

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

This needs assessment is prepared with the assumption that information in reports and databases is accurate, i.e. respondents answered to the best of their knowledge and database development and analyses were free of recording errors.

A. Existing Information:

Demographic and health-related behavior data were compiled from several sources to assess nutrition education needs of Pennsylvanians receiving or eligible to receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In Pennsylvania (PA), SNAP is administered by the PA Department of Human Services (DHS). The Pennsylvania State University (PSU) is contracted by DHS to manage and implement the approved SNAP-Ed Plan, which is known as Pennsylvania (PA) SNAP-Ed. DHS provided the information on selected characteristics of PA SNAP recipients. See *References* at the end of this document for data sources.

Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-free PA is the report published by the Governor's Food Security Partnership. The Report outlines nine goals to achieve by 2020. See the Implications section of this needs assessment for discussion about PA SNAP-Ed's role in addressing these goals.¹

- 1) Every county and/or region in Pennsylvania will have a local food alliance to combat hunger in their local communities.
- 2) The SNAP participation rate will increase from 90 percent to 98 percent or higher.
- 3) The number of children benefiting from free and reduced-price meals during the school year (linked to nutrition programs in summer) will increase from 20 percent to 30 percent.
- 4) Sixty percent of students benefiting from free and reduced priced school meals will participate in school breakfast. This is an increase from 47 percent in 2014-15.
- 5) The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program redemption rate will increase from 308,000 to 340,000 checks annually.
- 6) Double SNAP Bucks will be available at all highly accessible, high-need farmers' markets, and additional SNAP recipients will have access to SNAP employment and training and SNAP education.
- 7) Pennsylvanians will have streamlined access to food security information and benefits.
- 8) The average number of people participating in WIC programs will increase from over 245,000 to 260,000.
- 9) Pennsylvania will improve access to healthy, nutritious food.

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

1. Demographic Characteristics of SNAP Target Audience in PA.

Geographic Locations of Low-Income Pennsylvanians

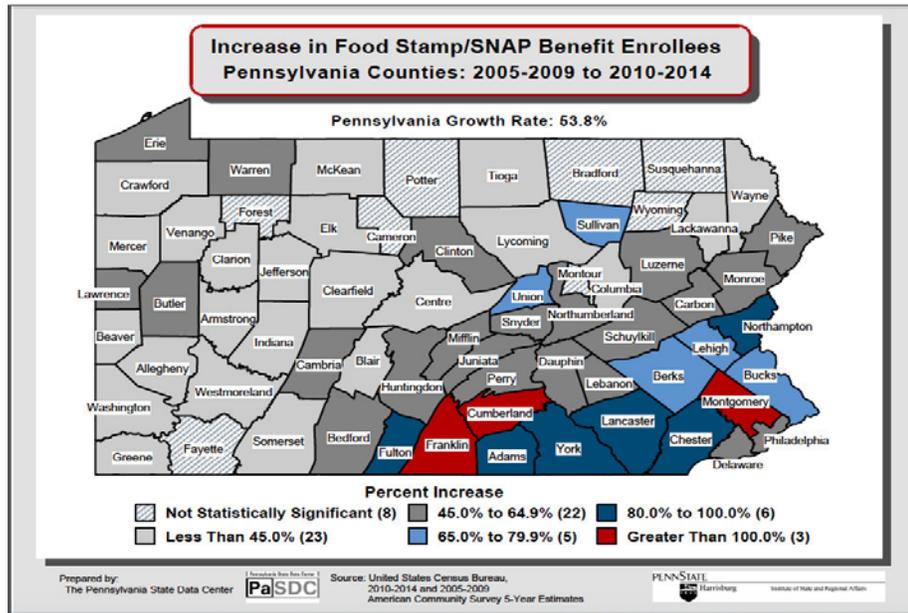
- Geographically, PA is largely rural with significant urban populations concentrated in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey results, 13.3% of Pennsylvanians are living below poverty, and an estimated 16.8% are living below 125% of poverty. In addition, 28.0% of Pennsylvanians in families composed of a single female householder with children are living in poverty.²
- Poverty rates in PA are different between races. In 2016 the rates of poverty were 6.8% for white alone; 23.6% for black or African American alone; and 29.0% for Hispanic or Latino.²
- 2016 data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that in the Philadelphia area, 30.2% of all families with children under 18 and 44.7% of families headed by a single female with children under the age of 18 live in poverty. 2016 data show that 25.9% of Philadelphians live below 100% of the poverty level.²
- According to the Allied Services Rehabilitation Hospital and John Heinz Rehabilitation Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, the \$10,000-\$19,000 level of income for Lackawanna County was the most selected response (26.7%), In Luzerne County the most selected income level was less than \$10,000 (23.1%).³
- In 2016, in Erie County (northwest PA), 26.0% of all households had income below \$25,000. Poverty levels were higher for Black/African American (34.7%) and Hispanic/Latino (50.4%) compared to White (9.6%).²

SNAP Participation in Pennsylvania

- The number of SNAP eligible persons in PA increased by 7.1% between March 2011 (1,753,132) and March 2018 (1,838,413).^{4,5} Additional information on county-specific SNAP enrollment is presented in Figure 1.
- PA SNAP participation has increased by 2.5% from 2012 to 2017.⁶ However, from April 2016 to April 2017, the population participating in SNAP in PA decreased by 0.22%.⁷ As of March 2018, there were 1,832,365 enrollments in the PA SNAP program.⁵

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

Figure 1. Increase in SNAP Benefit Enrollees



- Based on 2015 estimated population and SNAP eligible data, 14.4% of the state population is SNAP eligible. Philadelphia County has the highest percentage of SNAP eligibles at 30.8%, followed by Fayette (22.6%), Erie (19.79%), and Luzerne (19.48%).⁸
- As of August 2016, 26.4% of Pennsylvania SNAP eligibles are from Philadelphia County and 8.4% are from Allegheny County (Pittsburgh area).⁴
- Pennsylvania’s overall unemployment rate is 4.8% (Mar 2018). Philadelphia County’s unemployment rate of 5.9% is higher than the overall unemployment rate for PA. The highest rates of unemployment also include Forest (6.5%) and Fayette (6.0%) as of March 2018.⁹
- In 2016, the five PA counties with the highest childhood food insecurity levels included Forest (24.5%), Fayette (23.2%), Philadelphia (21.7%), McKean (21.7%) and Clinton (21.6%).¹⁰ In 2016, the national food insecurity rate was 12.9% and the state rate was 12.5%.¹¹
- In 2016, the national food insecurity average rate was 12.9% and the state rate was 12.5% (Feeding America, Food Insecurity in the United States, 2018. Accessed /14/18). In 2016, the county with the highest food insecurity rate was Philadelphia (21.0%), followed by Fayette (15.4%), Forest (15.0%) and Erie (14.5%).¹²

Population Diversity

- PA’s population is aging and becoming more racially/ethnically diverse each year. PA’s median age increased from 2010 to 2016 and the median age in 2016 (40.7 years) exceeded that of the United States’ (37.9 years). PA tied with Connecticut for 6th highest median age in 2016. Population of minority groups has increased more quickly than overall population. Between 2010 and 2016, Hispanic/Latino population grew by 25.3%.¹³

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

- Northeast PA has a more diverse population than is average for the rest of PA. In the Hazelton and Wilkes-Barre areas there are more residents than the state average with limited English speaking skills. The area also has a higher percentage of elderly than the state (16.6%) and national average (14.2%) and the over 65 population is projected to rise from 19.4% to almost 22%.¹⁴
- Lackawanna and Luzern counties in Northeast PA, both have a higher percentage of elderly (18.9% and 19.1% respectively) than the state (16.6%) and national (14.2%) averages as of 2016 and is projected to increase.³
- Although the majority of PA SNAP eligible are white (53.5%), there are also a large percentage of black SNAP eligible (30.1%). The areas of greatest percentage of black SNAP eligible include: Philadelphia (59.5%), Delaware (56.7%), Allegheny (45.3%), and Dauphin (39.7%) Counties.⁸
- The Preschool and School-Age Projects serve a large, urban population; In FY17 Non-Hispanic Black/African American preschoolers represent the largest portion (44.4%) of all Preschool Project participants, followed by non-Hispanic White (28.0%) participants and Hispanic White (16.3%). Non-Hispanic Black/African American represents the largest segment (42.9%) of School-Age Project participants, followed by non-Hispanic White (28.5%) and Hispanic White (18.3%).¹⁵
- The Community Eligibility Program (CEP) allows schools and districts in high poverty areas to provide meals free of charge to their students. Almost 20% of PA public school are designated CEP. Philadelphia County has the highest percentage of CEP schools (90%) followed by Erie County (35.7%) and Allegheny County (34.5%). Fifty percent of Pennsylvania's CEP schools are located in Philadelphia County.¹⁶

Spanish Speaking SNAP-Eligible Pennsylvanians

- Spanish-speaking SNAP eligibles in PA are growing in number. Spanish was reported as a preferred language by 46,260 (5.2%) SNAP eligibles in March 2018.⁸
- County-specific data from March 2018 indicates that the Spanish-speaking SNAP eligible population is disproportionately high in specific counties and that the number of Spanish-speaking SNAP eligible continues to grow within these counties. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ (73.9%) of PA Spanish speaking SNAP eligible are located within 5 counties, Philadelphia (38%), Berks (12.8%), Lehigh (9.6%), Luzerne (7.2%), and Lancaster (5.9%).⁸

2. PA Diet-Related Health Statistics of Target Population

Dietary patterns of PA SNAP eligibles reveal inadequate intake when compared to USDA Food Guidance.

- National Healthy People 2020 objectives include increasing the amount and variety of fruits and vegetables to the diets of those 2 years old and older.¹⁷ An FY 2017 behavior monitoring survey was administered to a sample of students in grades 8-12 participating in PA SNAP-Ed, only 17.4%

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

reported vegetable intake 3 or more times per day in the past 7 days.¹⁸ This finding emphasized vegetable intake as a nutrition education need. PA SNAP-ED FY 2016 evaluation of 1,327 fifth grade students showed that many students do not meet recommended intake levels for vegetables.¹⁹

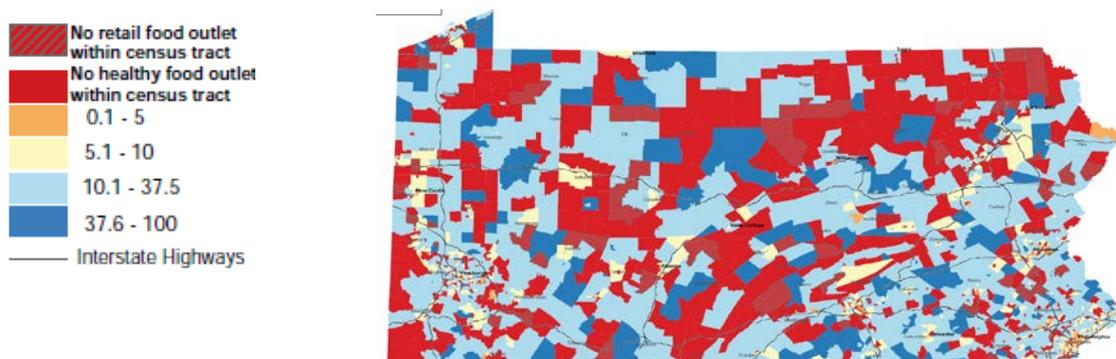
- Data from the 2015 Study on America’s Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables show:²⁰
 - Fruit and vegetable consumption has decreased over the past 5 years.
 - Children (<12 years of age) are consuming more fruit than 5 years ago, however vegetable consumption has decreased.
 - Adults 18-44 years old are eating more fruit and the consumption of fresh fruits has increased.
 - Adults 45 and over are consuming less fruits and vegetables than 5 years ago.
 - Households with incomes less than \$20,000 per year have the largest decline in fruit and vegetable consumption over the last 5 years.
- Data from the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report states that only 1 in 10 adults nationwide are meeting federal fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations.
 - Fruit consumption is lowest among men, young adults, and adults living in poverty.²¹
- Fruit and vegetable consumption data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and PA SNAP-ED FY 2016 statewide student monitoring data show:
 - Statewide in 2016, 37.2% of PA SNAP-ED 8th – 12th graders reported eating fruits 2 or more times a day in the last seven days and 34.3% reported eating vegetables 2 or more times per day in the last week.²²
 - Philadelphia-specific data reveal that in 2015, 32.2% of high school students reported eating fruits or drinking 100% juice 2 or more times a day in the last seven days and 22.9% reported eating vegetables 2 or more times per day in the last week.²³
- Milk consumption data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and PA SNAP-Ed Statewide monitoring data show:
 - Nationally in 2015, only 10.2% of high school students reported drinking 3 or more glasses of milk per day in the past week which decreased from 16.2% in 2005.²³
 - Statewide in 2016, PA SNAP-ED 8th – 12th graders reported consuming an average of 2.16 cup equivalents of dairy per day in the past seven days.²²
- A sample of Adult/Senior Track participants completed a Calcium post/retrospective-pre survey in 2016. Prior to SNAP-Ed, 9.6% of respondents report consuming ≥3 cups of dairy products each day. After SNAP-Ed, the number increased to 18.4%.²⁴

3. Retail Food Environment in Pennsylvania

- The modified retail food environment index (mRFEI) measures the number of healthy and less healthy food retailers within census tracts across each state as defined by typical food offerings in specific types of retail stores (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores, or fast food restaurants). See Figure 2.²⁵

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

Figure 2. PA Modified Retail Food Environment Index



Lower scores indicate that census tracts contain many convenience stores and fast food restaurants compared to the number of healthy food retailers. A zero score indicates no healthy food retailers (supermarkets, larger groceries, produce stores, or supercenters) within the census tract.

(By U.S. Census Tract)

- 30.9% of PA census tracts do not have at least one healthy food retailer within ½ mile of tract boundary. ²⁶
- Reported barriers to healthy eating behaviors relevant to the urban setting were explored with a low-income (LI) audience in Harrisburg, PA. Barriers identified included distance to a grocery store, transportation issues, higher produce costs as compared to less expensive snack foods, and influence of children on food purchasing decisions. ²⁷
- Additional barriers to access healthier food options in PA include living in rural areas, economic challenges, food deserts, lack of transportation, expense of convenient corner stores, cost of healthy food, and lack of knowledge (what is healthy and preparation). ²⁸
- In Southeastern PA (SEPA), the Philadelphia area, 42.2% of all adults eat fast food at least once a week as compared to 48% of those living in poverty. ²⁹
- Only 15.7% of SEPA adults consume the recommended 5+ servings of fruit/vegetables per day ³⁰
- More than half of SEPA adults (53%) do not consume recommended amounts of fruits or vegetables each day. Some groups are overly represented in this data, such as 60% males, Black (67.6%) Latino (65%) White (46.9%) adults; and those living below poverty (71.5%) compared with those above (50.6%). ³⁰
- 28.4% of SEPA adults travel out of their neighborhoods to purchase food. ³⁰
- 12.5% of SEPA adults have had to alter or skip a meal due to lack of money for food. ³⁰
- In NEPA there is limited access to healthy nutrition as residents don't always have access to a grocery store. 12.8% of Lackawanna residents have no access to fresh fruits and vegetables ¹⁴

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

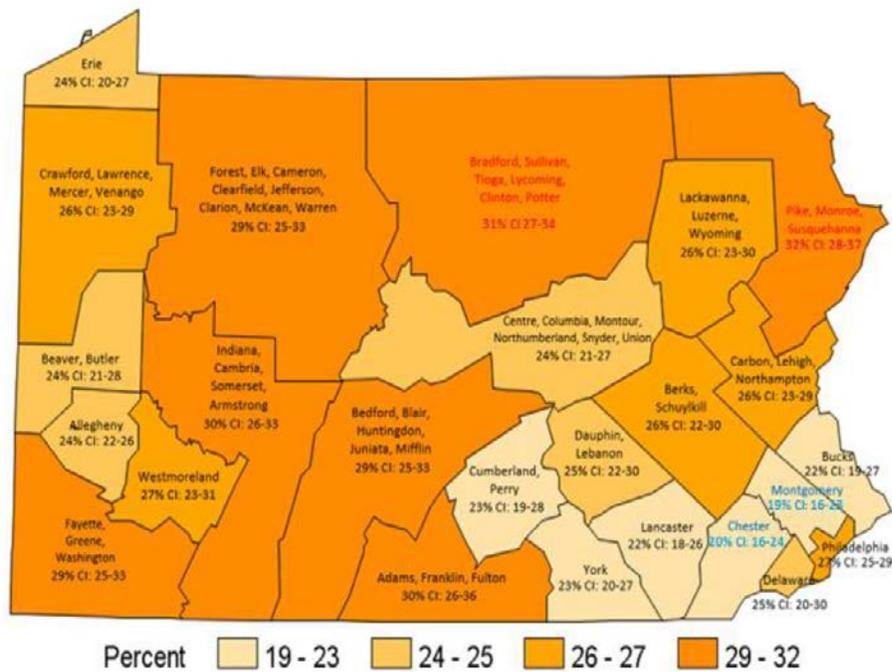
- McKean County in northwest PA is very rural with only 44.4 persons per square mile compared with PA overall of 284 persons per square mile. Only 50% of these residents have access to healthy food.³¹

4. Obesity Status of SNAP Eligible Target Population

- 31.9% of Philadelphia's adults have a BMI greater than or equal to 30 kg/m². Of the eleven largest US counties, Philadelphia is the county with the highest adult obesity level.³² Allegheny County, which includes Pittsburgh, has an adult obesity level of 28.5%.³³
- The percent of overweight/obese PA school children is 38.4% for grades K-6 and 40% for grades 7-12 up from 32.6% and 34.1% in just two years. Potter and Monroe Counties have the largest percentage of overweight/obese students in grades K-6 at over 60%. Greater than 60% of 7-12 grade students in Potter and Union Counties are considered overweight/obese.³⁴
- In the seven largest cities where data is available, Philadelphia ranks 1st for teen obesity. 15.3% of children (grades K-6) in Allegheny County are considered obese and 17% of teens (grades 7-12) are obese.³³
- Children (grades K-6) in Lebanon County have the highest obesity rate in the state at 17.4% and Perry County has the highest teen (grades 7-12) obesity rate at 22.8%.³⁵
- Nationally, research has shown that low and high-income children have similar BMI in kindergarten. By 8th grade more low-income children were obese compared to high-income children. For example, 6% of 14 year old girls from high-income families were obese while 20% of children from low-income families were obese.³⁶
- Nationwide, obesity rates of children 5 and under have fallen from 14% in 2004, to 10% in 2014.³⁷ While 19 states significantly decreased, PA is one of three states where preschool obesity levels increased.³⁸
- The PA statewide rate of no leisure time physical activity in the past month among adults between 2013 and 2015 was 25 percent. See Figure 3.³⁹

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

Figure 3: Map 2: Participated in no leisure time physical activity in the past month among Pennsylvania adults by region, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2013-2015



- Barriers to physical activity include lack of time, competing priorities, environmental barriers (safety, traffic, poor street features, limited access to fitness facilities and cost).²⁸
- Thirty-seven percent of PA adults earning less than \$15,000/year had “no leisure time physical activity” when compared to those making over \$75,000 (11%). More Hispanic adults (34%) reported “no leisure time activity” as compared to white non-Hispanic adults (22%).⁴⁰
- Over 39% of southeast PA adults are physically active less than three times per week. 46.8% of adults living below poverty level exercise less than three times a week. At or above the poverty level, the number drops to about 38.2%.²⁹
- Residents of Lackawanna (52.3%) and Luzerne (55.4%) Counties report lower rates of physical activity than those reported for the state and nation.¹⁴
- In south central PA, specifically Perry, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lebanon, and York Counties, between 2012 and 2015 there was an increase of 7.1% in reported physical activity – from 68.1% to 75.2%.³⁵
- National YRBSS data from 2015 show that 15.5% of high school students had not participated in recommended levels of physical activity (60 minutes daily during 5 or more days a week) on even 1 day during the week prior to the survey.⁴¹
- FY 2017 PA SNAP-ED data showed that 47.6% of students (8th-12th grades) reported 60 minutes of physical activity on 5 or more days in the past 7 days after participating in SNAP-Ed.¹⁸

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

- The number of U.S. adults that don't use the internet has shrunk. In 2000, 86% of the population 65 years or older did not go online; in 2016 that rate has decreased to 41%. In 2018, 34% of the population 65 years or older did not use the internet.⁴²

5. Other Nutrition-Related Programs Serving Low Income Pennsylvania Residents

Numerous programs that deliver nutrition education to LI audiences operate within PA. These range from federally or state funded programs to those operated by local non-profit agencies or charitable organizations.

- The PA Department of Health administers the WIC program in all PA counties.
- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) conducts nutrition education programming to LI adults who have children and are responsible for planning and preparing family meals. EFNEP is not funded statewide; however, this program is available in 61 of the 67 PA counties.
- The PA Department of Education (PDE) coordinates Team Nutrition initiatives, providing school foodservice departments with materials and resources to improve meal preparation, increase understanding of the nutritional needs of children, and promote healthy school food environments by emphasizing the nutritional value of school meals. Additionally, PDE implements national school meal programs in PA.
- Head Start, a preschool program with a nutrition component, serves LI children throughout the state.
- The PA Department of Aging administers congregate meals at senior centers and home-delivered meals to homebound persons.
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the State Food Purchase Program are administered by the PA Department of Agriculture, providing regional food banks with commodities and fresh foods to supply local non-profit food pantries serving the LI population across the state.
- Food policy councils active within the state include Pittsburgh Food Policy Council, Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council, and PA Governors Food Security Partnership.

6. Underserved Audiences and Geographic Areas of PA

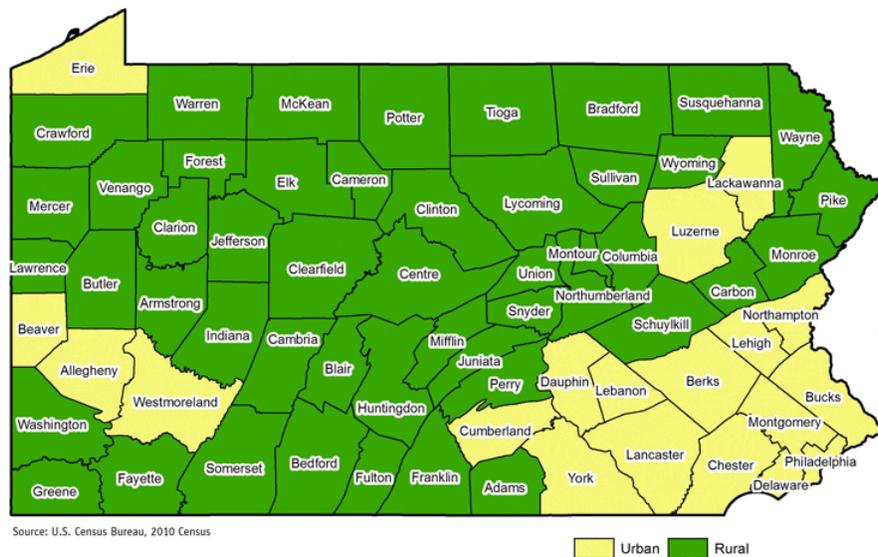
- **Adults** are an underserved population. 41.3% of PA SNAP recipients are adults aged 18-59,⁸ but adults account for only 9% of PA SNAP-Ed participants.⁴³
- **Preschool-age children** continue to be underrepresented in the SNAP-Ed population. Preschoolers account for only 7.1% of SNAP-Ed participants.⁴³ Some progress has been made in increasing reach to preschoolers. Between FY 2010 and FY 2016 PA SNAP-ED preschool participation increased from 7,625 to 19,493, a 256% increase in just six years. There was an increase in preschool participation by 155% just between FY 2014 (12,617) and FY 2016. These

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

data indicate that efforts to reach this audience are working; however, rural preschoolers remain underserved. 84% of PA SNAP-Ed preschool participants are located in a major urban area. The majority of programming is provided by one local partner programming in Philadelphia and Montgomery Counties.⁴³

- **Rural PA counties** are historically underserved by SNAP-Ed. The following PA counties received only indirect SNAP-Ed in FY 2016: Cambria*, Cameron*, Carbon, Chester, Clarion, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford*, Cumberland, Forest, Franklin, Greene*, Juniata, Lebanon, McKean*, Mifflin*, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland*, Perry, Potter*, Snyder, Somerset, Tioga, Union, Venango*, Warren, Washington, and Wayne. The asterisk indicates counties with greater than the State percentage (14.7%) of SNAP eligible population.²

Rural Pennsylvania Counties



http://www.rural.palegislature.us/demographics_rural_urban_counties.html

7. Implications of Needs Assessment

- Continue to implement evidence-based nutrition education and policy, system, and environmental approaches to improve nutrition and physical activity behaviors. Expand evidence-based SNAP-Ed with priority community partners (e.g. retail, grocery, corner stores, and farmers' markets).
- Expand reach of evidence-based SNAP-Ed to underserved adult audiences.
- Expand reach of evidence-based SNAP-Ed to underserved rural preschool audience.
- Expand reach of evidence-based SNAP-Ed to underserved, high-need areas.
- Explore additional avenues to provide SNAP-Ed using technology (e.g. online modules, apps).
- Assess PA SNAP-Ed effectiveness using appropriate measures and indicators from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework.

FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

- Develop partnerships with agencies providing related public health services to support coordination of efforts. Table below lists examples of PA SNAP-Ed partnership opportunities related to Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA goals:

Blueprint for a Hunger-free PA Goals	PA SNAP-Ed Opportunities
Every county and/or region in Pennsylvania will have a local food alliance to combat hunger in their local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation in local food alliance groups.
The SNAP participation rate will increase from 90 percent to 98 percent or higher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with relevant SNAP outreach partners.
The number of children benefiting from free and reduced-price meals during the school year (linked to nutrition programs in summer) will increase from 20 percent to 30 percent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with SNAP-Ed eligible schools (CEP designated schools and schools with >50% free/reduced) to provide evidence-based nutrition education and school food environment interventions. • Partnering with summer meals programs to provide evidence-based nutrition education.
Sixty percent of students benefiting from free and reduced priced school meals will participate in school breakfast. This is an increase from 47 percent in 2014-15.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with SNAP-Ed eligible schools to provide evidence-based nutrition education and breakfast policy interventions.
The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program redemption rate will increase from 308,000 to 340,000 checks annually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing SNAP-Ed farmers' market nutrition education to WIC audiences.
Double SNAP Bucks will be available at all highly accessible, high-need farmers' markets, and additional SNAP recipients will have access to SNAP employment and training and SNAP education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers' market nutrition education and PSE interventions, such as food demonstrations, tastings, and recipes.
Pennsylvanians will have streamlined access to food security information and benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined access to SNAP benefits for seniors; partnering with Area Agency on Aging to expand SNAP-Ed at senior centers.
Pennsylvania will improve access to healthy, nutritious food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with corner stores to provide evidence-based nutrition education and PSE interventions.

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FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

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FY 2019 Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed Needs Assessment

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