



Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

February 19, 2013

January 2012

The SNAP Working Group of the Sustainable Food Policy Board ***identified barriers and possible solutions*** to SNAP enrollment in Austin/Travis County

SFPB SNAP Working Group Members:

Kathy Green, Capital Area Food Bank and member of the SFPB

Celia Cole, Policy Analyst with the Center for Public Policy Priorities

Claudia Herrington, Community Relations Coordinator, El Buen Samaritano

Suzanne Santos, Farmers Market Director, Sustainable Food Center

May 15, 2012

- HHSD provided a staff response to PHHS regarding the SFPB Recommendations
 - Collaborate with other HHSD social service events/outreach programs to enroll residents in SNAP
 - Collaborate with other community service oriented City departments to identify opportunities to promote SNAP enrollment and assistance.
 - Identify public and private sector financial resources to support value added incentives at farmers' market, grocery stores, etc.
 - Work in partnership with the SFPB to develop additional strategies to increase enrollment and expand SNAP benefits.
 - Bilingual and culturally appropriate outreach campaigns that address identified SFPB barriers.
 - Identify opportunities to utilize communication tools heavily utilized by the target populations, e.g., Spanish language radio/TV.
 - Report back to PHHS in 120 days to report status of activities and needs identified.

June 2012

- HHSD recruited and formed an ad hoc working group of internal stakeholders and key community partners to discuss the SFPB recommendations and develop a realistic set of community actions. Participants included:
 - Robert Kingham and Kristy Hansen, HHSD Chronic Disease Prevention
 - Jake Stewart, City of Austin PARD/Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens Program
 - Donna Sundstrom, HHSD Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program
 - Maria Allen, HHSD Neighborhood Services
 - Pamela Larson, City of Austin Planning and Development Review
 - Yvonne Seiders, Austin ISD Nutrition and Food Services
 - Natasha Rosofsky, United Way, Austin TX
 - Kathy Green, Capital Area Food Bank
 - Mary Teeters, Meals on Wheels and More
- This group met four times (July – October) to discuss how to address the SNAP enrollment problem using existing community program infrastructure and resources.
- Preliminary action has already occurred on some of the recommended actions.

Community Action 1

- **Educate direct services staff on what SNAP is, how it works, how individuals/families enroll, and how/where SNAP benefits can be used.**
 - Target audience: public health nurses, WIC clinic staff, school-based parent support specialists, parish nurses and church outreach staff, volunteers and staff of food banks/pantries and meal delivery services, childcare center staff, etc.
 - Assure that SNAP assistance information is up to date in the 211 referral network and other service points in the community.

Community Action 2

- **Educate SNAP-eligible populations on what SNAP is, how it works, how to enroll, and where to use their benefits.**
 - Information must be developed for low-literacy and in multiple languages.
 - Cross reference other benefit and/or discount programs available to low-income populations through the City and State.
 - Take information straight to the people – meet them where they are.
 - Possible partners: Capital Area Food Bank, Central Texas Literacy Coalition, libraries, schools, churches, recreation/community centers, Sustainable Food Center, CommUnity Care, El Buen Samaritano, Ventanilla de Salud, etc.

Community Action 3

- **Build the community infrastructure to support SNAP-eligible populations in using their benefits.**
 - Assess and analyze transportation access to food retailers that accept SNAP to create improvements and increase access.
 - Increase the number of enrollment sites where assistance can be provided.
 - There are only four HHSC offices and five Texas Benefits Bank locations currently established in Travis County.

Progress to Date

- Pilot project implementing the Benefit Bank of Texas at 4 HHSD Neighborhood Centers. Anticipate expansion after completion of pilot.
- Preliminary outreach to community partners:
 - Parent Support Offices at AISD and Manor ISD to assist in getting SNAP information to parents and possibly serving as an enrollment site.
 - Texas Agrilife Extension and Capital Area Food Bank regarding available SNAP Nutrition Education resources.
 - Other City offices (AAQL, Austin Energy) that serve target populations to provide SNAP info through their programs.
 - African American Quality of Life Initiative to provide outreach through the churches they work with that operate food pantries.
- HHSD Neighborhood Centers promote the Double Dollar Incentive Program for SNAP recipients at East Side Farmers Market.

Progress to Date (Cont.)

- A UT School of Nursing Intern surveyed residents receiving services at the Blackland Neighborhood Center to assess their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to using their SNAP benefits at farmers markets and developed printed materials promoting the Double Dollar Incentive Program at the East Side Market.
- HHSD programs are developing partnerships with the Latino Healthcare Forum and the Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas.

Progress to Date (Cont.)

- Review of the USDA SNAP Outreach Toolkit for best practices and turnkey solutions.
- Researching mobile unit enrollment programs
- Researching current and future possible bus routes to better serve the SNAP population and improve access to healthy grocery stores.
- Researching Healthy Corner Store programs and how they may fit into existing efforts in high risk areas (i.e., Dove Springs.)