



Supporting Formerly Incarcerated People with SNAP E&T

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training

Returning citizens, or people who were previously incarcerated, face significant challenges when transitioning back into their community, including access to housing, healthcare, food, and employment. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), in addition to its [Employment and Training \(E&T\) component](#), can provide returning citizens with meaningful access to food assistance and employment services. The SNAP E&T program includes employment-focused case management, job search assistance, and skills training opportunities, among other services.

Barriers to Reentry

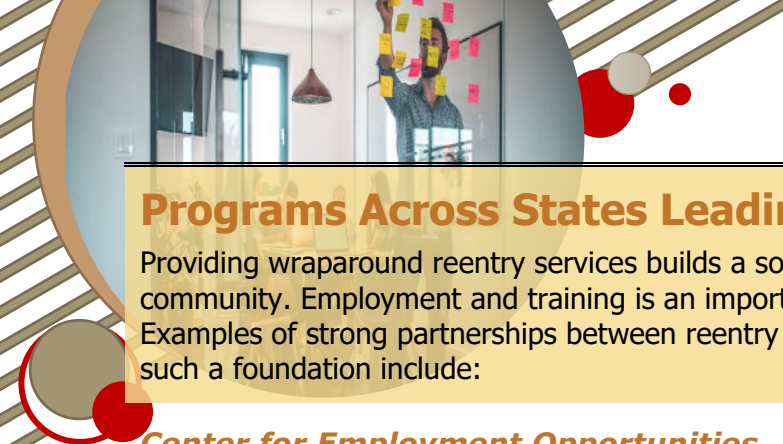
Many individuals coming home from incarceration need assistance with food access. One study found that [90% of individuals](#) recently released from prison reported food insecurity.ⁱ SNAP provides access to food assistance to returning citizens, along with the opportunity to participate in

employment and training supports. Supporting the needs of returning citizens prevents recidivism and leads to positive long-term outcomes.

Establishing supports for employment and training is critical for individuals upon reentry. Because of time spent involved with the justice system, returning citizens are less likely to have the education or training credentials needed for employment. In 2018 more than half of formerly incarcerated people held only a high school diploma or GED.ⁱⁱ With dedicated employment and training services, returning citizens can access much needed educational and credentialing opportunities to become more competitive job candidates.

When strategizing to ensure returning citizens are supported, states may consider the following options for SNAP and SNAP E&T:

- ✓ Request waivers from Section 11 of the Food and Nutrition Act to begin processing SNAP applications from incarcerated individuals nearing their release date, promoting timely access to SNAP benefits and enrollment in SNAP E&T services.
- ✓ Partner with the state's Department of Corrections and other organizations tailored to support returning citizens to identify eligible individuals and provide employment and training supports to meet individuals' unique needs as early as possible.
- ✓ Consider removing bans on SNAP access for people with prior felony drug convictions to promote access to enhanced employment and training services for formerly incarcerated individuals.



Programs Across States Leading the Way

Providing wraparound reentry services builds a solid foundation for individuals' reintegrating into their community. Employment and training is an important building block to a solid foundation for reentry. Examples of strong partnerships between reentry programs and SNAP agencies working together to build such a foundation include:

Center for Employment Opportunities

As a national reentry service provider, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) leverages SNAP E&T to provide services such as paid work-based learning as well as reimbursements for transportation and other fees. For example, CEO partners with the **Colorado** Employment First Program (Colorado's SNAP E&T program) to provide vocational training to returning citizens, supporting valuable skills such as resume building, job application assistance, and evaluating employee benefits.

In **Pennsylvania**, [CEO uses SNAP E&T](#) to provide paid transitional employment to individuals formerly incarcerated through workforce readiness training, job coaching and placement, job retention support, and a variety of other personalized supports. The partnership between CEO and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is essential for providing food and transportation assistance to returning citizens while they receive the training and education needed to secure employment. CEO was recognized as a statewide best practice in providing reentry services in 2020.

Pre-Release Application Program

Section 11 of the Food and Nutrition Act prevents acceptance of SNAP applications from people who have been incarcerated for more than 30 days. States may request waivers to begin processing SNAP applications from incarcerated individuals nearing their release date so that SNAP benefits are accessible immediately upon their release. One example is **South Dakota**. With assistance from the department of corrections case managers, individuals who are incarcerated in state correctional facilities [may apply for SNAP benefits up to two weeks before their scheduled release date](#). A SNAP pre-release application program removes application barriers and expedites support for individuals returning to their communities.

Project Ready in Muskingum County, Ohio

During the client intake assessment, Project Ready assesses a client's eligibility for Medicaid and SNAP, including SNAP E&T. SNAP E&T funding is leveraged to support individuals who were formerly incarcerated in their participation in adult education and high school equivalency classes, post-secondary education, vocational training, and other related training activities.

¹Emily A. Wang, Gefei A. Zhu, Linda Evans, Amy Carroll-Scott, Rani Desai, and Lynn E. Fiellin. [A Pilot Study Examining Food Insecurity and HIV Risk Behaviors among Individuals Recently Released from Prison](#), National Library of Medicine (2018).

¹¹Lucius Couloute. [Getting Back On Course: Educational Exclusion and Attainment Among Formerly Incarcerated People](#). Prison Policy Initiative (2018).