Pandemic Overpayments Causing Greater Hardship for Low-Income Families

An East Tennessee family of four applied for SNAP during the pandemic when they struggled to put food on the table for their two children. They were approved by DHS to receive the maximum SNAP benefit for a family of four but are now required to pay back over $5,000. Several months after the State approved the family to receive SNAP benefits, they determined that they were not eligible. Now as they continue to struggle to afford food, they also have outstanding debt that the State could waive but has decided not to. Read more here.

SNAP Pandemic Overpayments - State Inflexibility Causes Greater Hardship for TN Families

During the pandemic several families who turned to SNAP for support to afford food now face thousands of dollars in pandemic overpayment fines due to mistakes made by those families or by state workers. The State does not have to collect these fees from families, yet is charging families who struggle to afford food to now give money back to the government. DHS could apply for waivers from USDA to exempt families from having to pay back pandemic overpayments that are extremely high due to households receiving the maximum SNAP allotment during the pandemic. Read more about the waivers here.
End the SNAP Drug Felon Ban!
Please add your organization in support!

Deadline to sign is COB Thursday, February 16

Repeal the lifetime ban on SNAP and TANF for individuals with a past felony drug conviction. Access to these programs reduces recidivism and provides support to households who struggle to afford food and find jobs. Individuals who have served their time should not continue to be punished and if struggling with hunger should have access to SNAP. Read the letter to learn more. Add your organization to the sign-on here.

Stolen SNAP Benefits - Skimming

In early 2022, many SNAP and Families First (TANF) households across the country saw their benefits stolen from their EBT cards due to skimming, cloning, and similar theft. At the end of 2022, over 1,300 Tennessee SNAP and Families First households had been impacted. Families First households in Tennessee were reimbursed for money that was stolen from their cards. SNAP families have not been reimbursed but may see relief in 2023 if the skimming incident happened after October 1, 2022.

What to do if you or someone you know has had their benefits stolen:

1. Call EBT customer service 1-888-997-9444 to report stolen benefits
2. Call the TDHS Office of Inspector General fraud hotline 1-800-241-2629
3. Visit the TDHS website for more information

SNAP and Families First households can take these steps to reduce the risk of skimming:
1. Keep your PIN secret
2. Check your EBT account regularly for unauthorized charges
3. Check for anything suspicious attached to card reading machines

**WIC**

*Comment Now! USDA Proposes Rule to Improve WIC Food Package*

USDA proposes an improved WIC food package that would make this critical program even healthier, more accessible, and easier to use. Tell USDA to act swiftly to issue an improved WIC food package! [Comment here.]

[Learn more about the proposed rule here!](#) And more [here from USDA.](#)

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**CHILD NUTRITION**

*Improving Access to School Meals for Tennessee Children*
Medicaid Direct Certification in TN - Connecting More Low-Income Children to School Meals!

Tennessee was selected to participate in the USDA Medicaid Direct Certification demonstration project. This will increase access to school meals for low-income children in Tennessee while reducing administrative burdens for schools and parents or guardians. Direct Certification decreases errors in school meal program administration and helps to ensure that children in need receive healthy meals at school. More information here

IMPORTANT UPDATES

P-EBT 2022 - 23 School Year

P-EBT for this school year has not yet been approved. P-EBT for Summer 2023 may be available for families if Tennessee is approved by USDA for this school year. Sign up for our P-EBT alerts to get the latest information about P-EBT.
You Can Help End Hunger! Here Are Some Actions You Can Take Today!

The 113th General Assembly is underway. Now is the time to contact your elected official and check in for new legislation that might impact your work or the people you serve. Here are some of the bills TJC is watching:

**SNAP HB 709** (Rep. Littleton) - Requires DHS to obtain specific authorization from the general assembly before seeking, applying for, accepting, or renewing a waiver of work requirements established by the SNAP program; prohibits DHS from exercising the state's option to provide an exemption from the work requirements; requires the department to assign individuals who are subject to participation conditions to an appropriate employment and training program.

**NSLP/School Meals SB 0208/HB 0255** – Sen. Lowe/Rep. Raper - Local Education Agencies (LEA) - Requires local school boards to establish a school lunch and breakfast program that provides a free breakfast and lunch to each student enrolled in a school under the board's jurisdiction; requires the state to reimburse each LEA the cost of providing free meals to each student enrolled in the LEA after all available federal funds have been applied.

Help us end hunger! Here are some actions you can take today!
Submit comments to USDA’s proposed rule to WIC –
Tell USDA to act swiftly to issue an improved WIC food package! [Comment here](#). The comment period will close February 21, 2023.

**Contact Your Legislators Today!** Share your experience with hunger or the work you are doing to address its impact on Tennesseans. Set up a visit with your elected official and talk about changes you would like to see. Contact Signe Anderson [sanderson@tnjustice.org](mailto:sanderson@tnjustice.org) if you need help reaching out to your legislator.

### UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

**Help Us Improve Our Webinars!**
Take [this survey](#) to provide input on what you would like to see in our 2023 webinars.

**February Webinar:** Ending Poverty and Hunger in Tennessee – Expanding the Safety Net Programs

Feb 23, 1:00 pm CT

[Register Now!](#)

While the U.S. has made strides in poverty reduction, the impact on Americans is widespread and harsh. According to [USDA, 34 million people](#) are food insecure, including 9 million children. In Tennessee, over 809,000 people face hunger and 234,000 of those experiencing hunger are children. Tennessee’s child poverty rate is [18.8%](#), ranking it as the 12th worst state when it comes to child poverty. Join us to learn more.

**End Hunger in Tennessee! Join Us for a Day of Learning, Planning, and Advocacy.**

Mid-South Food Bank
(3865 S Perkins Rd, Memphis, TN 38118)

9:00am - 4:00pm CT

[Register here!](#)

Tennessee Justice Center and Mid-South Food Bank are co-hosting an anti-hunger conference to address hunger in West Tennessee on March 24, 2023. We will explore how hunger impacts the region, hear from partners who are currently working to address food insecurity, and find ways that we can collectively work together to end hunger in our communities. The agenda will include sessions on SNAP, WIC, and Child Nutrition programs.

**SNAP Access Call:** Thursday, January 26, 2023 at 10:00am CT – Join us to discuss SNAP advocacy, casework best practices, and nutrition program updates. E-mail [alutrell@tnjustice.org](mailto:alutrell@tnjustice.org) for more information and for the link to register.
If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please (Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).