

SNAP Incentives

Tips for Messaging

- ✓ Explain how SNAP serves as a safety net and who participates in SNAP. Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP participants are children, elderly, and people with disabilities.
- ✓ Share how SNAP complements local programs — show the connection to food banks, pantries, farmers’ markets and other local resources.
- ✓ Don’t get into a debate about the abuse people feel they see when it comes to SNAP. Changing the image of abuse is very difficult because it is so ingrained, and it is often hard for people to accept facts contrary to what they believe is true.
- ✓ Focus on the fact that most SNAP participants only receive benefits for a limited time while they get back on their feet.
- ✓ Focus on the health benefits of SNAP incentives: SNAP participants who receive added financial incentives to purchase more fruits and vegetables, actually eat more fruits and vegetables, spend more of these SNAP benefits on healthy foods, and eat more of them even after the incentive programs end.
- ✓ Don’t focus only on FRESH fruits and vegetables (since incentive dollars can also be used for frozen, dried, canned as well).

SNAP Incentives Main Message

★ *SNAP protects children and families who are struggling to afford food by reducing food insecurity. Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP participants are children, elderly, and people with disabilities. By adding financial incentives to encourage SNAP participants to purchase more fruits and vegetables, families will have greater access to healthier foods and local economies will be stronger.*

Supporting Facts/Messages

- 1 SNAP incentive programs help families stretch their food dollars and buy healthier options, children are taught healthy behaviors, establishing lifelong habits that will support their overall health and wellness.
- 2 SNAP incentives ensure that SNAP participants have greater access to nutritious foods and helps to encourage them to purchase more fruits and vegetables.
- 3 Without SNAP incentives, thousands of families would not be able to afford fruits and vegetables for their kids.
- 4 Every \$5 spent using SNAP generates as much as \$9 in economic activity SNAP incentives can increase spending on fruits and vegetables at grocery stores and farmers’ markets.

Specific words and phrases to use/avoid:

Messages that resonate best are clear and simple. They use everyday language free of jargon and communicate shared values and emotion. Below you’ll find a list of words/phrases Voices for Healthy Kids encourages you to use (left-hand column) when talking about healthy drinks. Language in the right-hand column includes terms and phrases not as easily understood or impactful when looking to engage your audience.

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Focus on “SNAP Incentives” or “financial incentive for SNAP participants to purchase fruits and vegetables”	✗ Do not focus on the larger SNAP program
✓ SNAP participants	✗ SNAP recipients
✓ “SNAP” (or local program name)	✗ “Food stamps”
✓ Safety net, protect children and families, help people buy food	✗ Welfare
✓ “Healthy eating helps prevent type 2 diabetes and heart disease”	✗ “Healthy eating helps prevent obesity”
✓ “Food insecurity”	✗ “Hunger”

Tips for Effective Messaging to Support Public Policy Change

1 Connect with supporters.

When communicating to gain support for policy, systems, and environmental changes that help kids grow up at a healthy weight, it is important to use language that will move people to take action. By framing your message in a way that paints a picture of how the current environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make healthy choices, you can create a sense of urgency and the need to take action. Make sure to clarify that the change and action you're calling for is about transforming environments to make it easy for people to eat healthy and be physically active and less about creating personal behavior change.

2 Use the right words.

While obesity is a chronic disease, most people still think of it as a personal problem with a personal solution. They believe if someone is obese or overweight, that person just needs to eat less and be more physically active. They don't immediately see the need for public policy solutions. However, when talking about people facing obesity-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease, most people agree that we need to work together to find a solution to the problem. Avoid using "obesity" and instead emphasize the health threats posed by heart disease and/or diabetes.

3 Emphasize choice.

People are most supportive of healthy changes if they don't fear their choices will be limited. When talking about adding healthy options, stress the array of overall choices offered to people, especially parents who we are here to support, so the focus is not on the removal of unhealthy options.

4 Use the right messenger.

Messages are only as strong as the person delivering them. Is the person delivering the message credible? Are they representative of the community most affected? Do they have personal experience related to the issue? Are they respected by the audience? The best messenger needs to be determined for each situation and location. For example, when messaging on health issues, the best messenger could be a doctor, a nurse, or a patient. Make informed decisions about the most culturally appropriate messenger on an issue.

5 Stress consumer education as ONE piece of the puzzle.

People believe education is the best way to encourage behavior change. But helping all children grow up at a healthy weight is a complex challenge and education is only one part of the solution. Reinforce consumer education as key to awareness building about the problem and solutions, but emphasize other initiatives that drive system-wide policy change. For example, with tobacco use, warning labels did a great deal to educate consumers but the change in norms and dramatic drops in smoking rates happened when environmental changes happened like prohibiting the sale to minors and making workplaces smoke-free.

6 Alleviate skepticism and build trust.

People are very skeptical of government and framing our solutions only from that lens can prevent us from getting our message through to key audiences. Introduce policy, systems, and environmental change efforts to the public with words like "services," "resources," "partnerships," as people are more inclined to embrace this terminology instead of "regulations," "mandates," "bans," "funding," and "government."