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EO 12866 Meeting

RIN: 0584-AE62

Agency 0584-USDA/FNS

Rule Title: Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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GIVE READILY,  
AND THE LORD WILL BLESS YOUR NATION

From the Bible, Deuteronomy 15:

7) **If, however, there is a needy person among you**, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman.

8) Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs.

10) Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings.

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WHO IS NEEDY?

**Military Families Facing Hunger** *Military.com 6 May 2020*

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/05/06/congress-must-act-immediately-military-families-facing-hunger.html>

"Military families facing hunger --  
it's as unjust as it is shocking."

Data from an annual 2017 Census Bureau survey showed that more

than 16,000 active-duty service members received food stamps, known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. "We've identified that there are food pantries on or near almost every military base in this country. ... there's no reason that those who are serving in the armed forces should have to go to food pantries on a routine basis."

**"Letter from Wisconsin", by Dan Kaufman**

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/17/how-suffering-farmers-may-determine-trumps-fate> *New Yorker*, Aug 17, 2020

"... A lot of farmers I know are on food stamps."

Volenec's dairy farm is in the Driftless Area, a vast region of hills and valleys in southern and western Wisconsin whose agricultural and political histories are deeply entwined. Since *NAFTA's* passage, more than two hundred thousand small farms in the U.S. have gone under, and an agricultural trading surplus with Canada and Mexico has become a twelve-billion-dollar deficit.

The breakfast was a benefit for the Farmer Angel Network, a support group founded by Randy Roecker, a dairy farmer from nearby Loganville. As in many rural areas, suicides in Wisconsin have increased dramatically in recent years, reaching a record of nine hundred and eighteen in 2017.

Roecker introduced me to his family, who were sitting around a cafeteria table. His mother, father, daughter, and son-in-law all work on the farm. His parents, both in their eighties, still wake up at three-thirty every morning and work until eight at night. All of them support Trump. "We feel like he is more in touch. I know what my wages are. We live below the poverty level over here. Most of the farmers I know, we're on free health care, and a lot of farmers I know are on food stamps." He looked around the table at his family. "It's all Trump supporters around here."

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## FAR TOO MANY AMERICANS GO HUNGRY

### **Why Hunger Can Grow Even When Poverty Doesn't**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/28/us/politics/coronavirus-hunger-poverty.html> *New York Times, July 28, 2020*

"... Poverty is measured annually; people eat daily whether income arrives in time or not."

-- Almost half the people who are food insecure are not poor but "near poor", meaning incomes up to twice the poverty line. Nearly two-thirds of the households with more stringent "very low food security" before the pandemic, ie, actual hunger, were not poor.

-- Income volatility hurts families, eg, running out of money and groceries at the end of the month.

-- The growth of 'near poverty' during a pandemic increases food insecurity among the near poor as well as the officially "poor".

### **Are You Eligible for Food Stamps Now? It's Complex**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/17/your-money/food-stamps-coronavirus.html> *NYT July 18, 2020*

The safety net is starting to unravel. 10.8% of American adults are experiencing some level of food insecurity, according to Census Bureau Pulse Survey data released this week, and higher in Louisiana, Nevada and Ohio.

In 2018 FY, 40M people qualified for SNAP in an average month, meaning they passed both income and asset tests, and two employment requirements. And that was pre-Covid.

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## A JOB IS NOT A LIVING WAGE. DETAILS MATTER.

### **Meal Programs Scramble to Feed Hungry Children**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/parenting/free-summer-meal-programs-snap-wic-children.html> NYT July 8, 2020

Because she still has a job, though two days a week instead of full-time, the patient care technician, 57, cannot file for unemployment and isn't eligible for most financial assistance programs. Her smaller paycheck barely covers rent, bills and food for herself and her youngest granddaughter, 17, who lives with her full-time. "I raised four girls by myself, and I've been raising grandkids forever, and I did it all on my own. No benefits have ever come my way," she said. "This is something brand-new to me, and I don't know which way to turn."

Even in pre-Covid years, the USDA summer food program was only able to reach one child for every seven who received free or reduced price meals during the school year, Government financial assistance programs are struggling to operate under the twin pressures of a pandemic and the rise in unemployment.

Since mid-March, childhood hunger has risen to a rate three times higher than reported during the financial crisis of 2008, with nearly one in five households of mothers with children ages 12 and younger not getting enough to eat, according to a survey by the Brookings Institution published in May.

Congress authorized the Pandemic-EBT program in mid-March, to provide families with electronic debit cards with the cash value of school meals instead. But after two months, only about 15 percent of eligible children had received benefits, according to a New York Times analysis. Congress has yet to authorize Pandemic-EBT to cover summer meals.

Meal distribution programs are also bracing for the end of short-term financial help from the government, like the pandemic stimulus checks and unemployment bonuses.

Sara, a mom in Clinton Township, Michigan, didn't qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), because her husband's unemployment benefits pushed their household income above the threshold. "They didn't take into account that it's temporary," she said.

Many SNAP agencies are struggling, with most employees still working remotely to manage heightened demand. "Ohio agencies normally process 40,000 applications a month and we received over 100,000 in April alone," she said.

Complicating matters, the WIC program doesn't allow recipients to shop online for food nor use curbside pickup or self-checkout lanes in most places. Meg, a SNAP and WIC participant in Kirksville, Missouri, said she makes a separate grocery trip each week for her WIC foods. "I can use my SNAP card on anything and do curbside pickup, but for WIC, I have to go into the store, and since I don't have child care, I'm taking my kids in with me every time," she said.

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## SNAP IS LIFE-SAVING FOR VETERANS

### **"Reviewing the Availability of Resources to Address Veteran Hunger"**

Testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Veteran Affairs,

<https://d31hzhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20200116/8a/1c/f9/77/90f7be42590e6ca9e0f59ef2/>

*Josh\_Protas\_Testimony\_01.09.20\_FINAL.pdf*

*9 Jan 2020*

SNAP helps about 1.3 million low-income veterans, based on American Community Survey data, and about 7 percent of veterans live in households that receive SNAP.

As part of the efforts to address the recent suicide epidemic by veterans and military service members, policy makers must recognize the vital importance of federal nutrition assistance programs like SNAP in helping to meet their basic needs. It is clear that Members of Congress should support policy proposals that expand access and participation in SNAP in an effort to strengthen the program, not weaken it.

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