Expanding Community Colleges as SNAP E&T Providers

Student Outreach, Engagement, Enrollment

Planning Guide #7



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ACCT
1101 17th St NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 775-4667
acctinfo@acct.org
www.acct.org

ACCT ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

This planning guide is one of a series of documents produced by ACCT with the following project partners:

APHSA American Public Human Services Association

SJI SEATTLE JOBS INITIATIVE Opening Doors to Living-Wage Careers

skills strategy CONSULTING

USDA Food & Nutrition Service

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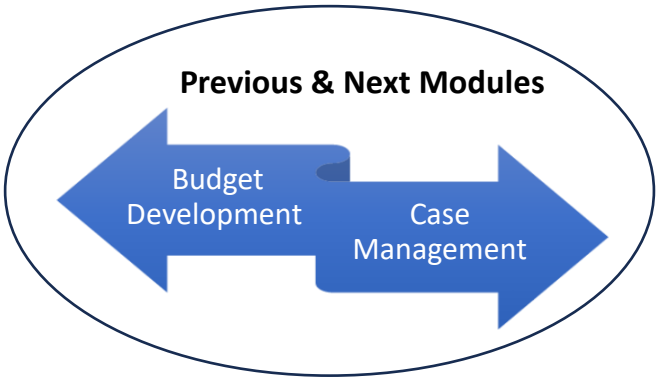
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SNAP E&T Planning Guide #7

Student Outreach, Engagement, Enrollment

Summary



Outreach/Retention Strategy

SNAP E&T is an incredible program that supports community colleges' student success agenda. It can be a powerful outreach strategy and lever to increase community college enrollment for people accessing SNAP benefits, enhancing their access to quality skills training and support services that lead to jobs and careers with economic stability and mobility. SNAP E&T program and support services can also be a retention strategy for existing students who are accessing SNAP benefits. According to a US Government Accountability Office report on college student food insecurity, under half of the 4 million plus college students across the country eligible for SNAP are not enrolled in this program[1]. If they were enrolled in SNAP, they may be eligible for the additional services and supports provided by SNAP E&T.

Student Eligibility

There are unique SNAP eligibility requirements for students enrolled half-time or more at institutions of higher education. These students who meet the income and household eligibility requirements can be eligible for SNAP benefits if they meet a student exemption. One of these exemptions is to be enrolled in an employment and training program such as SNAP E&T. Students who are less than half-time, as defined by their college institution, are not considered students for purposes of SNAP eligibility – meaning they do not have to meet additional eligibility requirements. Yet they could still access and benefit from SNAP E&T programs and services. In addition to enrollment in SNAP E&T, there are other exemptions that students can meet, such as participation in a WIOA or work study program, or when parenting children under six years old. Colleges should work with their human service agency and SNAP outreach partners to ensure they

Who to Invite to the Table (college internal planning)

- SNAP E&T college lead
- College executive leader sponsor
- Basic needs college staff Including food pantry
- Intake staff for Adult Education, CTE, career pathways and workforce development grants
- Strategic enrollment management/Outreach leaders
- Human Service agency SNAP outreach manager
- SNAP outreach contractors

Planning Goals

1) Examine how SNAP E&T supports colleges' student success agenda by enhancing outreach efforts, increasing access, enrollment and retention for students and supporting equitable pathways to jobs and careers
2) Understand the unique SNAP student eligibility requirements to assist students in maximizing these resources
3) Comprehend the two referral processes (direct and reverse) for SNAP E&T enrollment and determine the best ways for colleges to streamline these processes in strong partnership with their SNAP agency partners

[1] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits." Report to Congressional Requesters. December 2018.

understand all the ways students can qualify and access these critical food SNAP benefits -- which can also help increase enrollment in their SNAP E&T program.

SNAP E&T Enrollment

Once SNAP eligibility is established for students, one of the biggest questions for colleges is how to identify and enroll students into the SNAP E&T program. To help identify and encourage enrollment, colleges can consider including information about SNAP and SNAP E&T in their intake and onboarding process, as part of their scholarship or emergency aid processes, and through any food pantry, student resource and/or basic needs insecurity efforts. This can not only boost enrollments, but help to reduce any stigma surrounding public benefits access.

As soon as students are identified or interested, SNAP E&T requires referral from the SNAP human service agency to third-party providers such as community colleges. The referral process is designed to verify SNAP eligibility -- a key federal and state requirement -- and ensure individuals accessing SNAP are referred into the SNAP E&T program that meets their needs.

There are two types of referral processes. The first is a direct referral from the SNAP agency, where the agency refers people already accessing SNAP benefits into the SNAP E&T program. The second is a reverse referral where the college identifies a student who is already accessing SNAP benefits, or likely eligible, and refers them to the human service agency. The human service agency then verifies the student's SNAP enrollment and eligibility for SNAP E&T and refers the student back into the college SNAP E&T program for services and supports. Colleges can identify students who may potentially be eligible for SNAP or already are receiving SNAP benefits through various touch points on campus. This can take place during the college student intake and onboarding process, via any food pantry, student resource and/or basic needs hub on campus or as part of their scholarship or emergency aid processes.

While this process may sound cumbersome or challenging for the students and providers, it is important to note that this process can be mechanized and occur behind the scenes through shared databases and/or strong communications. This referral process looks very different from state to state and can be designed to best meet the needs of human service, SNAP E&T third-party providers, and participants/students. Community colleges who are SNAP E&T third-party providers can work closely with their human service partners to develop or follow an established referral process to ensure eligible individuals can access SNAP and SNAP E&T properly. States and counties are encouraged to develop a collaborative and human-centered design process that reduces hurdles for students and administrative burden for human service agencies and colleges.

After being referred into the college SNAP E&T program, the student will need to participate in an orientation, complete an assessment, and co-create a case plan with the college, intermediary provider or E&T case manager. At the college, this is typically accomplished through an individual appointment with a coach or navigator, and supports a student in deciding the best education and career pathway and necessary support services. While the orientation and assessment are only required one time, colleges will need to verify SNAP eligibility monthly, can update the case plan as goals are achieved and evolve and revisit the assessment as necessary.

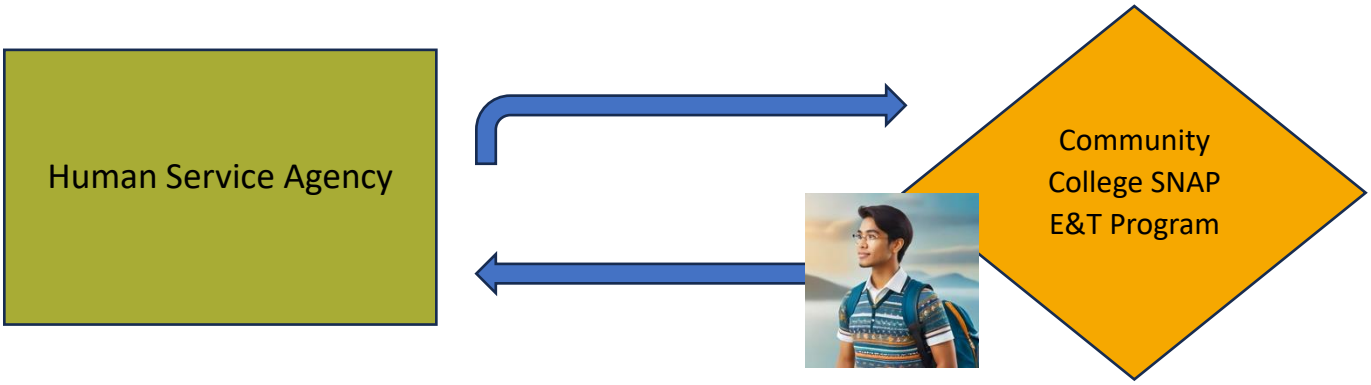
SNAP E&T Overview

SNAP E&T is a unique program that aligns directly with state and institutional goals focused on equitable college access and completion of credentials that can support the economic wellbeing of students and meet the needs of local employers. The SNAP E&T framework is extremely flexible and can easily leverage current faculty and staff work in student success or workforce development. Colleges do not need to hire new staff or pull existing staff away from their ongoing responsibilities.

Direct referral process*



Reverse referral process*



**These visuals are an attempt to show a simplified version of the two SNAP E&T referral processes. The actual process will look different from state-to-state.*

Guiding Questions

1) In what ways is your college currently identifying students experiencing food insecurity? For example, campus food pantry, intake/onboarding process, faculty syllabus, etc...
    a. How else and where else could your college identify students experiencing food insecurity?
2) Where could you integrate information about SNAP benefits and SNAP E&T into your outreach, student onboarding and scholarship/emergency aid processes?
3) How could you expand awareness about SNAP benefits and SNAP E&T amongst college staff and faculty particularly in ways that reduce stigma about accessing public benefit access?
4) What do you need to better understand about the SNAP E&T referral process and SNAP verification process that your human service agency uses? For example, do they have a shared data system, shared monthly spreadsheet? How will they collaborate; is there one point of contact or an automated, centralized system?
5) How could this referral process be enhanced to be student-centered to simplify for students and reduce administrative burden for human services and/or college staff?

Meeting Agenda Template

- Check-in regarding prior meeting action items
- Review and discuss responses to guiding questions
- Review and discuss the potential challenges
- Develop written responses for each guiding question
- Identify areas that need further research/understanding – develop specific descriptions of information still needed
- Create a detailed list of questions for technical assistance
- Clarify next steps, who is responsible, and a timeframe for reporting back to team

Additional questions with regard to student enrollment processes:

6) Who plays a role in the work to improve systems and policies and how could they be engaged?
7) Who at your institution has experience mapping out similar processes to help students access benefits and resources and seamless grant program enrollment?
8) What are anticipated concerns from staff and faculty about participating in SNAP E&T?
    a. What are some strategies to bring them along? Develop a plan to work with these stakeholders to improve the referral processes.
9) What are potential next steps in the SNAP E&T planning?

Potential Challenges

1) The referral process for SNAP E&T is unique and may look very different than referral processes for other workforce development partnerships and programs. It is important to consider the broader college strategic enrollment management plan and strategies when developing referral processes and identifying solutions to any challenges specific to SNAP E&T.

2) The referral process between human service agencies and community colleges may include the sharing of participant/student data across either established data systems or may require the design of emerging systems.

This can be complex but there are viable simple solutions that can be implemented in the short term while mapping out longer term processes.

3) With so many college faculty and staff interested and engaged in addressing student food insecurity, it may be difficult to ensure all of these individuals understand SNAP student eligibility and the SNAP E&T referral process and integrate information about both into their efforts.

Planning Checklist

- ❒ 1) Understand the SNAP outreach efforts in your community and at your college.
- ❒ 2) Review the state SNAP E&T referral process between human service and third-party providers such as community colleges.
- ❒ 3) Engage with your human service agency to ensure understanding of the referral process (direct and reverse if both are possible) including workflow, data sharing, and communication.
- ❒ 4) Determine with your human service agency the best way to train college staff on the referral process including any helpful documentation.
- ❒ 5) After some experience with the referral process, explore with your human service agency if and how a human-centered design process could improve the referral process for students/participants and reduce administrative burden.

Tools/Organizational Aids for this Module

- SNAP for Students Resources - Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon SNAP
- NOVA: Benefit Access

Resources

- FNS SNAP E&T Toolkit
- FNS SNAP E&T Operations Handbook
- SJI Student Centered Design process
- Fresh Success Program at Gavilan College

FAQ's

1) How does the SNAP student eligibility requirement impact the opportunity to enroll in SNAP E&T programs and the associated supports with a college?

   The student eligibility requirement for SNAP affects students who are enrolled half-time or more at their higher education institution. However, SNAP E&T is on the list of exemptions to the student eligibility requirement so can actually make it more viable for students to maintain SNAP benefits while accessing SNAP E&T supports and services.

2) How come the SNAP E&T referral process is different from state to state?

SNAP and SNAP E&T oversight lies primarily at the state level. In developing third-party provider SNAP E&T programs, states establish a referral process – direct referral, reverse referral or both. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these approaches. It is important for colleges to engage with human service staff on a regular basis to make the referral process as seamless as possible for students while reducing the administrative burden.

3) How is SNAP E&T eligibility verified upon enrollment and ongoing monthly?

   Ongoing SNAP E&T eligibility verification will vary from state to state. It is important to work closely with your human service agency to understand and follow the process and identify ways to share this information seamlessly in a way that protects the student's data privacy.

Case Study

College XYZ has integrated SNAP E&T into their college-wide strategic enrollment management plan identifying important touch points where staff and faculty are able to engage with students to determine if they are experiencing food insecurity and help them access SNAP and SNAP E&T supports and services. For instance, a question on food insecurity appears on the student onboarding questionnaire, and follow-up information is provided about applying for SNAP benefits and the SNAP E&T program. The SNAP E&T college lead has worked closely with the human service agency over the past year using a human-centered design process to simplify the referral process and increase the number of students accessing SNAP E&T. While they initially launched the program through the secure sharing of spreadsheets, where the human service agency could verify SNAP eligibility and refer into the college's SNAP E&T program, they worked together to advocate for a data sharing system that allows the colleges to look up and verify eligibility. Referrals are made seamlessly through this system, upon receipt of SNAP benefits. As a result, the college has seen an increase in referrals and numbers of participants accessing SNAP E&T services and supports and the human service agency is seeing increased educational attainment and employment outcomes.