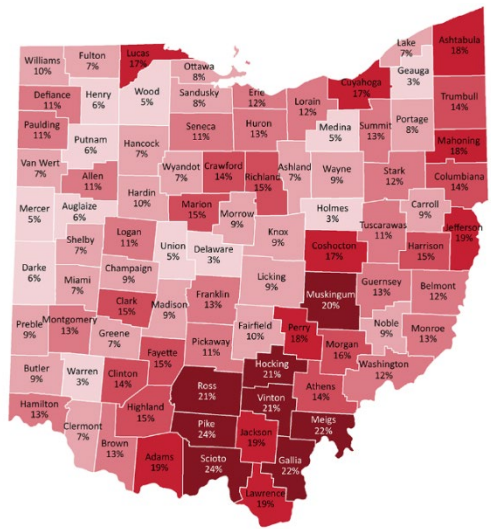


The Problem: Early Issuance of February 2019 SNAP Benefits Due to Federal Government Shutdown Has Created a “SNAP Gap” in Ohio



Due to the partial federal government shutdown, February SNAP benefits were issued early on January 16. This has created a “SNAP gap” that is likely to cause significant financial strain for SNAP participants, because they will experience, at a minimum, nearly 40 days between the issuance of February and March SNAP benefits. For some Ohio SNAP recipients it could be as long as 60 days. While the total amount of benefits won’t change, the long gap between availability of benefits is likely to cause hardship for many households and further strain the emergency food assistance network and other already stretched community resources.

- SNAP benefits are very low to begin with and participants have very little income. Even with SNAP, many SNAP households struggle to afford enough food at the end of the month and often have to turn to local foodbanks and food pantries to get through the month.
- Research shows that people spend less on food and eat lower quality diets after their SNAP benefits run out. Food insecurity, hospital admissions, and disciplinary problems for school-aged children are also higher.
- Foodbanks and food pantries, as well as other local community service providers, will likely see increased in demand as families scramble to fill the hole in their monthly food budgets. This increased demand from what could be hundreds of thousands of households will come on top of what foodbanks have already been doing for furloughed workers.
- An estimated 1.4 million people – or 1 in 8 Ohioans – will be directly impacted as a result of the SNAP gap. The charitable sector and local governments are not equipped to step in and replace SNAP benefits for hundreds of thousands of Ohio households.



Percent of Population that Receives SNAP Benefits by County (source: The Center for Community Solutions)

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services issued over \$163 million in federally-funded SNAP benefits on January 16, 2019 to more than 670,000 assistance groups.

SNAP benefits are issued on a staggered basis, meaning some households receive benefits on the 2nd of the month while others receive them as late as the 20th of the month, depending on their assigned case numbers (see reverse side for more detail).

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks estimates that the majority of Ohio SNAP households will have a gap of at least 50 days, and some will have a gap of 60 days or more.

Potential Solutions: The State of Ohio and Congress both have options for addressing this unprecedented potential public health crisis.

- Congress could issue additional, emergency SNAP benefits to help families fill the “SNAP gap” left by the shutdown, just as they do in the event of a natural disaster.
 - The State of Ohio could issue additional, emergency SNAP benefits to help families fill the “SNAP gap” left by the shutdown through state-appropriated dollars.
 - Governor DeWine could issue an executive order to provide one-time funding for additional food purchases by Ohio’s foodbanks to ensure food remains available at local food pantries until March SNAP benefits are issued.
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Specific caseload information is not readily available from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and would require a public data request, which Governor DeWine could make in order to better understand the impact of the forthcoming “SNAP gap.” The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is also monitoring demand for help from its network and will remain in communication with the Administration, the Ohio General Assembly, and congressional members.

We do know the following monthly SNAP benefit issuance schedule was put into place in July 2014:

- Case numbers ending in 0 = benefits available on the 2nd of the month
- Case numbers ending in 1 = benefits available on the 4th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 2 = benefits available on the 6th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 3 = benefits available on the 8th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 4 = benefits available on the 10th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 5 = benefits available on the 12th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 6 = benefits available on the 14th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 7 = benefits available on the 16th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 8 = benefits available on the 18th of the month
- Case numbers ending in 9 = benefits available on the 20th of the month



The Ohio Association of Foodbanks represents Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and their 3,500 member hunger relief agencies. To contact us for more information, please reach executive director Lisa Hamler-Fugitt at 614-271-4803 or lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org.