

SENIORS

"I've been working 30 years, turned 66 on the 15th. Can I retire? No. I'm going to have to find a job because I can't afford to sit down because the bills that I have and everything. And the way the food is, that's just one of the problems."

PAPERWORK IS TOO LONG AND INVASIVE

Many seniors on fixed incomes can complete a simplified two-page SNAP only application, but in our focus group, none reported being offered this application at the CAO.

"Why do they have to humiliate you like this for these few dollars?"


Additionally, many felt like the process of applying for maintaining benefits was invasive and cumbersome. Only 17% of senior adult survey respondents that are currently using SNAP reported knowing when to expect their renewal paperwork. They weren't sure of who to contact and did not feel comfortable resharing their experience over and over again to multiple people.


Ultimately for many seniors, the potential pros of applying for SNAP do not outweigh the cons of the application process. This perception of the process as complex and invasive prevents many eligible seniors from attempting to participate.

...I think it's also the stigma that you're begging for something or that you're needy for something that you don't qualify for or that you might not qualify for. And then going through the whole process and being told no when it's all over with. Those are things that basically cause barriers between people and being fed or being hungry."

DIGITAL LITERACY & NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Do you consider yourself good at finding information online, communicating online, and using online resources?

 39.5% of seniors said yes

 78.3% of adults said yes

Participants expressed frustration over needing their children or grandchildren to help them use new tools or access online resources, which sometimes leads to missing SNAP deadlines.

OTHER CAUSES

- **Challenges contacting workers and long wait times at County Assistance Offices:** As seniors use technology less, they rely on in person and phone services more. Long wait times and challenges with reaching their local office disproportionately impact seniors.
- **More large print notices and forms:** seniors reported that forms are hard to read and understand.

“Every time they need a large print notice, they need to call the number on the notice and have a notice mailed to them. And I have asked repeatedly if this could be made standardized and they are like, no, no, we cannot standardize that...I feel it is bordering on discriminatory.”
- CAO employee interviewee

RECOMMENDATIONS

Standardize and automate delivery of large-print SNAP notices and forms for individuals who indicate those needs during their application.

Form a usability testing group for SNAP applications, renewal forms, and notices. Gather SNAP users, advocates, and DHS/CAO representatives to identify and improve confusing or unnecessarily invasive areas.

Increase in-office access to shorter SNAP-only applications at CAOs, especially the two-page Elderly/Disabled Simplified Application.

Continue to provide assistance with applications and renewals over the phone.

Collect and publicly publish customer service related data such as office wait times, call wait times, and disconnects

Re-evaluate staffing needs