



Supporting College Students with SNAP Employment & Training

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training

Throughout a student's educational journey colleges build an educational foundation through a variety of programs and opportunities. The [SNAP Employment and Training program \(SNAP E&T\)](#) is one opportunity for colleges to provide students with low-incomes education and training in addition to supportive services such as child care, transportation, and textbooks. However, [while over 4 million college students are SNAP eligible](#), just under half of eligible students are not enrolled in the SNAP program.ⁱ For those students, colleges and their partners can support their enrollment in SNAP to combat hunger. Once enrolled, students may be eligible for additional supports and services through SNAP E&T. Low program enrollment

results in missed opportunities to offer students highly needed services for successfully obtaining employment, ranging from job search services to child care and transportation.

SNAP Eligibility for College Students

Federal rules regarding SNAP eligibility stipulate that [students enrolled in higher education more than half-time](#) are ineligible for SNAP unless they meet one of the following conditions:

- Under age 18 or age 50 or older
- Have a physical or mental disability
- Work at least 20 hours a week in paid employment
- Participate in state or federally financed work-study
- Care for a child under the age of 6, or care for a child ages 6 to 11 and lack child care necessary to attend school and work 20 hours a week or participate in work study
- A single parent caring for a child under 12 and enrolled full time
- Receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Participating in an on-the-job training program
- Attending higher education through:
 - SNAP E&T
 - Other state or local E&T programs for households with low-income, equivalent to SNAP E&T
 - A program under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - A Trade Adjustment Assistance Program.

Students must also meet eligibility requirements to enroll in SNAP. Additionally, students participating in higher education less than half-time, as defined by the higher education institution, need **not** meet the exemption requirements noted above.



When strategizing to support college students, states may consider the following options for SNAP and SNAP E&T:

- ✓ Support colleges and higher education institutions in understanding student eligibility for SNAP and SNAP E&T to better identify eligible students and share information about available services and supports with them.
- ✓ Use administrative processes to expand the definition of "eligible students" to include individuals who meet the criteria for the Perkins IV program or other similar programs, as another E&T program equivalent to SNAP E&T.
- ✓ Connect community colleges with SNAP Outreach providers who can provide students interested in SNAP with additional information and support.
- ✓ Onboard community colleges as E&T providers so that students receiving SNAP who could benefit from additional E&T supports have access through the community colleges they attend.
- ✓ Community college providers can identify programs and services that may qualify for SNAP E&T and integrate them into an existing SNAP E&T program at the community college or become a new SNAP E&T provider.

Programs Across States Leading the Way

Cross collaboration among community colleges and the SNAP E&T programs is crucial for addressing the training and educational needs of college students. Some promising practices include the following:

Oregon Community College SNAP E&T Program (STEP)

Through the [Oregon Pathway to Opportunity Initiative](#), Oregon seeks to address the racial and systemic inequalities that adults, parents, GED, and students of color face by expanding federal, state, and local resources for students with low income to increase their access to education and boost college completion rates. STEP, the state's SNAP E&T program, advances the Oregon Pathways to Opportunity Initiative as it sets aside \$5 million to establish a Benefit Navigator designed to identify college students who are eligible for SNAP benefits, the STEP program, housing, and other related services. According to the [National Skills Coalition](#) 2021 report, completion of the Community College Certificate increased student's earnings potential by \$5000.

Arkansas Career Pathway Initiative

Arkansas CPI is a partnership among the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS), Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and the state's community colleges and university technical centers. The program leverages TANF funds to increase access and support students with low income to obtain post-secondary credentials. A [recent evaluation](#) found that participants in Arkansas CPI graduated from college with a degree or certificate at a significantly greater rate than other students.

EleVate Virginia

In 2015, as part of a [SNAP E&T pilot](#), the Virginia Department of Social Services partnered with seven community colleges to provide SNAP E&T participants with career coaching in targeting industry sectors and to increase attainment of career readiness certificates. The EleVate SNAP E&T Pilot focused on providing services Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). Today, SNAP E&T programs are [available in all 23 community colleges](#) throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

i. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits*. (2018).

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