The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most important safety net program protecting persons from food insecurity in Florida. Because of its singular role in combating hunger, SNAP is at times the target of questions about the adequacy of allotment levels and the ability of households to put healthy meals on the table with their benefits. In 2021, the Florida Project, launched with support from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), sought input from those who know SNAP the best – SNAP participants themselves —on barriers to healthy eating and the ability to access nutritious food.

This fact sheet provides highlights from The Florida Project: Recommendations for Healthy Eating Pilot Projects, which can be accessed in full here.¹

**What are the top barriers to maintaining a nutritious diet with SNAP in Florida?**

- The price of healthy foods is more than participants can afford.
- Benefit allotments are too low.
- Healthy foods are not promoted or unhealthy foods are more promoted in store advertisements.

*Benefit allotments are so low compared to the high price of nutritious food that one participant said she is forced to use “bill money to feed her children.” Similarly, another reported that their family has to "go without and miss meals" unless they supplement SNAP with other funds.*

**What are the top recommendations for SNAP pilot projects to help Florida families buy more healthy foods?**

- Allow people to buy healthy hot and prepared foods with SNAP benefits.
- Increase how much money people can use in SNAP for healthy foods and beverages.
  - For example, increase Fresh Access Bucks,² which provides SNAP participants an equal amount in free fruits and vegetables when they use their SNAP benefits at participating vendors, like many farmers markets and farm stands.
- Increase how much money people can use in SNAP for food and beverages, regardless of the nutritional value.

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2. Fresh Access Bucks are a program that provides SNAP participants with additional food dollars for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables from participating vendors.
Did participants in the Florida Project reflect the characteristics of Florida’s SNAP households?

Florida Project participants were similar in race and ethnicity to SNAP participants\(^3\) as a whole in Florida:

- Thirty percent identified as Black or African American, compared to 25 percent of Florida’s SNAP caseload.
- Twenty-two percent identified as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx, compared to 31 percent of Florida’s SNAP caseload.
- Forty-one percent identified as white, compared to 33 percent of Florida’s SNAP caseload.

The main difference between Project participants and SNAP households in Florida was households with children; the share of households with children who took part in the Project (roughly 70 percent) exceeds the share of households with children in Florida who participate in SNAP (35 percent).\(^4\)

Do barriers to maintaining a nutritious diet with SNAP or recommendations for pilot projects to improve the ability of SNAP participants to access healthy food differ based on race or ethnicity?

Regardless of race or ethnicity, Project participants identified similar barriers to buying nutritious food with SNAP and made similar recommendations for ways to improve the ability of SNAP households to put healthy meals on the table.

What is it about low SNAP allotment levels and restrictions on buying hot foods that contribute to struggles to maintain a nutritious diet?

- Maximum SNAP allotments are modest: they range from $250 a month for one person to $658 a month for families of three.\(^5\)
- For typical households, SNAP provides, at most, between $2 and $3 per person per meal.
- SNAP cannot normally be used to buy hot or prepared foods like a rotisserie chicken or salad from a grocery store’s salad bar,\(^6\) which hurts those most in need, such as households whose stove is on the fritz and people who are experiencing homelessness.

\(^4\)Id.