



Vulnerable Wisconsin Families to Receive Less Food Assistance

Cuts will Hit Families with Children, Northern Wisconsin the Hardest

Nearly 900,000 people in Wisconsin will have a harder time putting food on the table starting in November, when a temporary boost to FoodShare, Wisconsin's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), ends. Notwithstanding the looming reductions, the House of Representatives has proposed another substantial cut as part of the Farm Bill. The across-the-board cuts in November will reduce the food assistance by \$89 million for struggling Wisconsin families in fiscal year 2014 alone. Cuts of that magnitude will cause significant pain for low-income families and hurt Wisconsin's economy.

All Beneficiaries to Experience SNAP Cuts

A modest boost in SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to strengthen the economy and ease hardship expires at the end of October.

SNAP has never experienced a reduction in benefits that impact all participants. Nationwide, 47 million struggling people rely on SNAP benefits to help meet their nutritional needs, including 22 million children. Given the fact that benefits already don't cover all food costs for many families, these cuts will be particularly painful.

SNAP Helps Wisconsin Families Make Ends Meet

SNAP provides a modest but important boost to many Wisconsin families. In July 2013, 860,000 people in Wisconsin received help from SNAP — about 1 out of every 7 Wisconsinites.

The average monthly SNAP benefit is relatively low, but it can make a big difference in helping to put food on the table. In Wisconsin, SNAP benefits average about \$115 per person, or roughly \$1.30 per meal. The cuts to SNAP mean that starting in November, a family of three will have its benefit cut by \$29 a month.

Children make up a large share of those who get help from SNAP in Wisconsin. Statewide, 452,000 children, or one out of three Wisconsin children, were enrolled in or participated in SNAP in 2012. All these children will be hurt by this cut.

In some areas of the state, more than half of the children receive assistance over the course of a year. In six Wisconsin counties — Menominee, Milwaukee, Adams, Sawyer, Burnett, and Washburn — a majority of children received assistance at some point in 2012, as shown in the

chart below. In Milwaukee County alone, 146,000 children, or three out of five children living in the county, received SNAP benefits in 2012.

SNAP Cuts to Hinder Local Economies

In addition to helping feed hungry families, SNAP is one of the fastest, most effective ways to stimulate a struggling economy, because benefits are immediately spent on food at local grocery stores. Every \$1 increase in SNAP benefits generates about \$1.70 in economic activity, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The coming reduction in SNAP means that families will spend less in their community, with the loss being felt by local businesses. The table on the next page shows how the cut to SNAP will hurt counties across Wisconsin in the next year.

Families in Milwaukee County will lose the most in purchasing power over that period— \$32.9 million — but families in other counties will experience significant losses as well, particularly in the rural northern part of the state, where a large number of families rely on SNAP. For example, in Washburn County, where more than a quarter of residents received SNAP benefits in 2012, families will lose \$265,000 due to the reduction in benefits.

SNAP Benefits Are Important for Wisconsin Children

Counties in which more than half the children received SNAP benefits at some point during 2012.

COUNTY	SHARE OF CHILDREN RECEIVING BENEFITS
Menominee County	93%
Milwaukee County	61%
Adams County	60%
Sawyer County	59%
Burnett County	55%
Washburn County	51%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Health Services
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Further SNAP Reductions Likely to be Attempted

Policymakers at the state and national levels have said they want to cut the program even more.

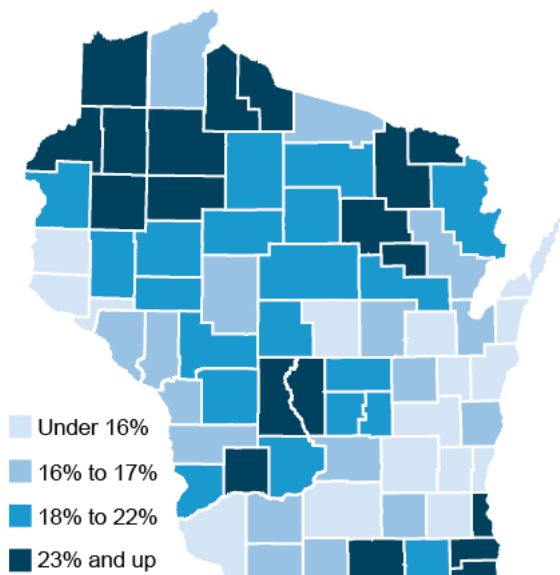
At the state level, legislators imposed new work rules that will reduce the number of people receiving benefits by an estimated 31,000, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau. Governor Walker has advocated for asset limits for people receiving SNAP benefits, which would further limit eligibility. At the national level, House Republicans have passed a bill that would slash billions of dollars from the SNAP program.

Efforts to reduce SNAP benefits are shortsighted given the slow economy and lackluster job growth, particularly in Wisconsin. Poverty and joblessness often mean families can't put food on the table, and one in nine Wisconsin households is affected by food insecurity, according to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

SNAP is a powerful tool that helps keep Wisconsin families out of poverty. Reducing benefit levels or restricting eligibility during slow economic times will make it harder for Wisconsin residents to make ends meet, and will hit families with children and northern counties the hardest.

Many Families in Northern Wisconsin Rely on SNAP

Share of individuals who received SNAP benefits at some point during 2012.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Health Services
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SNAP Benefit Reduction by County

Estimated amounts for the period November 2013 through September 2014.

COUNTY	SNAP REDUCTION	COUNTY	SNAP REDUCTION
Adams	\$360,000	Marathon	\$1,665,000
Ashland	\$302,000	Marinette	\$567,000
Barron	\$686,000	Marquette	\$222,000
Bayfield	\$158,000	Menominee	\$245,000
Brown	\$3,052,000	Milwaukee	\$32,854,000
Buffalo	\$122,000	Monroe	\$612,000
Burnett	\$239,000	Oconto	\$408,000
Calumet	\$267,000	Oneida	\$454,000
Chippewa	\$742,000	Outagamie	\$1,546,000
Clark	\$347,000	Ozaukee	\$400,000
Columbia	\$597,000	Pepin	\$61,000
Crawford	\$197,000	Pierce	\$276,000
Dane	\$5,629,000	Polk	\$496,000
Dodge	\$876,000	Portage	\$693,000
Door	\$263,000	Price	\$178,000
Douglas	\$758,000	Racine	\$3,763,000
Dunn	\$514,000	Richland	\$277,000
Eau Claire	\$1,345,000	Rock	\$3,293,000
Florence	\$61,000	Rush	\$242,000
Fond du Lac	\$1,049,000	St. Croix	\$527,000
Forest	\$143,000	Sauk	\$804,000
Grant	\$456,000	Sawyer	\$348,000
Green	\$406,000	Shawano	\$509,000
Green Lake	\$206,000	Sheboygan	\$1,421,000
Iowa	\$231,000	Taylor	\$219,000
Iron	\$88,000	Trempealeau	\$282,000
Jackson	\$256,000	Vernon	\$314,000
Jefferson	\$898,000	Vilas	\$218,000
Juneau	\$403,000	Walworth	\$1,337,000
Kenosha	\$3,243,000	Washburn	\$265,000
Kewaunee	\$166,000	Washington	\$889,000
LaCrosse	\$1,343,000	Waukesha	\$1,996,000
Lafayette	\$168,000	Waupaca	\$578,000
Langlade	\$387,000	Waushara	\$291,000
Lincoln	\$377,000	Winnebago	\$1,905,000
Manitowoc	\$797,000	Wood	\$1,140,000
Wisconsin		\$89,000,000	

Source: Analysis of figures from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Wisconsin Department of Health Services
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