meals using their SNAP benefits.

☞ SEE **MP-WG #10** FOR INFORMATION ON OUTREACH FOR OTAP/LIFELINE.

☞ SEE **MP-WG #16** FOR MORE INFORMATION ON DIRECT CERTIFICATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCHES.

☞ SEE **SNAP-J.4** FOR INFORMATION ON HOMELESS AND ELDERLY MEAL PROVIDERS.