

SNAP Challenge

2017

Although we engage in the food system each and every day by eating, many of us are not likely to understand the experiences of families living on a food stamp (SNAP) budget. On top of budget restrictions, many SNAP beneficiaries live in areas with food access gaps – areas of limited physical, economic, and healthy access to food. The purpose of the SNAP Challenge is to provide you with a hands-on opportunity to explore the food access gap environment, giving you deeper understanding and insight into the challenges 1.7 million Ohioans face every day.

Activity Directions:

1. The average SNAP recipient receives \$1.34 per meal (or \$4.02 a day).
2. Write out a balanced meal plan for one day, one week, or one month for you and your family (breakfast/lunch/dinner/snack) depending on length of time you commit to taking the SNAP Challenge.

Note 1: These are the calorie requirements for your average person:

- 30-year old woman – 132lbs = 2050 calories
- 31-year old man – 176lbs = 3050 calories

Note 2: Keep in mind that many of our hungry neighbors have access to only the following cooking equipment: stove-top, a knife, a wooden spoon, measuring cups/spoons, and a couple of pots and pans.

3. Find your way to a retail location that sells food (this can be a corner store or a major grocery store chain).

Note 1: Determine the location of a food retailer near your starting point

Note 2: Try to use public transportation to get from your starting destination to the food retailer location and back.

4. Price your meal plan. If you cannot find or afford the ingredients on your meal plan, you will have to adjust your plan on the spot.

Note 1: Imagine you already have these few items at home: salt, pepper, cooking oil, sugar and flour.

Note 2: You cannot use SNAP benefits to purchase prepared food, hot foods, or food that will be eaten in the store. Nor can you use your benefits to purchase diapers, toilet paper, etc.

Share Your Experience:

Write-up your experience and share it with us in the following ways: Facebook, Twitter, Email

Some things to consider for your write up:

- Were you able to construct three balanced, healthy meals (and a snack) that met the minimum calories?
- How did your budget affect what you purchased?
- What about time constraints? Was the time required to prepare your menu reasonable?
- Was the shopping environment familiar to you? How did you feel?
- What other opportunities/challenges did you experience?
- How did you feel? What was your "mood," especially during the latter part of the Challenge?



Why Host/Promote the SNAP Challenge?

The SNAP Challenge gives participants a view of the struggle to obtain enough food that is faced by millions of low-income Americans. By living on the average food stamp benefit, Challenge participants find themselves forced to make food shopping choices on a limited budget, and learn how difficult it is to avoid hunger, afford nutritious foods, and stay healthy without adequate resources. While living on a food stamp budget for just a week cannot come close to the struggles encountered by low income families week after week and month after month, it does provide those who take the Challenge with a new perspective on hunger and deeper understanding.

Mid-Ohio Foodbank has supported and fostered SNAP Challenges across its network to help educate the public and opinion leaders about what it means to live on a limited budget. Countless individuals who have taken the Challenge, including elected officials and community leaders, have educated themselves and their communities about SNAP/Food Stamps, bolstered the public's understanding of the Program, and often created new anti-hunger advocates. By promoting the Challenge, you can help raise awareness of hunger in your community and the need to keep SNAP strong.

All SNAP Challenge materials are available in Mid-Ohio Foodbank's Hunger Action Month Toolkit. If you need further assistance, contact Marilyn Tomasi (mtomasi@midohiofoodbank.org).

Promoting the SNAP Challenge:

Encourage friends/family/co-workers to participate in the Challenge through Mid-Ohio Foodbank's social media outlets as well as your own. Mid-Ohio Foodbank's SNAP Challenge Facebook page will allow participants to congregate online to discuss their experiences. Encourage interested people to go to Mid-Ohio Foodbank's SNAP Challenge Facebook page where they can send us a message to register for the Challenge. To register we ask that individuals include this information:

First Name

Last Name

Are family members participating? If so, how many?

Organizational affiliation (if applicable)

City/State/Zip Code

Email Address

Facebook or Twitter handle

Using Social Media to Promote the SNAP Challenge:

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs provide an easy way for individuals and agencies to communicate about the Challenge. Use these platforms to build interest before the Challenge, to keep up excitement during the Challenge, to thank participants after the Challenge, and to inform your policy work in the weeks and months that follow. Encourage Challenge participants to use social media tools to share their stories.

Before the Challenge

Create messages that will inspire people to participate. Share information about who currently receives SNAP and statistics that show the number of people struggling to afford enough food. Be sure to include a link to Mid-Ohio Foodbank's SNAP Challenge Facebook page in all your social media posts. Sample posts include:

The average SNAP benefit is \$1.34 per meal or \$4.02 per day or \$28.14 per week. Could you afford enough food? What kinds of food could you buy to stay well? Find out more about Mid-Ohio Foodbank's #SNAPChallenge: (facebook link)

Did you know that 1.7 million Ohioans receive SNAP benefits? Take the #SNAPChallenge and find out more.

During the Challenge

Ask participants to post photos or videos of their shopping trips and the meals that they are preparing.

Take pics of tips that you learned along the way (one of our participants found a bakery that took baked goods to the dumpster everyday at 6:30p; she made a point to be there to gather up what she could!)

Share interesting takes on the Challenge, like a family trying to buy foods based on the "MyPlate" campaign by USDA. Use their Twitter handles or link to their Facebook profiles if you mention them.

And don't forget to share any media coverage you get during the event.

We are grateful to have so many participants join us in our #SNAPChallenge this year. It's not too late to join. Learn more here: www.midohiofoodbank.org/ham

After the Challenge

Thank everyone who participated. If you joined with other organizations to host the Challenge, thank them as well.

Thanks @xxxxxx for sharing your experiences during the #SNAPChallenge with everyone!

Use Mid-Ohio Foodbank as a Resource:

Mid-Ohio Foodbank can be a resource for you as you plan and promote the SNAP Challenge.

Contact Marilyn Tomasi (mtomasi@midohiofoodbank.org) if you would like advice/assistance with the SNAP Challenge.

