State Strategies to Improve SNAP Payment Accuracy: Early Lessons from the First Year of H.R. 1 Implementation

APHSA
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State agencies that administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are operating in a period of significant change. Since the passage of H.R. 1 in July 2025, agencies have been working to implement new requirements, prepare for upcoming cost sharing provisions, and strengthen payment accuracy efforts, all while continuing to serve millions of households each month.

As the national membership association representing state, county, and city human services agencies, APHSA has partnered closely with states throughout H.R. 1 implementation. Through ongoing engagement with agency leaders, peer learning opportunities, technical assistance, and policy discussions, states have consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to strengthening payment accuracy and program integrity while continuing to ensure eligible households can access the benefits they need.

Across the country, agencies are not only focused on identifying and correcting errors more quickly, but also on taking proactive steps to prevent them from occurring in the first place. States are using root cause analysis, operational reviews, and lessons learned from quality control findings to develop early detection tools, strengthen eligibility processes, and implement error prevention strategies that improve accuracy before mistakes occur.

Survey Overview

In spring 2026, the Urban Institute, in partnership with APHSA, surveyed all 50 state SNAP agencies to better understand the strategies states are implementing or considering in order to improve SNAP payment accuracy approximately one year after the enactment of H.R. 1. The survey explored state perspectives on the drivers of payment errors, workforce and capacity challenges, technology and data investments, policy and operational changes, participant communication strategies, and potential tradeoffs associated with reducing payment error rates.

The survey was administered through the Voxco platform and was fielded between May 19 and June 5, 2026. APHSA distributed the survey to state SNAP agencies and conducted follow-up outreach to encourage participation. States could respond electronically or through a paper survey format. Participation was voluntary, and the survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Thirty-nine states responded to the survey, representing a 78 percent response rate. Thirty-eight states submitted complete responses and one state submitted a partial response. The responding states represented a diverse mix of geographic regions and political environments, including both Republican- and Democratic-led states. The partial response was included for the questions completed; therefore, the number of respondents varies slightly across survey questions and is noted throughout the report. Findings are presented in aggregate to provide a national snapshot of how states are approaching payment accuracy improvement efforts and implementation of new federal requirements.

The results tell a story of innovation, investment, and adaptation. States reported pursuing a wide range of strategies, including strengthening workforce training, expanding quality control efforts, investing in technology and automation, enhancing participant communications, and using data more strategically to identify and address the root causes of payment errors. At the same time, many states reported making difficult operational tradeoffs as they balance new expectations with staff capacity, technology, and administrative resources.

While there is no single solution to improving payment accuracy, the survey responses demonstrate that states are actively responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by H.R. 1. They are testing new approaches, learning from one another, and working to build stronger systems that support both program integrity and positive participant outcomes. As implementation continues, states will need ongoing partnership, technical assistance, and operational support to sustain these efforts and continue making progress.

Key Findings and Considerations

The survey findings demonstrate that states are actively pursuing a wide range of strategies to improve SNAP payment accuracy and prepare for the implementation of H.R. 1. States reported investments in workforce development, technology modernization, data analytics, policy changes, and participant communications, often pursuing multiple approaches simultaneously.

Several themes emerged across responses:

States are making significant operational investments to improve payment accuracy. Many states have increased or are considering increasing staffing, expanding training efforts, strengthening quality assurance functions, and adopting new technology and data tools to identify and prevent errors.

Technology and data modernization are central components of state strategies. Nearly all states reported implementing or considering data-driven approaches to improve accuracy, and a substantial majority are exploring automation and artificial intelligence solutions to support eligibility determination, quality control, and case review activities.

States recognize that participant communication is critical to successful implementation. Respondents reported widespread efforts to update notices, online resources, client portals, and partnerships with community organizations to help households understand and comply with changing program requirements.

Payment accuracy efforts are creating operational tradeoffs. More than half of states reported redirecting resources away from other priorities, including systems modernization initiatives and timeliness improvement efforts, in order to focus on payment accuracy activities.

States continue to express concerns about implementation capacity and long-term sustainability. Responses suggest that achieving payment accuracy goals will require ongoing investments in staffing, technology, training, and administrative infrastructure. Many states indicated that future funding requirements and cost-sharing obligations could create additional operational challenges.

Federal-state partnership remains essential. Survey responses underscore the importance of timely federal guidance, technical assistance, operational flexibility, and sufficient implementation timeframes to support successful administration while maintaining access to benefits for eligible households.

State Capacity and Operational Readiness

As states prepare for new payment accuracy requirements, many are undertaking significant planning and assessment activities to understand the factors contributing to errors and identify opportunities for improvement. Survey[1] findings show:

- 92% of states (35 states) reported that a root cause analysis of payment error rates is complete or underway.
- States reported that payment errors stem from both participant and administrative factors, with responses suggesting errors are roughly evenly distributed between the two.
- 100% of states (39 states) reported that their legislature has passed or is strongly considering at least one budgetary, staffing, or systems investment to respond to H.R. 1 and support payment accuracy efforts.

These findings indicate that states are taking a comprehensive approach to improving payment accuracy by first seeking to better understand the factors contributing to errors and then pursuing investments to address them. States recognize that payment errors arise from multiple sources and are responding with a range of policy, staffing, operational, and technology strategies designed to strengthen program administration and support long term program integrity goals.

Workforce Investments and Training Strategies

Survey responses highlight the central role that frontline staff play in achieving payment accuracy goals. States reported investing in training, coaching, quality assurance, and workforce supports to strengthen eligibility determination processes and improve consistency across operations. Survey findings show:

- 56% of states (22 states) reported that they have increased, or are considering increasing, staffing levels. Among those states, eligibility or caseworker staff (39% or 15 states) and quality assurance staff (36% or 14 states) were the most commonly reported areas for staffing investments.
- 97% of states (38 states) are implementing (79% or 31 states) or considering (18% or 7 states) updated training informed by quality control data.
- 97% of states (38 states) are implementing (74% or 29 states) or considering (23% or 9 states) revised interview protocols and additional probing questions during eligibility interviews.
- 92% of states (36 states) are implementing (74% or 29 states) or considering (18% or 7 states) creating desk aids, policy manuals, or internal communities of practice.

These responses reinforce what APHSA has consistently heard throughout H.R. 1 implementation: payment accuracy improvements depend on having the workforce capacity needed to carry out increasingly complex program requirements. Investments in eligibility and quality assurance staff reflect states' efforts to strengthen the operational foundation necessary to support both program integrity and effective service delivery.

[1] 39 states responded to this section.

Leveraging Technology and Automation

States[2] reported interest in technology solutions that can support payment accuracy efforts while improving operational efficiency. Respondents highlighted the potential of automation, artificial intelligence, and system enhancements to support staff decision-making, improve consistency, and strengthen program administration. Survey findings show:

- Most states (82% or 32 states) are implementing or considering using AI or automation to support reducing payment error rates
- 41% of states (16 states) are currently implementing tools that flag high risk cases for additional review, and an additional 39% (15 states) are considering their use in the future.

Responses suggest that states are increasingly exploring technology solutions to target resources more effectively, support eligibility operations, and identify cases that may present a greater risk for payment errors. Many agencies are also evaluating emerging tools, including intelligent document processing and AI policy research tools, to support application and verification processes. Together, these efforts reflect a broader interest in leveraging technology to strengthen program administration and improve operational efficiency.

Using Data to Improve Accuracy

States[3] are increasingly leveraging data to better understand the drivers of payment errors and inform improvement efforts. Survey findings show:

- All responding states are implementing or considering at least one data driven strategy.
- 95% of states (36 states) are using (55% or 21 states) or considering (39% or 15 states) predictive analytics to identify high-risk cases.
- 95% of states (36 states) are currently increasing (74% or 28 states) use of case reviews to identify root causes of errors or considering doing so (21% or 8 states).
- 92% of states (35 states) are currently conducting staff interviews or implementing staff review processes to identify opportunities for improvement (71% or 27 states) or considering these approaches (21% or 8 states).
- 90% of states (34 states) are implementing or considering real-time caseload monitoring dashboards and other performance monitoring tools. This includes 61% (23 states) that have already implemented or are actively pursuing these tools and 29% (11 states) that are considering future implementation.

These findings suggest that states view continuous improvement, informed by both frontline staff experience and operational data, as an important component of strengthening program integrity and payment accuracy.

[2] 39 states responded to this section.
[3] 38 states responded to this section.

Policy and Administrative Approaches

States[4] identified a range of policy and administrative strategies designed to support payment accuracy while maintaining effective program administration and access to benefits for eligible households. Responses suggest that states are evaluating both existing policy options and new approaches to strengthen accuracy, reduce administrative burden where possible, and improve the consistency of eligibility determinations. Survey responses indicate:

Policy Strategies

- 76% of states (29 states) are implementing at least one new policy approach to reduce payment errors.
- 82% of states (31 states) are currently implementing enhanced income verification methods (34% or 13 states) or considering doing so (47% or 18 states).
- More than three-quarters of states (76% or 29 states) are implementing or considering reducing reliance on self-attestation as part of their payment accuracy efforts. Among those states, 53% (20 states) have already implemented or are planning changes, while 24% (9 states) are considering future implementation.

Responses suggest that states are reassessing verification practices, policy flexibilities, and other administrative approaches as part of broader payment accuracy efforts. These strategies reflect the range of options states are exploring to strengthen eligibility determinations while adapting to new H.R. 1 requirements.

Supporting Participants Through Change

States[5] emphasized the importance of participant communications and engagement as new requirements take effect. Respondents noted that participant understanding of program rules is closely tied to payment accuracy outcomes, making clear communication, accessible services, and strong community partnerships critical components of successful implementation. Survey findings show:

- 100% of states (38 states) are implementing or considering at least one client-facing strategy to support participants through program changes.
- 92% of states (35 states) are either updating (53% or 20 states) client facing portals and systems or considering (39% or 15 states) doing so.
- 87% of states (33 states) are either partnering (53% or 20 states) with community-based organizations to support participant outreach and education or considering (34% or 13 states) doing so.

These findings suggest that states recognize participant understanding and engagement as important components of payment accuracy efforts and are investing in both technology and community partnerships to support successful implementation of program changes.

[4] 38 states responded to this section.
[5] 38 states responded to this question.

Tradeoffs and Looking Ahead

While states[6] reported substantial investments in payment accuracy initiatives, many also described difficult operational tradeoffs and concerns about future implementation challenges. Survey responses indicate:

Tradeoffs

State responses highlight the difficult operational choices many agencies are making as they work to improve payment accuracy. With finite staffing, funding, and systems capacity, states are often required to prioritize among competing program responsibilities. In some cases, this has meant shifting resources away from other important priorities, including timeliness, modernization efforts, and technology investments, in order to focus on payment accuracy initiatives. These findings underscore that improving payment accuracy is not occurring in isolation, but within a broader operational environment where agencies must continually balance multiple program goals and requirements.

- 58% of states (22 states) reported making at least one operational tradeoff to prioritize payment accuracy efforts.
- 40% of states (15 states) reported reducing focus on benefit timeliness.
- 37% of states (14 states) reported pausing other systems improvement efforts.
- 13% of states (5 states) reported delaying EBT chip card implementation or related investments.

Looking Ahead

When asked about the potential impacts of the upcoming state benefit cost share requirement, states identified a range of possible operational, fiscal, and policy challenges. Survey findings show:

- 42% of states (16 states) identified freezing or reducing hiring as a potential risk.
- 29% of states (11 states) identified narrowing eligibility policies as a potential risk.
- 11% of states (4 states) identified withdrawing and/or pausing from SNAP as a potential risk.

These responses highlight the magnitude of the fiscal changes states are preparing for as benefit cost sharing approaches. While states remain committed to improving payment accuracy and strengthening program integrity, many are simultaneously evaluating how new financial responsibilities could affect workforce capacity, technology investments, participant access, and overall program operations. The findings suggest that states are focused on reducing error rates and actively planning for the broader implications of implementing a substantial shift in program financing.

As states continue implementing H.R. 1 and preparing for future cost-sharing requirements, their experience demonstrates that payment accuracy improvements are most successful when supported by stable operations, adequate staffing, modernized technology systems, and clear policy guidance. The experiences shared through this survey illustrate the significant efforts already underway and the deep commitment our members have to investing in accurate and effective SNAP administration.

Please contact Brandy Whisman (bwhisman@aphsa.org), Senior Policy Associate, at APHSA with any questions.

[6] 38 states responded to this section.