

Connecting College Students to Public Benefits

**FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY AND
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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About Education Northwest

Education Northwest is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping all children and youth reach their full potential. We provide high-quality research, technical assistance, professional development, and evaluation services that address the most pressing education needs in our region and across the country. Through an equity-centered approach, we collaborate to support learners of every age on their path to and through education and training after high school.

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Executive summary

Many college students, particularly students underrepresented in higher education, struggle to afford the full cost of college attendance and experience basic needs insecurity. A key strategy to address college students' basic needs insecurity is streamlining access to public benefits programs that can help pay non-tuition costs. In this research project, Benefits Data Trust, Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), and Montgomery County Community College (MontCo) worked with Education Northwest researchers to understand community college students' experiences with food insecurity, familiarity with public benefits program, and awareness of and experiences with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This brief summarizes findings from student survey and interview data collected from October 2022 to February 2023 at CCAC and MontCo.

Findings suggest that increasing student access to SNAP would promote equitable outcomes because students in the survey sample who were from groups persistently underrepresented in higher education were also more likely to experience food insecurity. Yet, there are challenges with awareness of and experiences with SNAP. Fewer than half of all surveyed students indicated knowing how to apply for SNAP, and fewer still (36%) indicated knowing if they were eligible to apply. Further, uncertainty about eligibility was the most cited reason for not applying for SNAP. Students who applied for SNAP described significant challenges with collecting and submitting the necessary documents, understanding the application and eligibility requirements, getting in-person help, the length of time it takes, and technology access and issues.

Students recommend that their college increase SNAP visibility through a wider range of marketing approaches, as well as targeted outreach and one-on-one assistance to low-income students. Students also recommended additional supports to apply for SNAP, including guidance through the application process; more information about the necessary documents, eligibility requirements, and how to complete the application; an easier application; support with technology; and improved casework communication.

Based on these findings, we recommend that postsecondary institutions:

1. Implement a widespread informational campaign to provide students basic information about SNAP and tools to assess eligibility
2. Train college staff members and faculty on SNAP eligibility
3. Conduct targeted, data-driven outreach to inform students of possible benefits eligibility
4. Build partnerships with local agencies administering benefits and/or nonprofits to support one-on-one application assistance for their students

Findings also support the following policy recommendations:

1. States should consider codifying federal guidance that encourages institutions of higher education to use Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) data to connect students with federal benefit programs
2. Education leaders working on expanding access to public benefits for college students should advocate for policy change to make SNAP eligibility easier to understand through reframing student exemptions

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Connecting students to public benefits

Many college students, particularly students from groups underrepresented in higher education, struggle to afford the full cost of college attendance, which includes non-tuition expenses. These college students may lack access to healthy food, stable housing, reliable transportation, affordable child care, physical and mental health care services, the internet and technology, and other necessities they need to survive and thrive in a postsecondary academic setting. Meeting students' basic needs is essential to their well-being and ability to learn and succeed in college (Daugherty et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab, 2021; Hallet & Freas, 2018; Haskett et al., 2020; Maroto et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2017; Trawver et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2018).

A key strategy to address college students' basic needs insecurity is streamlining access to public benefits programs that can help pay for non-tuition costs. Benefits Data Trust (BDT) is a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that helps improve public benefits access and connect individuals to programs throughout the United States that pay for food, healthcare, and other basic needs.

BDT partnered with two Pennsylvania community colleges, Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and Montgomery County Community College (MontCo), and Education Northwest researchers to investigate community college students' experiences with food insecurity, familiarity with public benefits, and awareness of and experiences with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

This brief describes key findings from student survey and interview data collected from October 2022 to February 2023. The *Connecting Students to Benefits* survey included two validated items from the [Hunger Vital Sign](#) (Hager et al., 2010) to assess students' food security. The other survey items were developed by Education Northwest researchers in collaboration with BDT, CCAC, and MontCo. They are distinct from other surveys that assess community college students' basic needs security, such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the #realcollege survey, and Trellis' Student Financial Wellness Survey, because the survey items assessed students' awareness of and experiences with SNAP. A total of **1,479 CCAC and MontCo students** responded to the *Connecting Students to Benefits* survey and are included in the analysis. See Appendix A for more information about the survey methods, characteristics of the survey participants, and survey protocol.

Following the survey, we interviewed **10 CCAC and MontCo students who applied for SNAP** about their experiences. See appendix B for more information about the interview methods, characteristics of the interview participants, and interview protocol.

Findings

Student experiences with food insecurity

The students who responded to the survey came from many diverse backgrounds that have been persistently underrepresented in higher education. For example, 39 percent of respondents identified as students of color, including American Indian/Alaska Native (2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (7%), African American/Black (20%), Middle Eastern/North African (2%), and Hispanic/Latino/a/e (8%). Additionally, many students were low-income (45% were Pell recipients), were first-generation college students (35%), or indicated having a disability (24%). Students also navigated multiple roles outside of school—many were working (75%), had children under 18 (26%), or studied part-time or a mix of full-time and part-time (54%). Finally, three-quarters of surveyed students identified as female, and half were 25 years old and older.¹

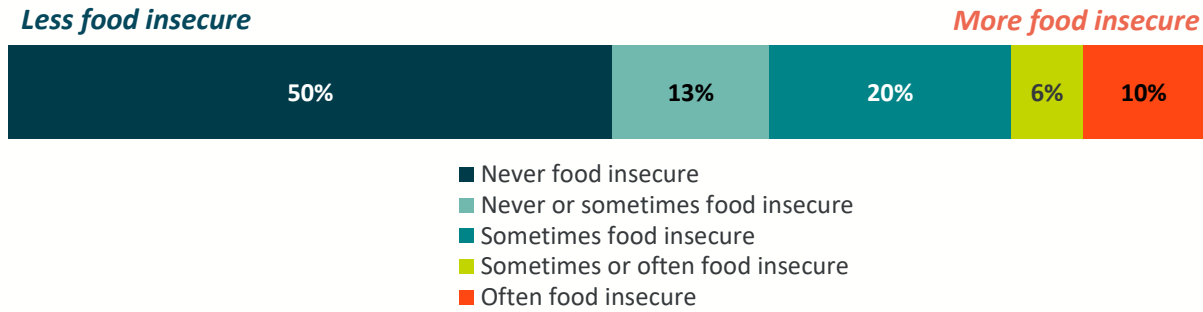
Increasing student access to SNAP would promote equitable outcomes because students from groups underrepresented in higher education were also more likely to experience food insecurity

Almost half of the survey sample indicated that it was sometimes true (31%) or often true (15%) that they worried their food would run out before they got money to buy more. Forty percent indicated that it was sometimes true (28%) or often true (12%) that the food they bought just didn't last and they didn't have money to get more.

Combining student responses across these two items, thirty-six percent of students indicated that it was sometimes or often true that they experienced food insecurity in these ways (figure 1). The following student groups, many of whom have been historically underrepresented in higher education, were more likely to report food insecurity (that is, they were more likely to select sometimes or often true for both items): students aged 25 and older; students enrolled a mix of full-time and part-time; students who identified as African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern/North African, and Hispanic/Latino/a/e; first-generation college students, student working 40 or more hours per week, and students with dependents (children under 18 years old).

¹ The survey sample at both CCAC and MontCo were more likely to be female, 25 years old or older, and Pell recipients than the general CCAC and MontCo college population (see tables A2 and A3) and national community college population (U.S. Department of Education, Spring 2021).

Figure 1. Thirty-six percent of students reported sometimes or often being worried about food running out and experiencing food not lasting long enough within the last 12 months



Note: Total sample size is 1,383 students. Responses from two items were combined to create a five-point scale: 1) We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more and 2) The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more. The five-point scale was: Never true to both items (0), never true and sometimes true (1), sometimes true to both items (2), sometimes true and often true (3), and often true to both items (4).

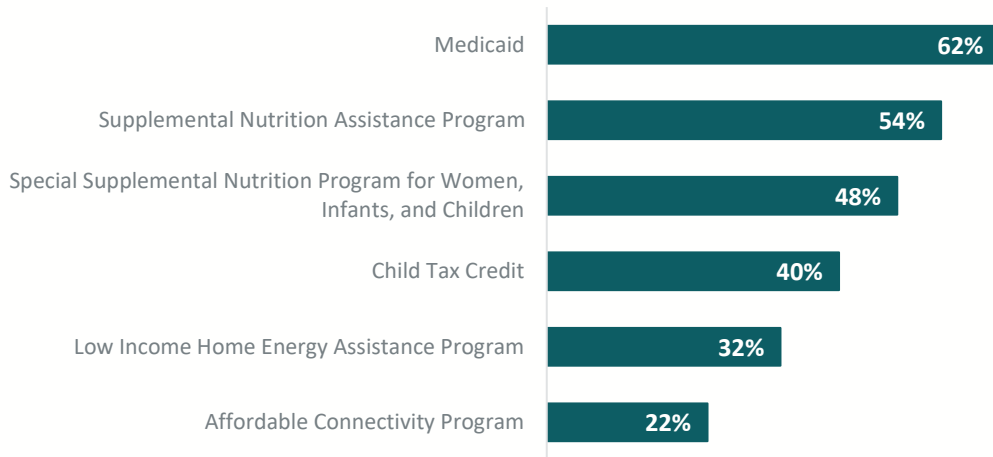
Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey. Food security items are from the Hunger Vital Sign (Hager et al., 2010).

Familiarity with public benefits

Student familiarity with and enrollment in public benefits programs vary based on the specific program

Students were most familiar with (and most likely to be enrolled in) Medicaid and least familiar with the Affordable Connectivity Program (figures 2 and 3). Students aged 24 and younger, students who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino/a/e, students who work 20 hours or less per week, and students who do not have any children were both less likely to be familiar with Medicaid, Child Tax Credit, Affordability Connectivity Program, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) *and* less likely to enroll in these programs.

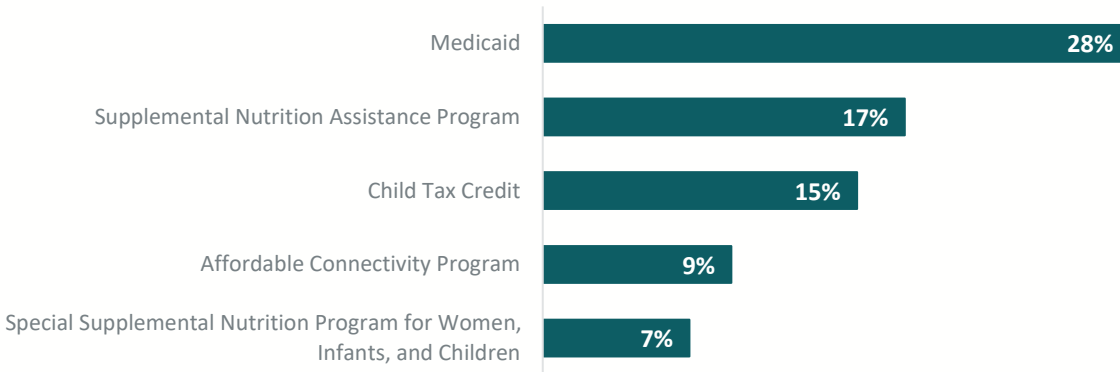
Figure 2. More students were familiar with Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program than other public benefits programs, such as the Affordable Connectivity Program



Note: Total sample size is 1,479 students. Figure presents the percentage of students who reported being familiar or very familiar with each program.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

Figure 3. More students are enrolled in Medicaid than other public benefits programs



Note: Figure 3 combines responses from two different survey questions. Figure presents the percentage of students who reported being enrolled in Medicaid, Child Tax Credit, Affordable Connectivity Program, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. (This survey question only asked about enrollment in these four programs.) Total sample size is 1,479 students. The figure also presents the percentage of the survey sample that indicated they received SNAP from a separate survey question.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

SNAP awareness

In interviews, students described becoming aware of SNAP through word-of-mouth, prior experiences, and outreach that was specific to their needs

The ten students who participated in interviews, all of whom had applied for SNAP, described **learning about SNAP through family, friends, word-of-mouth, growing up in a household that received SNAP, referrals from other agencies, college staff members, and/or the college website.**

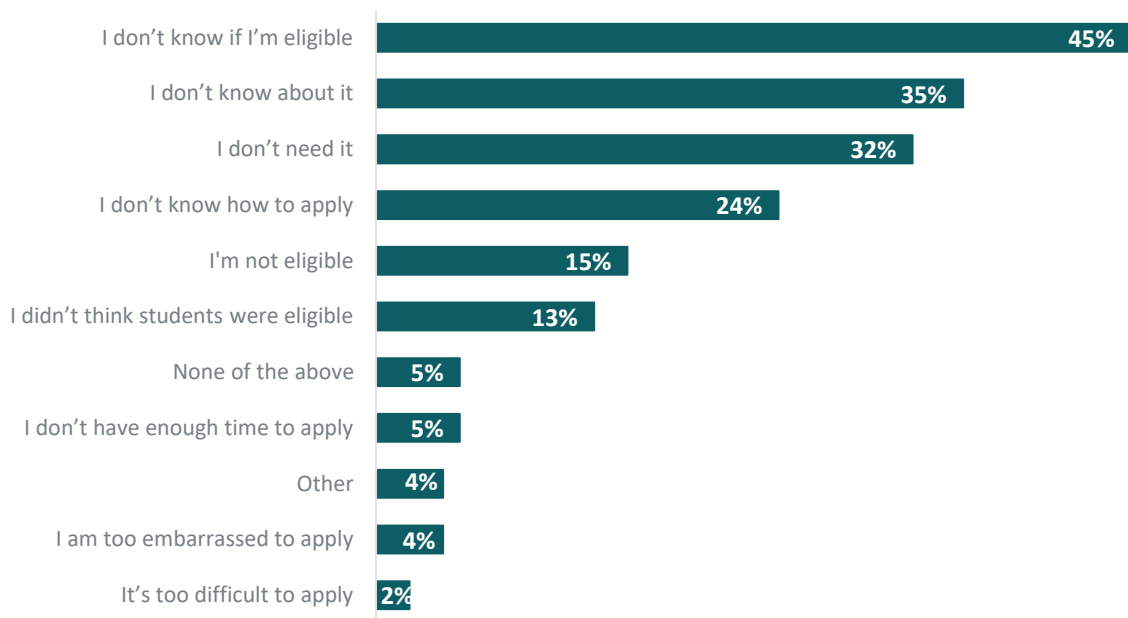
Many interviewed students became aware of SNAP from family and friends who shared information with the student in times of need. Other students shared that SNAP benefits or food stamps were “public knowledge,” and something that they grew up knowing about as a child from a low-income family. Three students shared that they were child recipients and felt that their knowledge of SNAP benefits was “passed down” from their parent’s experiences. One student shared that, as a child, she helped her caregiver complete the SNAP application by translating, filling-out, and submitting the paperwork. **Four students shared that various health and human service agencies shared information about SNAP in settings that were specifically related to their situational needs.** For example, three students shared that they first applied for benefits during their first pregnancy. “I was involved in WIC (Women Infant Children), and I saw a pamphlet for it,” one said. One interviewee shared that applying for SNAP benefits was one part of his recovery from drug addiction. Three students shared that they found out about SNAP via a college source, including by “poking around” on their college’s student services website and by applying to scholarships and getting connected with other on-campus resources like SNAP application assistance.

There appears to be a widespread lack of understanding about SNAP eligibility requirements that prevented many students from applying

Fewer than half (46%) of all surveyed students indicated knowing how to apply for SNAP, and fewer still (36%) indicated knowing if they were eligible to apply. The following groups of students were both less likely to know how to apply and whether they were eligible for SNAP: students aged 24 and under; students enrolled in college full-time; students who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African, and Hispanic/Latino/a/e; non-first-generation college students; students who work part-time (between 20 and 40 hours per week or fewer than 20 hours per week); and students who do not have children. (Many of these groups of students were also less likely to be familiar with and enroll in other public benefits programs.)

Uncertainty about eligibility was the most-cited reason for not applying for SNAP. Among surveyed students who did not apply for SNAP, nearly half indicated that one reason was that they didn’t know if they were eligible (45%; figure 4).

Figure 4. The top three reasons students did not apply for SNAP were that they didn't know if they were eligible, didn't know about it, or didn't need it



Note: Total sample size is 914 students who did not apply for SNAP. Students could select multiple reasons they did not apply for SNAP. "Other" included their parents/family already receiving it; not knowing what it is; no particular reason; feeling others need it more; not needing it.

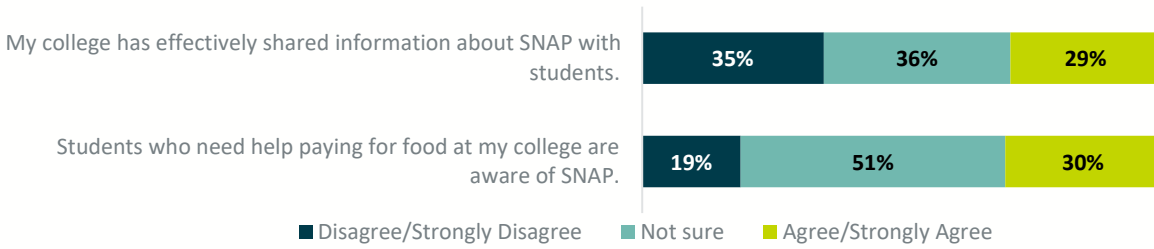
Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

Student interviews also illustrated that eligibility requirements are not widely understood prior to applying for SNAP. Overwhelmingly, interviewed students found out about their eligibility for SNAP during the application process. A student said, "I guess the process is you go through when you fill out the application and the caseworker will tell you if you are eligible or not." That is, many of the students were not certain of their eligibility before submitting applications. While a few students shared that there was eligibility information available (e.g., SNAP Income Limits), only one student described using this information before submitting their application and said, "I thought maybe I was eligible, because I had to complete a pre-qualified thing on the Compass page and it said that I probably was and to go ahead and fill out the application." Other students shared that resources and information about SNAP eligibility and income limits can help with understanding eligibility requirements, such as this [SNAP Income Limits](#) resource.

Improving SNAP awareness and outreach

Most surveyed students did not think their college has effectively shared information about SNAP or that students at their college were aware of SNAP (figure 5).

Figure 5. Less than one-third of students agreed that their college has effectively shared information about SNAP or that students at their college were aware of SNAP



Note: Total sample size is 1,443 students.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

All interviewed students recommended increasing the visibility of SNAP through using a wider range of marketing media

Students suggested various options for media including flyers, brochures, emails, and the school website. While flyers and brochures in common areas (e.g., student cafeteria) may reach those on campus, email blasts and website links might reach students off campus. One student said, “every week, my college would send out a community email which lists various club meetings and presentations that were available to students. It might be helpful if it included resources about the food pantry and SNAP.” Students also recommended the college share SNAP and basic needs resources with new students, specifically, and integrate information about SNAP into orientation materials.

So I think if that information was available, even just a one line mention in the welcome packet about additional resources for students, especially low income students, I think that would be helpful.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

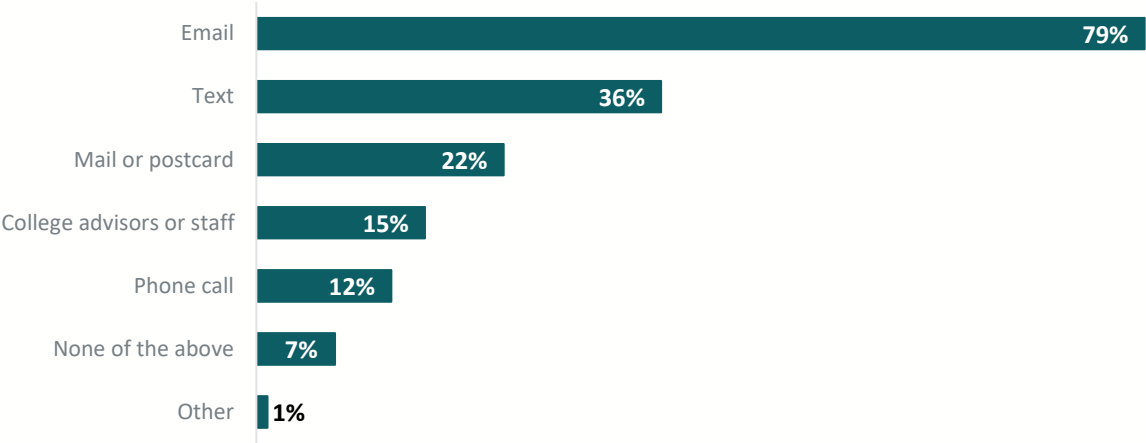
Interviewed students also recommended identifying and reaching out to low-income students who may qualify based on financial aid factors and providing these students with support with applying for SNAP.

It would be great if our school reached out to us and they told us, hey, since you already qualified for this, you more than likely qualify for a SNAP program as well. And if they also had a service ... for those who qualify, would you like to schedule a meeting with such and such to help fill out your application?

– Community college student (applied and did not receive benefits)

Students were asked in the survey to indicate their preferred methods of receiving notifications about eligibility for benefits. **Most students would prefer to be notified by email if they were eligible for SNAP, Medicaid, or other benefits (figure 6).**

Figure 6. Students preferred to be notified by email if they are eligible for SNAP, Medicaid, or other benefits



Note: Total sample size is 1,428 students. “Other” included preferring not to be notified, advertising using posters or social media, and a formal letter from college staff.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

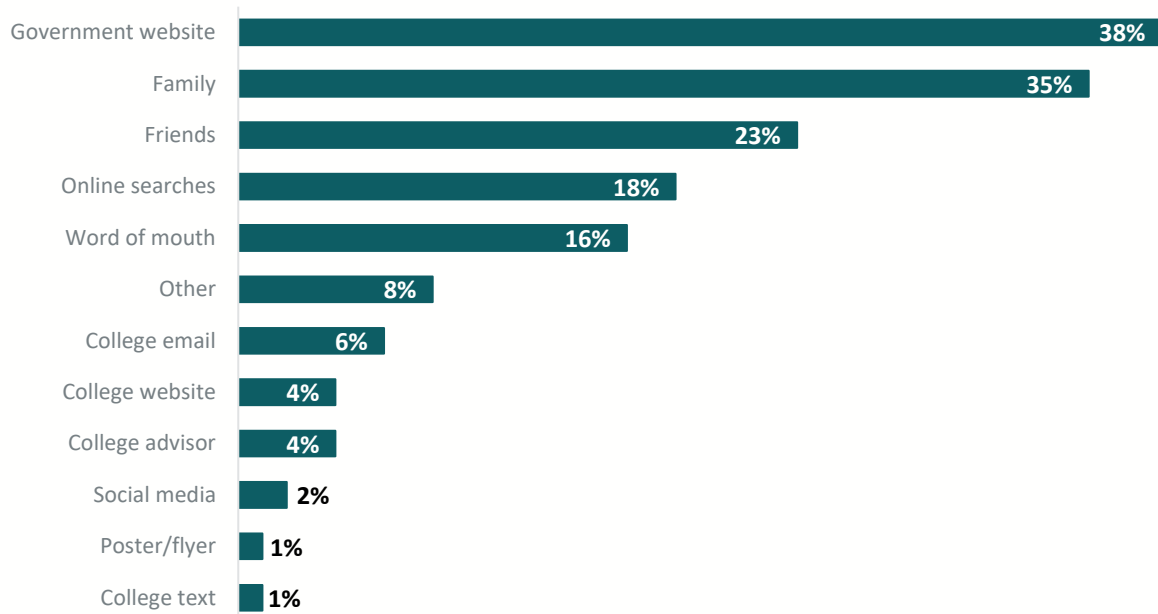
SNAP application experiences

Over one-third of the surveyed sample (35%) had ever personally applied for SNAP, and among these students half received benefits as a college students. Students more likely to apply for SNAP included those aged 25 and over; enrolled in college part-time or a mix of full-time and part-time; identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native and African American/Black; first-generation college students; working 40 or more hours per week or not working; or having children.

Students tend to apply on their own using online application tools and help with filling out the application when needed

Most surveyed students (68%) applied for SNAP on their own and used a wide variety of sources of information about how to apply. Students who applied for SNAP found information about how to apply from government websites, family, friends, online searches, and word-of-mouth, among other sources (figure 7).

Figure 7. Students' top sources of information about how to apply for SNAP were government websites, family, and friends



Note: Total sample size is 496 students who applied for SNAP. Other included prior knowledge from receiving it in the past, a health care professional, the welfare office, a social worker, and AmeriCorps.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

Most interviewed students completed the SNAP application online and started the application on their own. When asked how they found the [COMPASS website](#), seven students responded that they “Googled” variations of PA food stamps, Pennsylvania Welfare or SNAP benefits, EBT, Compass PA, and applying for benefits in Penn. Most students found the [COMPASS website](#) easy to navigate and the application process “a lot speedier” online compared to filling out paper applications. Many students shared that they use the myCompass PA app to re-certify and upload documents and appreciated that the application was prepopulated with their information, making it easier to update any changes on the app. A couple of students described using a mix of online and in-person approaches to submitting their application and providing documents. One of the two students initially signed up for SNAP benefits in person and then decided to complete the renewals online while the other completed her application online and submitted documents in person.

During the application process, students mainly received support from government caseworkers. All interviewed students said they were assigned to a caseworker, an employee of the state department of social services, after they submitted the application. Most students shared positive experiences with their caseworker and described them as “kind,” “supportive,” and “not judgmental.” One student shared that she was hesitant to interact with her caseworker based on previous experiences, but ultimately found them to be well-informed and helpful. Students

appreciated caseworkers’ personalized approach. For instance, students shared that the caseworkers often screened them for multiple resources, made connections whenever possible, and were encouraging during the interview process. One said, “[the caseworker] sat there and asked me every question he could, trying to help me fit into the salary requirements.” Two students shared that they used a toll-free number to reach their caseworker for more information, and although the wait time varied, you were able to “speak to a live representative who's able to look at your case directly.” Lastly, one student shared that they sought assistance from a health agency.

For the past six years, I've been working with a benefits coordinator through a mental health facility, and they have helped me go over the paperwork and understand everything and also help coordinate whenever I need to mail those specific documents back out.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

SNAP application challenges

While most surveyed students who applied for SNAP rated the application process as somewhat to very easy, they also shared significant challenges with the process in open-ended responses.

Students expressed challenges with collecting and submitting the necessary documents, understanding the application and eligibility requirements, getting in-person help, the length of time it takes, and technological challenges. Interviewed students shared similar challenges.

Table 1. Challenges applying for SNAP

Challenge	Number of Responses
Collecting and submitting documents	90
Application	
Difficult questions	16
Confusing application	15
Length	10
Eligibility	
Determining eligibility	17
Income limit	16
Hard to reach in-person help	26
Time-consuming	26
Technology	
Website	11
App	6
Uploading documents	9

Note: Total sample size is 256 students who applied for SNAP. Table summarizes themes from written responses to the open-ended (optional) question: “Please name one or two things that were most challenging when you applied for SNAP.”

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

A significant challenge for students applying for SNAP was the process of collecting the necessary documents

The most common challenge among surveyed students was knowing what documents and information were necessary for the application process and collecting and submitting verification, such as ID, employment paperwork, and proof of income. A survey respondent noted challenges with “gathering all of my information, looking up paystubs and W-2 forms.” Students struggled to provide all the documents they needed to apply, particularly because they didn’t have easy access to them. For example, one surveyed student shared, “Lots of information needed and when young and out on your own I didn't even have what they wanted.”

Similarly, four interviewed students shared difficulties in securing the required documents. Three students shared that they had a difficult time obtaining their pay stubs from an ex-employer or from an outdated employer system. One student shared that while her application process was smooth, she had a difficult time acquiring the required document to validate her partner’s unemployment.

Sometimes I would have a hard time getting the paperwork together. Mostly just having to go to a place that I had had been working at that, may or may not have been the best conditions to leave, and having to go back to them and ask them to sign a piece of paperwork saying that I don't work there anymore.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

Students also faced challenges with understanding the application. Some surveyed students struggled to understand some of the questions being asked of them. For example, one wrote, “Some of the questions make you think you are taking an IQ test. They are unnecessarily challenging.” Some students shared their concern that they didn’t answer the questions correctly. An additional challenge was a general lack of clarity over how to complete the application. One student wrote, “the application was difficult for me to fill out the first time and to fully understand it.” Finally, some students struggled with the length of the application, viewing it as too long and burdensome. One student shared the biggest challenges were, “the lengthy application. Repeated required information.”

Interviewed students also shared that they found the application to be “too wordy,” a bit “confusing,” and that the time involved was a “hinderance.” Four students shared issues with clarity on the application, website, and documents. Specifically, students wanted a better understanding of their eligibility. One said, “the website is not always going to tell you right away if you’re eligible so that way you don’t waste your time.” Two students discussed the questions they had about

whether their documents were correct and were going to be accepted. One noted, “they ask for proof of income. I feel like it's very broad. There's definitely a lot of room to overthink those things.” One student wanted more information about how to navigate the application website, because it was not “intuitive.”

Many surveyed students also shared having a hard time figuring out if they were eligible for benefits. Students were frustrated with the apparently restrictive rules to qualify, as many described being denied due to income limits even though they felt they didn't make enough money to cover food expenses. **Gross pay was specifically mentioned as a point of confusion** as students didn't understand why needed to submit that information instead of take-home pay after taxes. Example responses from students noting that eligibility issues were their biggest challenge include: “They said I make too much, but I don't make nearly enough,” “trying to fit into income limits while trying to work and provide for family while going to college,” and, “the income requirement because eligibility is calculated before tax which is crazy. Because the more you work the more tax is taken out and some people make little to nothing after tax.” Of the three interviewed students who applied for SNAP but did not receive benefits, two shared that they did not meet the eligibility requirements because of income limits.

Students also described difficulty contacting case workers for help, both over the phone and in-person. For example, one student wrote their biggest challenge was “getting in touch with a county employee,” and another wrote, “not being able to access help or get answers to questions (phone help lines were busy).” Another student described their biggest challenge was, “the caseworker turnover rate. The lack of communication and the difficulty of contacting a human for assistance were frustrating.” Additionally, a couple students described issues traveling to the office. The few interviewed students who shared that they went in person to complete the application described **long wait times** as well.

Students also cited the length of time it takes to complete the application as a challenge. Many surveyed students described that it takes a long time to complete the application, to get ahold of and communicate with case workers, to see approval or denial, and to receive the card. Some students described this more generally as a long wait or the waiting time, while others mentioned more specific aspects that took a while such as “waiting for determination.” This process often was found to be too time-consuming for students, as one shared their biggest challenge was “finding time in my schedule to answer the phone for the questionnaire they conduct and submitting the proper paperwork.”

Finally, students had some trouble with the website or the app. Students described the website freezing or crashing, having trouble accessing the site, or the site just not being user-friendly. Several students also shared challenges with uploading documents. For example, students said

“uploading the documents. Their site doesn't always want to scan properly,” and, “uploading documents is confusing if you have not done it before.”

A few interviewed students shared that they faced issues with the website prompting them to either stop their application or submit documents in person. Of the three interviewed students who did not receive SNAP benefits, one did not submit the required documents due to a combination of factors related to the length of time the application was taking to complete and difficulties with the application software.

I remember applying for everything in the middle of midterms weeks and just going through like difficulty and I don't wanna stress myself out over [the application] software that's getting on my nerves already. So, I'm just gonna push this to later on my to-do list.

– Community college student (applied and did not receive benefits)

Improving SNAP application experiences

Students suggested numerous ways the application experience could be improved, including **additional guidance through the application process; more information about necessary documents, eligibility, and how to complete the application; an easier application; support with technology; and improved casework communication.**

Table 2. Additional help to apply for SNAP

Additional Help	Number of Responses
Guidance through the application process	40
Knowing the necessary documents to provide	25
Better understanding of eligibility requirements	22
More information about SNAP	21
Easier application	19
Support with technology	14
Improved caseworker communication	7

Note: Total sample size is 151 students who applied for SNAP. Table summarizes themes from written responses to the open-ended (optional) question: “What else would have been helpful when you applied for SNAP?”

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

Students would like more guided assistance through the application process

Surveyed students described this guidance in the form of in-person assistance. Some also suggested it could come in the form of instructions or directions. For example, one student shared that “easy step-by-step instructions with graphics” would have been helpful when they applied for SNAP. Overall, students felt help from someone who knows more about SNAP could better guide them through the application process.

Interviewed students recommended that the college provide students interested in SNAP with one-on-one assistance. Students had different ideas of who could serve in these positions including people from outside sources (e.g., county representative, community-based organization partnership), teachers and staff members, and students familiar with the process. Ultimately, as one student put it, “the most helpful resource that I had was somebody to help me through this whole process.” Another student said, “my biggest piece of advice is just to make it more obvious that it’s there and that the school can assist in the process of applying and determining eligibility.”

They can maybe have somebody from the county assistance office come in or have somebody on staff at the school periodically, on certain dates, to help the students apply or to answer any questions about the application process.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

Surveyed students also shared what else would be helpful (table 2). After guidance with the application process, the next most common request was **help in knowing what information or documents are necessary to apply**. Some students shared that the directions were unclear or they did not know all they would need to provide after the application. For example, one student shared, “It would be helpful if someone told me in detail what documents to prepare in advance.”

Students also want help to better understand the eligibility requirements, particularly around income limits. Some students were unsure or confused about their eligibility status, for example, students wrote that it would have been helpful “if they clearly told me which kind of college students can be accepted for SNAP” or if they were provided “more clarity as to who is eligible.” Income was a main point of frustration for students, as they either were not clear or did not understand the income limits. Students shared that “knowing the amount of income before being denied” and “knowing the income requirements before you applied, so you don’t waste your time applying if you are not accepted for it” would be helpful. Overall, students would have liked to know if they were eligible before applying for SNAP.

Students also wanted more information about the general process of applying for SNAP. For example, one wrote, “it would have been helpful to have a general overview of how the program

would work, and how the enrollment process works.” Students described wanting more resources, information, and FAQs about how to apply and what it takes to apply. Students also wanted more information about SNAP itself, particularly what the benefits of the program would be.

Other students described making the application process easier and less burdensome. They wanted less paperwork, simpler questions, and more options to apply. One student shared that they would like to see “the process being easier/less time consuming,” and another requested “greater ease of applying; being in need of assistance is hard enough without feeling like I’m being interrogated.”

Some students talked about improvements or better access to technology to smooth the application process. They discussed making the website and app easier to navigate, access to printers or scanners for documents, preferring to apply online, and an easier way to submit documents.

Lastly, students desired better communication and interactions with the county assistance office. Students described difficulties getting ahold of them and unpleasant interactions. For example, one student shared, “it was such a long time ago, but what I remember is that the case workers weren’t so helpful or enthusiastic about helping me. So, I guess a more helpful and enthusiastic staff.”

SNAP impact

All interviewed students who received SNAP benefits (7 out of 10 students) shared that it has made a positive impact on their personal and academic lives. Students discussed having a “huge burden” lifted off their shoulders, and described the aid as a “blessing,” “benefit,” and “huge help.” Students shared that receiving benefits helped them buy groceries for themselves and their families, “as a person who grew up being food insecure to the point of hypervigilance, not letting my kids starve was kind of a big thing. So not having to stress about that was really helpful.” These benefits enabled students to purchase “nutritious food,” while saving their income for other expenses such as rent and utility bills.

It’s made my life so much easier. I’ll don’t have to take money out of what little I have left to pay bills. So, I’m not worried about am I gonna pay this bill or eat? It’s made that stress gone.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

One student shared that college was accessible because the SNAP benefits allowed them to work fewer hours. Finally, one student shared that they can “focus more on studying and assignments” because they “worried less” about expenses.

It's changed my life. It's been like the whole reason that I have been able to keep it together enough to get some of the opportunities that I've gotten.

– Community college student (applied and received benefits)

Next steps

Overall, our findings suggest the following next steps for postsecondary institutions and their partners:

Recommendations for postsecondary institutions

1. Implement a widespread informational campaign to provide students basic information about SNAP and tools to assess eligibility

A widespread informational campaign about SNAP may be beneficial since many community college students may be eligible for SNAP benefits but unaware of their eligibility or of SNAP altogether (see figure 4). For example, many CCAC and MontCo students are from low-income households and thus may be eligible for SNAP: 40 percent of CCAC and 37 percent of MontCo full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students received Pell Grants in 2020-21 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020-2021, Community College of Allegheny County; U.S. Department of Education, 2020-2021, Montgomery County Community College).

A widespread informational campaign should use social media, on-campus flyers, email, resources in student orientation packets, and the school website to inform the overall student population about what SNAP is, who might be eligible, and how to apply. Pre-screening tools could give students an idea if they are likely eligible for SNAP and if they are, the next steps to take or where to go for more assistance.

We also found that there were specific groups of students who were less familiar with public benefits programs, less likely to enroll, and less likely to know whether they were eligible for SNAP and how to apply. These groups included: students aged 24 and under, students who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino/a/e, students who work part-time, and students who do not have children. We do not know to what extent these students are eligible for SNAP; a widespread campaign would help reach students who lack awareness about public benefits and provide them tools to assess whether they are eligible or not before they take any next steps.

2. Train college staff members and faculty on SNAP eligibility

A widespread informational campaign may help more students understand if they are eligible and may be all that is needed to help some students apply. However, many students in this study expressed significant challenges with the application process and would have benefited from more assistance. Education for college faculty and staff members about SNAP eligibility is key so they can help refer students who are likely eligible to resources and assistance. College faculty and staff members need to understand when and where to refer students, as well as what on- or off-campus benefit application assistance may be available.

3. Use data to conduct targeted outreach to inform students of possible benefits eligibility

Colleges could implement more targeted outreach to students who are likely eligible for SNAP and refer them to one-on-one application assistance. College offices and departments (admissions, financial aid, and student services) should work together to identify likely eligible students using students' Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) and other institutional data, with support from resources such as BDT's toolkit ["Benefits Access for Student Success: A Toolkit for Leveraging Data to Find Eligible Students"](#) (Benefits Data Trust, 2023). They can then share tailored resources about SNAP and other benefits and refer students to applications and assistance. Given the challenges students in this study noted with finding and providing acceptable documentation for their SNAP applications, postsecondary institutions should also help streamline documentation processes for students.

4. Build partnerships with local agencies administering benefits and/or nonprofits to support one-on-one application assistance for their students

Postsecondary institutions should explore how they can build partnerships with their local or county human services offices and/or nonprofits to refer students for application assistance. Since caseworkers are not available until an application is submitted, students need help to understand the SNAP eligibility requirements, application process, and benefits prior to starting or during the application process but before submission. One-on-one assistance could cover the full scope of SNAP and other available benefits, college student eligibility (e.g., student exemptions, income requirements), how to navigate online or self-service applications, examples of required documentation, and where and how to use benefit (e.g., locations that accept Electronic Benefits Transfer cards).

Policy recommendations

5. States should consider codifying federal guidance that encourages the use of FAFSA data to connect students with federal benefit programs.

In January of 2022, the U.S. Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague Letter (Kvaal, J., 2022, January 20) reminding institutions of higher education that they are permitted to use FAFSA data to connect students with federal benefit programs. California recently codified this federal guidance into state law by enacting legislation requiring public universities and colleges in the state to use FAFSA data to identify students likely eligible for CalFresh, the state's version of SNAP, and conduct outreach to those students to inform them of possible eligibility and how to apply (A.B. 2810, Ca. 2022). Other states should consider similar measures that ensure public institutions of higher education take steps to connect likely eligible students with benefit programs.

6. Advocate for policy change to make SNAP eligibility easier to understand through reframing student exemptions

SNAP eligibility requirements are unnecessarily confusing to students. As recommended in a 2018 United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, SNAP student exemptions should be reframed affirmatively, using language such as, "students can qualify for SNAP if they meet one of the following criteria." Reframing will help eliminate confusion and help to describe the eligibility requirements more clearly.

To conclude, SNAP benefits can have a positive impact on college students' personal and academic lives, but there are challenges with benefits awareness and access. Findings from this research project align with findings from our ECMC Foundation Basic Needs Initiative evaluation ([Hodara et al., 2023](#)) that found that students learn about basic needs services and resources in a wide variety of ways and have different preferences for how they receive information. Based on these two studies, which include student voices from across the country, we recommend a holistic approach to public benefits outreach through campus-wide outreach (flyers, email), social media, and word-of-mouth paired with training for college faculty and staff-members, targeted outreach to students who are likely eligible for public benefits, and one-on-one assistance. In addition, codifying the use of FAFSA data to connect students with federal benefit programs and changing the way SNAP rules and regulations are framed could facilitate clearer, more student-centered ways of describing SNAP eligibility and help more students apply for and receive benefits that improve their well-being and academic success.

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Appendix A: Student survey

Survey approach

The *Connecting Students to Benefits* survey was intended to gather information about what students understood about public benefits and their experiences with SNAP. The survey included two validated items from the [Hunger Vital Sign](#) (Hager et al., 2010) to assess food security. The other survey items were developed by Education Northwest researchers in collaboration with Benefits Data Trust, CCAC, and MontCo.

At CCAC, the survey was first administered to 7,738 enrolled CCAC students who were 18 or older on 10/31/23. Three reminder emails and a text message were sent to students in November and December and the survey was closed on 12/13/23. At MontCo, the survey was first administered to 7,909 enrolled MontCo students who were 18 or older on 11/7/23. Three reminder emails were sent to students in November and December and the survey was closed on 12/13/23. To incentivize participation, 25 students from each community college who completed the survey were randomly selected for a \$20 Visa gift card.

In total, 1,570 students consented to take the survey, but we dropped 91 students from the sample who did not answer any questions or only answered the first or second question. We kept the remaining responses even if students only partially completed the survey. Thus, the total sample size varies by item. At CCAC, the maximum sample size was 833, and at MontCo, the maximum sample size was 646.

Data from the survey was imported from Alchemer, a survey software program, to Stata, a statistical software program, to undergo cleaning and analysis. We disaggregated most survey items by age, full-time/part-time status, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, work status, and whether the respondent had children. Then we examined which groups responded above or below the average for the item to report groups that were more or less likely to report an experience. Finally, open-ended responses were exported and coded for themes in Excel.

Survey sample and representativeness

The survey sample represents a diverse group of individuals with various lived experiences and identities. Half of the students who responded to the survey were age 24 and under and half were 25 and older. About three-quarters were returning students. Over half were part-time (39%) or a mix of part-time and full-time (15%). Three-quarters of respondents identified as female. Nearly 4 percent identified as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. Thirty-nine percent of

respondents identified as students of color: American Indian/Alaska Native (2%), Asian/Pacific Islander (7%), African American/Black (20%), Middle Eastern/North African (2%), and Hispanic/Latino/a/e (8%). Almost one-quarter of respondents reported having a disability and one-quarter reported having children under 18 years old. More than one-third indicated they were a first-generation student. Only 4 percent were international students. Hours worked varied with one-quarter of students working full-time (40 or more hours a week), half working part-time, and one-quarter not working. Finally, nearly half of respondents were Pell recipients.

Table A1. Survey sample characteristics

Demographics	Percent
College	
Community College of Allegheny County	56%
Montgomery County Community College	44%
Age	
24 and under	51%
25 and above	49%
New or returning student	
New student	26%
Returning student	74%
Full- or part-time student	
Full-time student	46%
Part-time student	39%
Mix of both	15%
Gender	
Man	20%
Woman	75%
Transgender man	1%
Transgender woman	<1%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	2%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Race (select all that apply)	
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
African American/Black	20%
Middle Eastern/North African	2%
Hispanic/Latino/a/e	8%
White	67%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Has children under 18 years old	26%
Has a disability	24%
First-generation college student	35%
International student	4%
Hours worked per week	
40 or more hours	24%
Between 20 but less than 40 hours	31%

Less than 20 hours	20%
Not working	25%
Pell grant recipient	45%

Notes: These questions were optional and sample sizes fluctuate for each item between 1,351 and 1,372.

Source: Connecting Students to Benefits Survey.

The surveyed sample at both CCAC and MontCo were more likely to be female, 25 years old or older, and Pell recipients than the general college population (see tables A2 and A3). It is harder to conclude if the survey sample is representative of the college population by race/ethnicity. In the survey, students could select all race/ethnicity categories they identified with, while the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, from which we draw the college population characteristics, assigns a single race/ethnicity to students. Thus, it appears that the survey sample is represented by more white students and students of color compared to the college population.

Overall, the survey sample is not representative of the college population, and thus findings are not likely generalizable to the entire CCAC and MontCo student population. However, they provide perspectives from an important group of diverse students who mirror the characteristics displayed in table A1.

Table A2. CCAC survey sample and college population

Demographics	Survey Sample (n = 833)	College Population, Fall 2021 (N = 11,977)
Female	77%	53%
Male	18%	47%
White	71%	61%
Black/African American	19%	14%
Hispanic/Latino	5%	3%
24 and under	43%	57%
25 and over	57%	43%
Pell	45%	27%

Source: Survey sample percentages from Connecting Students to Benefits Survey and college population percentages from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System:

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=210605>

Table A3. MontCo survey sample and college population

Demographics	Survey Sample (n = 646)	College Population, Fall 2021 (N = 8,996)
Female	73%	60%
Male	21%	40%
White	62%	58%
Black/African American	22%	15%
Hispanic/Latino	11%	10%
24 and under	61%	67%
25 and over	39%	33%
Pell	45%	29%

Source: Survey sample percentages from Connecting Students to Benefits Survey and college population percentages from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System:

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=214111>

Connecting Students to Benefits student survey protocol

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a survey to share what you know about public benefits and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), otherwise known as food stamps. This survey is part of the *Connecting Students to Benefits* project with Montgomery County Community College and Community College of Allegheny County, funded by [Benefits Data Trust \(BDT\)](#), a national nonprofit organization that helps individuals access public benefits. Your college is working with Benefits Data Trust and [Education Northwest](#), a research organization, to better understand college students' experience with SNAP benefits. Education Northwest researchers will summarize the results of this student survey in a report to help your college better understand challenges to accessing SNAP benefits and what may help students access SNAP.

We expect this survey to take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Your participation in the survey is **voluntary** and will have no impact on your student experience, access to campus supports or financial aid, or participation in SNAP. You may choose not to participate or stop the survey at any time.

Your responses are **confidential**. We will not use your name or identifiable characteristics in the research report. The research report will be used by Benefits Data Trust and your college to better support students' access to public benefits.

If you choose to complete this survey, you will be entered into a raffle for a \$20 visa gift card. (25 students will win the raffle.)

Please contact Michelle Hodara at michelle.hodara@ednw.org or 503-275-9598 with any questions regarding this survey.

1) Do you consent to take this survey?

Yes

No

This first section is about your awareness of public benefits.

2) How familiar are you with the following programs?

	Very familiar	Familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not at all familiar
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: SNAP provides financial assistance to purchase groceries				
Medicaid: Medicaid provides free or low cost health coverage				
Affordable Connectivity Program: ACP provides discounted internet service				
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: LIHEAP provides financial assistance to pay heating bills				
Child Tax Credit: CTC is a refundable tax credit for families with dependent children				
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children: WIC provides supplemental foods to pregnant and breastfeeding individuals and households with children 5 and under				

3) Are you enrolled in any of the following programs?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Medicaid			
Affordability Connectivity Program			
Child Tax Credit			
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)			

The next questions ask you about SNAP benefits, specifically.

4) Do you know if you are eligible for SNAP benefits?

Yes

No

5) Do you know how to apply for SNAP benefits?

Yes

No

6) What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
My college has effectively shared information about SNAP with students.					
Students who need help paying for food at my college are aware of SNAP.					

7) If you were eligible for SNAP, Medicaid, or other benefits, how would you prefer to be notified by your college?

Email

Text

Phone call

Mail or postcard

College advisors or staff

Other - Write In: _____

None of the above

This section asks about your experiences applying to SNAP. As a reminder, your responses are confidential.

8) Have you ever personally applied for SNAP?

Yes

No

**Survey logic: If yes, next question is #12. If no, next question is #9.*

9) Why have you not applied for SNAP? Check all that apply.

I don't know about it

I don't need it

I'm not eligible

I don't know if I'm eligible

I didn't think students were eligible

I don't know how to apply

It's too difficult to apply

I don't have enough time to apply

I am too embarrassed to apply

Other - Write In: _____

None of the above

10) Are you interested in applying for SNAP?

Yes

No

Unsure

11) What help would you most like to receive to apply for SNAP?

Assistance over the phone

In-person help

Other - Write In

**Survey logic: Next question is #20.*

**Survey logic: If yes to question #8.*

12) How easy was it to apply for SNAP?

Very easy

Easy

Somewhat easy

Not at all easy

13) Have you personally received SNAP benefits as a college student?

Yes

No

I don't know

Prefer not to answer

If no to #13:

14) Why did you not receive SNAP benefits? [optional write-in]

15) How did you find information about applying for SNAP? Select all that apply.

College advisor or staff

College website

Email from college

Text message from college

Family

Friends

Word of mouth

Online searches

Social media

Poster/flyer

Government website

Other - Write In: _____

16) What is the primary way you received help in applying for SNAP? Select only one.

Assistance over the phone

In-person help from a college staff member

In-person help from a county office or community-based organization

In-person help from a friend or family member

I applied on my own without assistance

Other - Write In: _____

I don't remember

17) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The help I received made the process of applying for SNAP easier for me."

Strongly agree

- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18) What else would have been helpful when you applied for SNAP? [optional write-in]

19) Please name one or two things that were most challenging when you applied for SNAP.
[optional write-in] _____

This section asks about the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months.

20) "We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months?

- Often true
- Somewhat true
- Never true

21) "The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for your household in the last 12 months?

- Often true
- Somewhat true
- Never true

These final questions are optional and ask about your background. As a reminder, your responses are confidential.

22) What is your age?

23) Are you a new or returning student?

- New student
- Returning student

24) Are you a full-time or part-time student?

- Full-time (that is, most terms I take 12 credits or more)

- Part-time (that is, most terms I take less than 12 credits)
- A mix of full-time and part-time (it varies every term how many credits I take)

25) What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender man
- Transgender woman
- Non-binary or gender non-conforming
- Add my own - Write In: _____
- Prefer not to answer

26) What is your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Hispanic/Latina/o/x
- Native Hawaiian
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Add my own - Write In: _____
- Prefer not to answer

27) Do you have a disability or learning difficulty?

- Yes
- No

28) Are you a first-generation college student (that is, are you the first in your family to attend college?)

- Yes
- No

29) Are you an international student?

- Yes
- No

30) Are you working?

- Yes, 40 or more hours, on average, per week
- Yes, between 20 but less than 40 hours, on average, per week
- Yes, less than 20 hours, on average, per week
- No

31) Do you have any children under 18?

- Yes
- No

32) Are you a Federal Pell Grant recipient?

- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
-

Survey logic: If answered yes to question #8, students see this page:

Before you go, we would like to gather your interest in participating in a one-on-one interview with an Education Northwest researcher about your experiences with SNAP. The interview would last approximately one-hour and be conducted over the phone or zoom. The interview will be confidential and be used to inform how to improve access to SNAP for other college students. At the end of the interview, you will receive a \$50 gift card for your participation.

33) Are you interested in participating in an interview?

- Yes
- No

If you selected yes, an Education Northwest researcher will reach out to you to provide more information about the interview. Thank you!

34) To be entered into a raffle to receive a \$20 visa gift card, please share your name and email address. 25 students will be selected at random to receive a visa gift card. Your name will not be connected to your survey responses.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

Appendix B: Student interviews

Interview approach

The student interviews were intended to provide a deeper look at the SNAP application experience for community college students from diverse backgrounds. We conducted ten virtual interviews with CCAC and MontCo students in February 2023 to learn more about their SNAP application experience. Students were identified for an interview if they indicated on the survey that they had applied for SNAP and were interested in participating in an interview. A total of 272 students indicated on the survey they were interested in participating in an interview.

To select students for the interviews, we considered race, gender, work status, food security, whether they received SNAP benefits, and whether they had children under age 18. We selected a pool of 20 students for interviews that were intentionally diverse across those characteristics. We then contacted five students from CCAC and five students from MontCo for an interview. If students did not respond to our request, we reached out to other students in the pool until we completed 10 interviews total.

Our interview participants were a diverse group of students:

- Four identified as a woman, three identified as a man, and three identified as non-binary or gender non-confirming.
- Two interviewees identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, two as Asian/Pacific Islander, four as African American/Black, one as Middle Eastern/North African, five as Hispanic/Latino/a/e, and four as white. (Students could select multiple race/ethnicity identities, and many of the interviewed students identified as more than one race/ethnicity).
- Four interviewees indicated that they were not working, one worked less than 20 hours per week, two worked between 20 and 40 hours per week, and three worked more than 40 hours per week.
- Six students have children under the age of 18 while four students indicated having no children.
- Seven interviewees indicated that they received SNAP benefits while three did not receive SNAP benefits. Of the three students who did not receive SNAP benefits, two shared that they did not meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., worked too many hours) and one student did not submit the required documents.

Interview participants received a \$50 gift card at the end of the interview.

The interviews were transcribed and coded for themes aligned with the interview protocol related to SNAP application awareness and ideas for increasing awareness, SNAP eligibility awareness and understanding, experiences with the SNAP application process and challenges, needed application supports, and the impact of SNAP. Following coding the interviews, researchers summarized key themes and selected illustrative quotes that highlighted student experiences.

Interview protocol

Informed consent (verbal)

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Marbella Uriostegui, and I am a researcher at Education Northwest, a nonprofit organization based in Portland, OR. This interview is part of the *Connecting Students to Benefits* project with Montgomery County Community College and Community College of Allegheny Country project, funded by [Benefits Data Trust \(BDT\)](#), a national nonprofit organization that helps individuals access public benefits. Your college is working with Benefits Data Trust and Education Northwest to better understand college students' experience with accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

You previously completed a survey and indicated that you have applied for SNAP. We would like to hear from you about what that experience was like. Education Northwest researchers will summarize the results of the student survey and interviews in a report to help your college and Benefits Data Trust better understand challenges to accessing SNAP benefits and what may help students access SNAP. The results of this study inform efforts to improve access to SNAP benefits and help other students at your college access SNAP.

This interview will take no more than 1 hour of your time. Your participation in this interview is **voluntary** and will have no impact on your student experience, access to campus support or financial aid, or participation in SNAP. You may choose not to participate, decline to answer any question, or stop the interview at any time. If there is a question you are not able to answer, or prefer not to answer, that is fine. If there is anything you discuss that you do not want us to share, please let me know.

This interview is **confidential**. We will not use your name or identifiable characteristics in the study report.

At the conclusion of this interview, we will send you a \$50 gift card as a thank you.

If you have any questions about this research project or the way your interview will be used, please contact Michelle Hodara at michelle.hodara@ednw.org or 503-275-9598.

With your permission, I would like to record this interview in order to have a complete record of our conversation. You may request at any time to discontinue or temporarily stop the recording. The recording will be shared with a third-party service for transcription. Is audio recording acceptable to you? *[If yes, turn on audio recorder.]* Just to confirm one more time: You agree to participate in this study and understand that it is voluntary and confidential. *[Need audible consent for our records.]* Thanks, OK, let's begin.

Interview Questions

Introduction

1. Let's get started with introductions. Can you tell me your name, major (or potential major), and how long you have been a student at [College Name]?
 - a. Are you a full-time or part-time student?
2. Are you currently working?
 - a. If yes, what do you do for work?
 - b. How many hours a week do you work on average?

Knowledge about SNAP and eligibility

3. How did you become aware of SNAP benefits?
 - a. Who shared information about SNAP benefits with you?
4. How did you learn about SNAP requirements and about your eligibility for these benefits?
5. Did you notice if your eligibility for SNAP benefits changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. If yes, how did you learn about those changes for SNAP eligibility?

Application

6. How long ago did you submit a SNAP application as a college student?
7. Walk me through your process for signing up for SNAP benefits.
 - a. Did you complete forms online? Did you go into an office?
 - b. Who helped you sign up? Did anyone from your college help you complete the application? If yes, who?
 - c. Did anyone outside your college help you complete the application? If yes, who?
 - d. After applicants submit their information, they are required to submit documentation. What was your experience with providing documentation?
 - e. One of the required documents includes the Community College Verification Form. Did you get that form filled out?
 - i. How did you know who to go to get that form filled out? How easy or difficult was it to get this form filled out?

8. How much time passed after you submitted your application and documents to be notified whether you qualified or not?
9. What was most challenging about the SNAP application process?
 - a. Who or what helped you the most? (probe for experience with case worker)
10. What information would have been helpful during the application process?
11. What resource would have been helpful during the application process?

Status/Recertification

12. At this time, are you receiving SNAP?
 - a. If no, did you ever receive SNAP benefits as a college student? Why are you not receiving benefits?
 - b. If yes, have you encountered any challenges using your benefits?
13. Have you had to recertify your eligibility to continue receiving SNAP benefits?
 - a. If yes, how did you know how to recertify? (Reminder email?)
 - b. What was that process like? Did you receive any help?

Increasing Outreach

14. There are college students who are eligible for SNAP and do not know about SNAP or have not yet applied. What are some barriers or challenges college students face related to accessing SNAP benefits?
 - a. What could your college do to eliminate the barriers you named?

Impact

15. If received/receiving SNAP benefits as a college student: What impact has accessing and receiving SNAP benefits had on your college experience? Your personal life?
16. Do you have any additional advice for your college to improve students' experiences with accessing public benefits?