Needs Assessment Process

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.

<u>Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-free PA</u> is the report published by the Governor's Food Security Partnership in September 2016. 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. A <u>2017 accomplishments report</u> is available on the Partnership's website.

- 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.

Needs Assessment Findings

1. Demographic Characteristics of PA SNAP Population

Geographically, PA is largely rural with significant urban populations concentrated in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania classifies 19 of 67 Counties in the Commonwealth as urban (Appendix 3). The Census Bureau plans to redefine urban designations as part of the 2020 Census data delivery process. The second Pennsylvania map in Appendix 3 shows urban areas using 2010 Census data but applying suggested 2020 urban area definitions. Applying new definitions results in 77 (out of 137) areas that would no longer qualify as urban.²

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 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.³
 - Approximately 27% of Pennsylvanians are living below 185% of federal poverty level. Appendix 4 shows percent of this population by county.³
 - Poverty rates in PA are different between races; 6.8% for white alone; 23.6% for black or African American alone; and 29.0% for Hispanic or Latino.⁴
 - 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. Data show that 25.9% of Philadelphians live below 100% of the poverty level.⁴
 - 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%).⁴
- 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%).⁵

SNAP Participation in Pennsylvania

• The number of PA SNAP participants and households has increased from January 2021 to February 2022 as shown in Table 1). $^{6-11}$

Table 1. PA SNAP Participants & Households 2017-2022

	PA SNAP Participants	PA SNAP Households
2017 March	1,858,536	883,172
2018 March	1,838,413	889,852
2019 March	1,764,396	875,202
2020 March	1,764,327	923,466
2021 January	1,826,453	909,149

	7	7
2022 February	1,906,772	944,580

- Based on 2020 population estimates and February 2022 SNAP participation data, 14.9% of the state population is enrolled in SNAP.^{11,12} Philadelphia County has the highest County percentage of SNAP participants at 30.32%, followed by Fayette (23.4%), Cameron (20.99%), Luzerne (20.6%), and Erie (20.57%).¹¹
- As of February 2022, 25.15% of Pennsylvania SNAP participants reside in Philadelphia County and 8.6% are from Allegheny County (Pittsburgh area).¹¹ Although most PA SNAP participants are white (51.85%), there is a large percentage of black SNAP recipients (29.54%). The areas of greatest percentage of black SNAP participants include Philadelphia (58.7%), Delaware (56.33%), Allegheny (43.9%), Dauphin (37.56%), and Montgomery (32.33%) Counties.¹¹ Appendix 5 shows the percent of PA households receiving SNAP benefits by county and percent of SNAP households by race/ethnicity.³
- In February 2022, 56.52% of SNAP participants were female. Nearly 36% of SNAP participants were under the age of 18.¹¹

Table 2. February 2022 SNAP Participation by Age and Gender

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		Female		Male		Total
0-4 years		94,767		99,246		194,013
5-17 years		237,449		246,936		484,385
18-59 years		536,597		348,753		885,350
60 and older		208,963		134,061		343,024
	Total		1,077,776		828,996	1,906,772

- Median income of Pennsylvania households receiving SNAP benefits is \$19,230, as compared to \$20,963 nationally. The median income for PA SNAP households varies widely by county with Fayette (\$15,222) at the low end of the range and Montgomery (\$27,068) on the high end.³
- 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 2018.¹³ In May 2020, the Institute of State and Regional Affairs released a report quantifying employment impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of non-essential businesses in Pennsylvania. At least 1.2 million employees worked in industries impacted by business closures. Nearly 1.7 million unemployment claims were filed between March 21 April 4, 2020.¹⁴
- 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%). ^{15,16} In 2016, the national food insecurity rate was 12.9% and the state rate was 12.5%. ¹⁵

• In 2016, the national food insecurity average rate was 12.9% and the state rate was 12.5%. 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%). 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%).

Population Diversity in Pennsylvania

- 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%.¹⁷
- 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%.¹⁸
- Lackawanna and Luzerne 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 (2016) and is projected to increase.⁵
- In FY 2021 PA SNAP-Ed delivered direct education to:
 - Nearly 6,500 individuals through the Adult/Senior Project, with 55.4% in the 18-59 age category. Approximately 67% of participants reported as female, while nearly 8% did not report gender. Approximately 17% were Hispanic, nearly 63% were White, and almost 34% were Black or African American.
 - Nearly 59,450 students through the School-Age Project. About 51% were male, approximately 20% were Hispanic, 36.4% were White, and 58.2% were Black or African American.
 - Nearly 7,050 preschoolers through the Preschool Project. Forty-nine percent were female, almost 20% were Hispanic, 53% were White, and 40.4% were Black or African American.¹⁹
- The Community Eligibility Program (CEP) allows schools and districts in high poverty areas to provide meals free of charge to their students.²⁰ There are 1,169 sites designated CEP for the 2021-22 school year; this is an increase from 1,111 CEP sites for the 2019-20 school year. Thirty-two percent of PA public schools were designated CEP for School Year 2019-2020; this data cannot be updated for the 2020-21 or 2021-22

school years as there is no County designation for CEP sites, nor a full listing of PA school buildings in the corresponding PA Department of Education Building Data Report. Almost half (44.77%) of PA CEP public schools are located in Philadelphia County (299) and Allegheny County (129). The following PA counties have more than half of their public schools designated CEP: Forest (100.0%), Philadelphia (95.5%), Northumberland (60.7%), Crawford (60.0%), Warren (60.0%), Fayette (57.5%), Luzerne (56.1%), and Armstrong (55.6%).²¹

Spanish-Speaking SNAP Households in Pennsylvania

- Spanish-speaking SNAP households in PA increased from March 2017 (40,000) to March 2018 (46,260) and then increased again in March 2020 (48,126), January 2021 (48,569), and February 2022 (53,043).^{6,7,9,11} February 2022 data show 5.62% of SNAP households were reported as Spanish-speaking.¹¹
- County-specific data from February 2022 shows that about 85% of Spanish speaking PA SNAP households are located in 7 counties: Philadelphia (39.94%), Berks (12.71%), Lehigh (10.91%), Luzerne (8.37%), Lancaster (5.92%), York (4.41%), and Dauphin (4.2%).¹¹

2. PA Diet-Related Health Statistics of SNAP-Ed Population

Dietary patterns of PA SNAP recipients 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 2020 behavior monitoring survey was administered to a sample of students in grades 8-12 participating in PA SNAP-Ed, only 12.8% reported vegetable intakes of 3 or more times per day in the past 7 days.²²
- Data from the 2015 Study on America's Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables show²³:
 - o 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.²⁴

- 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 2020 statewide student monitoring data show:
 - Statewide in 2020, 28.7% of PA SNAP-Ed 8th 12th graders reported eating fruits or drinking 100% fruit juices 2 or more times a day in the last seven days and 23.8% reported eating vegetables 2 or more times per day in the last week.²²
 - YRBS Pennsylvania (students not participating in SNAP-Ed) data reveal that in 2019, 28.5% of high school students reported eating fruits or drinking 100% juice 2 or more times a day in the last seven days and 23.9% reported eating vegetables 2 or more times per day in the last week.²²
 - BRFSS 2015 data reveal the percent of adults within the PA SNAP-Ed population with adequate vegetable consumption is 30.76%; the national average for the SNAP-Ed population is 34.01% (see Appendix 6).²⁵
- Milk consumption data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and PA SNAP-Ed Statewide monitoring data show:
 - Nationally in 2017, only 7.9% of high school students reported drinking 3 or more glasses of milk per day in the past week which decreased from 10.2% in 2015, and 16.2% in 2005.²⁶
 - Statewide in 2020, PA SNAP-Ed 8th 12th graders reported consuming an average of 1.64 cup equivalents of dairy per day in the past seven days.²⁷

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 Appendix 7.²⁸
- 30.9% of PA census tracts do not have at least one healthy food retailer within ½ mile of tract boundary.²⁹
- Reported barriers to healthy eating behaviors relevant to the urban setting were explored with a low-income 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.
- 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).³⁰

- 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.³¹
- Only 15.7% of SEPA adults consume the recommended 5+ servings of fruit/vegetables per day.³¹
- 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%).³¹
- 28.4% of SEPA adults travel out of their neighborhoods to purchase food.³¹
- 12.5% of SEPA adults have had to alter or skip a meal due to lack of money for food. 31
- 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. 18
- 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.³²

4. Obesity Status of SNAP Population

- 33.3% of Philadelphia's adults have a BMI greater than or equal to 30.0 kg/m2. Of the
 eleven largest US counties, Philadelphia is the county with the highest adult obesity
 level. 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.³⁵
- 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%.³⁶

- 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.³⁷
- 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 Appendix 6).³⁹
- Barriers to physical activity include lack of time, competing priorities, environmental barriers (safety, traffic, poor street features, limited access to fitness facilities and cost).
- 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%.³¹
- Residents of Lackawanna (52.3%) and Luzerne (55.4%) Counties report lower rates of physical activity than those reported for the state and nation.¹⁸
- 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%.³⁶
- National YRBSS data from 2019 show that 17.0% 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 2020 PA SNAP-Ed data showed that 37.3% 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.²²

• 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 low-income 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 46 of the 67 PA counties.⁴³
- 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.
 PDE also implements national school meal programs and the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program in PA.
- Head Start, a preschool program with a nutrition component, serves low-income children throughout the state.
- The PA Department of Aging administers congregate meals at senior centers and homedelivered 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

 64.42% of PA SNAP recipients are adults aged 18 and older, but adults account for only 8.8% (6,436) of PA SNAP-Ed direct education participants. 10,44 In contrast, 10.17% of PA SNAP recipients are preschool-age children and account for 9.7% (7,046) of PA SNAP-Ed direct education participants. 11,19

- Rural PA counties are historically underserved by SNAP-Ed. Bolded text indicates counties in the following statements that are designated rural per Appendix 3.
 - The following PA counties did not receive SNAP-Ed direct education nor PSE intervention in FY 2021: Chester, Clarion, Clinton, Crawford*, Cumberland, Forest, Greene*, Montour, Perry, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Venango*, Warren, Washington, and Wayne. Six of those 15 Counties are also unserved by EFNEP (Forest, Greene*, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Warren, and Wayne). The asterisk indicates counties with greater than the State SNAP participation rate (14.9%).^{11,19}
 - In FY 2021, four PA counties received direct education but no PSE intervention: Bucks, Carbon, Jefferson, and Wyoming. Three PA counties received PSE but no direct education: Lebanon, Northumberland and Pike.¹⁹

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 (direct education) to underserved adult audiences.
- Expand reach of evidence-based SNAP-Ed to underserved rural areas.
- Identify best practices and build on existing approaches to provide SNAP-Ed using technology, for example, online modules, apps, video/screen-share platforms (e.g. Zoom), and social media (e.g. Facebook Live). Continue to explore a mechanism to make evidence-based direct education available for underserved audiences and geographic areas via multimedia and explore promotion of those opportunities through state-level partnerships.
- Assess PA SNAP-Ed effectiveness using appropriate measures and indicators from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework.
- 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.	Representation in local food alliance groups.
The SNAP participation rate will increase from 90 percent to 98 percent or higher.	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.	 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.	 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.	 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.	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.	 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.	 Partnering with corner stores to provide evidence-based nutrition education and PSE interventions.

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