# SNAP CHURN

"The [loss] totally affected every part of mine and my children's lives."

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines SNAP churn as the phenomenon when a household stops receiving SNAP benefits for any reason, then re-enters SNAP and starts receiving benefits again within 4 months.

SNAP churn is inefficient and detrimental for beneficiaries and administering agencies. The USDA estimates states spend an average of $80 per household to re-enroll churners onto SNAP, accounting for up to 4% of total SNAP certification costs in states with large caseloads.

**The statewide SNAP churn rate in PA was 17% in March 2024**

**Churn rate among current SNAP participants: 20.1%**

## CHURN CAUSES HARDSHIP FOR FAMILIES

"I had fallen behind on my rent because feeding my kids was more important."

"As a type 2 diabetic my medication was too expensive to afford but I needed it so I asked the school for left overs of anything. It's sad. I shouldn't have to choose between my health and food for my children."

"Having 4 children and losing SNAP for a few months, it was difficult to keep up with groceries for meals and school lunches. That money took away from other necessities like utilities, house payment, gas for the vehicle to transport kids to school and adults to work."

"We were struggling. Literally over-drafting multiple accounts. Behind on bills. It was horrible. A [domino] effect. We needed food to eat. I'm still trying to catch up."

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## CAUSES

**Most difficult parts of completing annual renewal or SAR requirements (according to current SNAP participants)**

1. Receiving the information in the mail with enough time to complete the task: **46.3%**
2. Finding and submitting proof of income documentation: **28.7%**
3. Finding and submitting other verification documentation (such as expenses): **20.7%**
4. Understanding my packet and the questions being asked: **16.5%**
5. Understanding the SNAP rules and processes: **14.4%**
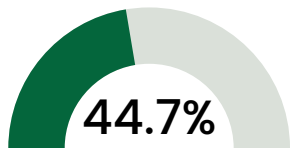
**44.7%** of respondents experienced churn because they received their paperwork in the mail too late to submit by the deadline.
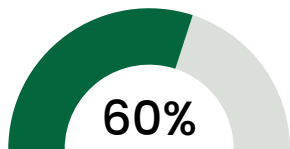
**60%** of current SNAP recipients reported receiving their paperwork less than 1 week before the deadline
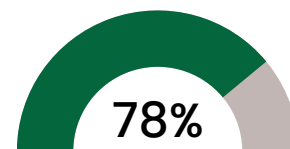
**78%** of current SNAP recipients knew about their right to appeal, 22% did not.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Pilot a mail tracking system to measure mail times and/or considering utilizing a local mail service.**

**Ensure that mail dates are at least 3 weeks prior to due dates.** This includes ensuring that recertification interviews are scheduled at least three weeks from the mail date, as caseworkers currently do not call to complete this required interview if the paperwork is not received prior to the scheduled interview.

**Allow both mail and e-notice options for SNAP renewal notices and other communication from DHS.**

**Clarify and publicize vital information for benefit recipients,** such as how to report changes, information about appeals and reconsiderations, and ways to reach a caseworker.

**Form a usability testing group for SNAP applications, renewal forms, and notices.**

**Send receipts via text and/or email to consumers to inform them that documents have been received in the office.**

**Evaluate staffing levels**

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