

# Nutrition in Housing Playbook



*Created by Elemental Advisors*

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# INTRODUCTION

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign launched the **Nutrition in Housing (NIH)** initiative to advance sustainable, resident-centered strategies that expand access to nutritious food and strengthen food security across affordable housing communities. Developed in partnership with leading affordable housing providers, the NIH program is designed to empower residents, build community capacity, and integrate long-term food access solutions directly into housing environments at a time when SNAP eligibility rules are changing considerably.

The NIH initiative began as a pilot in 2022 in collaboration with two leading affordable housing developers—**Mercy Housing** and **The NHP Foundation**. Together, we implemented the model across four diverse sites in three states: **Cleme Manor Apartments** in Houston, TX; **Esperanza Crossing Apartments** in Esparto, CA; **Gleason Park Apartments** in Stockton, CA; and **Savannah Gardens Apartments** in Savannah, GA. Although each site tailored its approach to meet the unique needs of its residents, several core strategies emerged across all locations. These included:

- **Resident empowerment and leadership development**, ensuring residents had a voice in shaping food access solutions.
- **Nutrition education classes** that built practical skills and confidence around healthy eating.
- **Food delivery and distribution programs** that reduced barriers to accessing fresh, nutritious foods.
- **Support with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications**, helping families secure critical federal nutrition benefits.



Collectively, these activities strengthened community engagement, increased residents' access to healthy food, and demonstrated the value of embedding food security strategies within housing systems. To highlight the success of this iteration of NIH initiative, a mixed-methods evaluation project was implemented and the findings of our Nutrition in Housing (NIH) pilot evaluation can be found in this [micro report](#).

In 2024, the NIH initiative evolved through a collaboration with **Mercy Housing – Sacramento** and **Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services**. This phase sharpened the program's focus on connecting residents to SNAP and other essential food resources. Despite launching during a period marked by significant SNAP eligibility changes, the project achieved meaningful success. Residents gained clearer pathways to nutrition assistance, staff strengthened their capacity to support families navigating benefit systems, and the partnership model proved adaptable, resilient and replicable.

Across all phases, the NIH initiative has demonstrated that when affordable housing providers, community organizations, and residents work together, they can create powerful, sustainable solutions that improve food security and support long-term well-being.

Together, Share Our Strength - No Kid Hungry and Mercy Housing engaged with Elemental Advisors

# ABOUT THE PARTNERS

## NO KID HUNGRY

No child should go hungry in America yet millions of kids across the country face hunger every day.

[No Kid Hungry](#) is working to change that by launching and strengthening programs that ensure all children have consistent access to the healthy food they need to grow, learn, and thrive. A national campaign of Share Our Strength, No Kid Hungry builds on more than 25 years of experience investing in local solutions to end hunger and poverty. Grounded in the belief that this is a solvable problem, the organization combines bold goals, innovative strategies, and strong partnerships to ensure every child in America has the food they need to grow up healthy and strong.



## MERCY HOUSING

Transforming Lives Through Affordable Housing: [Mercy Housing](#) is one of the nation's largest affordable housing organizations. They participate in the development, preservation, management and/or financing of affordable, program-enriched housing across the country. They acquire and renovate existing housing, as well as develop new affordable rental properties. Mercy Housing has a key focus on providing access to opportunity and supporting the health and wellness of all residents.

Home is just the beginning at Mercy Housing California. We believe that fostering healthy communities starts with giving residents the tools they need to build towards their dreams. Our free, onsite resident services include health and wellness programs, after-school enrichment, financial stability resources and community empowerment opportunities.

## SACRAMENTO FOOD BANK

[Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services \(SFBFS\)](#) was founded in 1976 with the purpose of nourishing community members experiencing hunger. As the need has grown over the past five decades, so have they. Today, SFBFS serves as the largest hunger relief organization in Sacramento County and the regional food bank, supporting a network of 112 partners to provide nutritious, meaningful food to neighbors in need.

Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services is dedicated to assisting those in need by alleviating their immediate pain and problems and moving them toward self-sufficiency and financial independence.

# HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

**WHO:** This playbook provides Resident Services Coordinators (RSCs) with the tools and guidance needed to help residents obtain and keep the SNAP food benefits for which they are eligible. It provides practical guidance, tools, and strategies to help coordinators connect residents to SNAP enrollment and re-enrollment support, reduce common barriers, and build trusted pathways to food resources within their communities. The guidance is based on the feedback of Resident Service Coordinators and informed by housing staff and residents. This guide is intended as a “how to” for housing organizations to increase food benefit uptake among residents.

Throughout this guide we include Resident Services Coordinator Pro-Tips, “**RSC PRO-TIPS**”, because they know best. Resident coordinator insights around nutrition strategies in housing are not just about delivering food, they are about designing resident-centered, relationship-driven approaches that are supportive, reduce barriers, and fit within the realities of each community.

By meeting residents where they live and leveraging existing relationships, housing communities can play an important role in helping families and individuals access the benefits that support their health and stability.

**WHAT:** The Nutrition in Housing Initiative and this playbook intends to strengthen the role of Housing Communities in benefits access by:

- Ensuring that residents experience centers around partnership with dignity and agency in nutrition access
- Creating trusted, repeat touch points where residents can safely navigate benefits and resources
- Increasing SNAP enrollment access over time

**WHY:** SNAP enrollment is the foundation to foster sustainable housing-based food access partnerships and systems change through trust building approaches and repeat touch points where residents can safely navigate benefits and resources.

**HOW:** To get the most out of this Playbook...

This Playbook was designed with Housing Community Staff in mind, as a result of a partnership with Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry Campaign and Mercy Housing, and can be used by any organization seeking to provide their community support in accessing nutritious food.

This Playbook can be...



# WHY NUTRITION IN HOUSING

Access to nutritious food is a critical, yet often overlooked factor in housing stability. Food insecurity and rent instability reinforce each other. When families are forced to choose between rent and groceries, they risk losing both stable housing and basic well-being. Instability are deeply intertwined when households are forced to choose between paying rent and buying food, both housing security and well-being are compromised. This dynamic has tangible impacts within housing complexes, contributing to poorer resident health outcomes, increased absenteeism from work and school, and higher unit turnover. Each of which carries costs for both residents and property operators.

Despite high levels of need, under-enrollment in benefits like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs) remains persistent due to barriers such as complex application processes, stigma, lack of awareness or fear, and limited on-site support. Prioritizing nutrition within housing settings is therefore not just a social good, it is a strategic approach to improving resident stability, health, and overall community resilience.



Nutrition in Housing communities are a critical access point for connecting residents to essential resources and their staff are well positioned to engage in trust-based conversations that can help reduce stigma and misinformation on resident resources like SNAP.



*“Before I got CalFresh, it was really difficult for me and my kids. I was getting just what I could get to last us through the week...CalFresh helped me and my family tremendously. I got approved the same day and me and the kids went shopping. My kids eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner with snack in between time without going without food.” -Resident*

## **RSC PRO-TIP: Food can be a pathway to broader engagement**

Nutrition programs often serve as an entry point to deeper connection. Food-related events can reduce isolation, build community, and open the door to other services such as healthcare, financial support, and benefits enrollment.

# SNAP OVERVIEW

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) is the United States' largest anti-hunger program, helping an average of 1 in 8 Americans per month. Invented as a way to help families afford meals in the face of rising food costs it is also a major stimulator of the U.S. economy, and a strong source of income for many grocers and retailers. Averaging a few dollars per person a day, the program helps the most vulnerable Americans, including people with low incomes, children, older adults, veterans, and people with disabilities, to access food. Recipients can then spend that money on food and beverages. The money cannot be spent on tobacco, alcohol, nonfood items, or in most cases, prepared foods (takeout).

SNAP is funded by the federal government and administered by the states, which distribute it to eligible residents. Find SNAP INFO for Each State: [SNAP State Directory of Resources | Food and Nutrition Service](#)

To qualify for benefits, participants must meet certain eligibility standards based on their income, assets, household size, immigration status (citizens and eligible noncitizens), and proof of employment. SNAP now requires that able-bodied adults (ages 16–59) meet general work rules, such as registering for work, accepting suitable employment, and not voluntarily quitting a job without a good reason. Stricter work rules and time limits also apply to "Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents" (ABAWDs), requiring them to work or participate in a training program for at least 80 hours a month to receive benefits for more than 3 months in a 3-year period. See current eligibility standards [here](#). After a family or individual is approved for SNAP, they receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which works like a debit card. Benefits are loaded onto the card.

*"They helped me get food assistance without leaving my apartment due to health issues."  
-Resident*

## Five Ways SNAP Helps Kids

Here are five things to know about how SNAP helps kids today and into their future:

1. **SNAP feeds kids.** In fact, **40%** of all people who participate in SNAP are children.
2. **SNAP helps families most vulnerable to hunger.** According to **USDA's most recent analysis**, four out of every five households on SNAP have either a child under the age of 18, a senior over the age of 60, or an individual with a disability. Together, these households make up 88% of all SNAP participants.
3. **SNAP can end poverty.** Adding SNAP benefits to a family's budget can mean the difference between living in poverty or not. A **2021 analysis** found that SNAP kept nearly 8 million people above the poverty line prior to the pandemic, including 3.6 million children.
4. **SNAP affects a child's education.** **Research shows** that kids who receive SNAP benefits do better in school, even increasing the likelihood of graduating. Access to healthy foods help develop memory, social skills and emotional stability, which are all crucial for academic success.
5. **SNAP affects a child's health.** **Research also shows** that kids receiving SNAP benefits are healthier than those who don't have access to SNAP. And, their families are less likely to sacrifice health care to pay for other basic necessities.

Source: <https://www.nokidhungry.org/blog/five-facts-how-snap-helps-kids>

# APPROACH TO SUPPORTING RESIDENTS WITH NUTRITION

Whether you are implementing one nutrition in housing program at one site or are implementing multiple programs at multiple sites, following these six key steps will help to ensure programs are locally tailored and meet your goals of supporting resident food access. Scaling Nutrition in Housing programs across affordable housing communities requires designing adaptable systems with consistent core elements.

## KEY STEPS TO STARTING NUTRITION IN HOUSING PROGRAMS

STEP 1 Build Support	STEP 2 Understand Residents' Needs	STEP 3 Develop Your Plan of Action	STEP 4 Explore Partners & Resources	STEP 5 Take Action	STEP 6 Sustain Efforts & Celebrate Success
<p>Build support by convening key staff and residents to form a committee who can inform the kind of nutrition programs that are desired and fit resident needs and goals.</p>	<p>Assess your current food access initiatives by talking to residents and/or conducting a survey to help understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current resident SNAP enrollment status</li> <li>• what SNAP and food programs work best for your residents</li> <li>• what food access support residents need and are comfortable with.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop a plan of action based on what is important and achievable in your housing community.</p> <p>Include key dates, staff roles, and resources</p> <p>Consider the kinds of activities and events (in person vs. virtual), materials, and social media campaigns that make the most sense.</p>	<p>Identify resources and partners that can make it easier to implement your plan of action.</p> <p>Gather SNAP enrollment information and forms, local food access locations, and community based organization map.</p>	<p>Design nutrition engagement materials and events based on resident's needs</p> <p>Start your enrollment activities, host your events, share your materials and guide residents through nutrition enrollment opportunities.</p> <p>Incorporate nutrition in housing into policies and practices, and budget lines where possible.</p>	<p>Acknowledge what is working well and share news of successes with residents and partners.</p> <p>Monitor resident engagement with conversations and surveys.</p> <p>Determine if residents are using the information and tools provided</p> <p>Adjust nutrition engagement activities and events as needed.</p>

**RSC PRO-TIP:** RSC PRO-TIP: One-size-fits-all approaches do not work. Each housing community operates as its own and is shaped by resident demographics, culture, transportation access, and local resources and partnerships. RSCs emphasized the need for flexible, adaptable strategies rather than standardized models.

# STEP 1: BUILD SUPPORT

## How to Build Support for Nutrition in Housing

### A. Create a shared understanding of why nutrition is important

- Connect nutrition to the stability of resident's overall health, children's school attendance, and community engagement
- Use real resident stories or examples to make the issue relatable
- Reinforce that SNAP and food access are tools for overall stability not just additional services

### B. Identify champions, not just staff

- Engage interested residents (e.g., "wellness champions") to support outreach and feedback
- Invite property staff beyond RSCs (leasing, maintenance, property managers) to play a role
- Leverage existing community leaders who residents know and trust

### C. Affirm what role Resident Service Coordinators will and *will not* play

- May help with SNAP application assistance
- May plan events and logistics
- May seek partners, resources and data
- May support communications and marketing
- Will not serve as eligibility determiners, benefits administrators, or compliance risk holders

### D. Distribute the work to avoid overburdening RSCs

- Position RSCs as connectors and coordinators, not sole implementers
- Engage community-based organizations to lead SNAP enrollment and other event activities
- Share responsibilities across partners, staff, and volunteers

### E. Start small and build momentum

- Pilot one or two low-lift activities like a partner-led event or simple outreach campaign
- Use early wins to build confidence and buy-in from staff and residents
- Expand efforts as capacity and partnerships grow

**RSC Pro-Tip:** Building support is not about adding more to one person's role, it's about creating a shared structure where Resident Service Coordinators connect residents to resources, partners and community members and support systems.

## STEP 2: UNDERSTAND HOUSING RESIDENTS' NEEDS

Understanding residents' needs is a fundamental part of incorporating an effective nutrition program. While Resident Service Coordinators often have valuable insights into their communities, the most successful nutrition efforts are informed directly by residents themselves. Gathering feedback helps housing communities identify barriers to food access, understand awareness of programs like SNAP, and learn what types of resources, events, and services residents find most valuable.

### Resident feedback can be collected in many ways:

- Incorporate nutrition questions into annual resident or climate surveys
- Add short questions or polls to newsletters and community communications
- Gather feedback at resident meetings, events, and health fairs
- Conduct informal conversations with residents during routine interactions
- Engage resident leaders or wellness champions in collecting feedback

A short survey can reveal barriers to food access, identify interest in programs and services, and help RSC's prioritize resources where they will have the greatest impact.

### Sample Resident Nutrition Survey

1. In the past 12 months, were you ever worried that your food would run out before you had money to buy more?
2. What are the biggest challenges you face in accessing healthy food?
3. Are you familiar with SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)?
4. Would you like information or assistance with SNAP or other food resources?
5. Which nutrition-related programs would be most helpful to you or your family?
6. What would make it easier for you or your family to access healthy food?

**RSC PRO-TIP:** Including Resident voice can improve your program and participation. Programs that incorporate resident input—whether through surveys, conversations, or feedback sessions—are more relevant, better attended, and more sustainable. Residents are more likely to engage when they feel seen, heard, and respected.

**Successful Food Access Starts with Residents’ Voices and Dignity Coupled with Resident Services Coordinator Empowerment.** RSCs are trusted connectors within their communities, but they also manage a wide range of responsibilities and can easily become overextended when new programs are layered on without adequate support. Recognizing their capacity and designing approaches that integrate seamlessly into their existing work is essential. No housing properties are the same. Each property has its own culture, challenges, and strengths, and RSCs are best positioned to interpret and respond to those nuances. Effective nutrition strategies are not one-size-fits-all; they are tailored, flexible, and co-designed with residents, leveraging the insights and relationships that RSCs have already built.

**RSC PRO-TIP: Trust and relationships inspire engagement**

**What builds trust:**

- Resident coordinators getting to know families personally
- Speaking residents’ language, scheduling around cultural holidays and translating materials
- Repeated monthly touchpoints
- Safe, familiar housing-based settings
- Respectful framing (dignity, choice, culturally appropriate food)
- Following up- closing the loop

**What may break trust:**

- Asking for debit/financial information
- Public laptop signups in lobbies
- Immigration fears / ICE climate
- High documentation burden
- Partners asking for pre-registration lists

**HOW RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATORS SUPPORT NUTRITION IN HOUSING**

Resident Service Coordinators use their partnerships with residents and community based organizations to provide four essential functions to foster nutrition in housing:



**Inform and Educate Residents**

Provide info on SNAP enrollment opportunities and the benefits and misconceptions about SNAP



**Preserve Safety and Privacy**

Protect residents time, data and persons



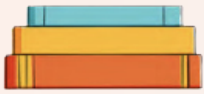
**Plan Events**

And create communication materials, these are important tools for supporting resident enrollment in programs like SNAP



**Engage Partners**

Include trusted organizations from the surrounding communities.



## INFORM AND EDUCATE RESIDENTS

Resident Service Coordinators (RSC) can use their partnerships with residents and community based organizations to educate residents about the SNAP Program and increase their level of comfort in applying. Staff can provide residents with details on SNAP enrollment opportunities, potential changes and discuss the benefits and misconceptions about SNAP. Available resources for community partner engagement and communication tools that include:

- Scripts and talking points for explaining benefits
- Addressing stigma with myth-busting information and flyers. e.g. common myths or misinformation regarding SNAP Benefits (see Appendix)
- Informative Flyers (in appropriate languages)
- Social Media Posts
- Resource integration and where to go for support
- Safety and privacy guidance

*“You shouldn’t be ashamed for asking for help. Getting the assistance you need doesn’t mean that you’re less of a person than the next person.” -RSC*



## PRESERVE SAFETY AND PRIVACY

Preserving safety and privacy is essential to holding the trust between residents and resident coordinators in order to ensure residents are comfortable accessing nutrition support. Many residents face real or perceived risks related to immigration status, stigma, or the sharing of personal information, which can prevent them from seeking help even when they are eligible. Housing staff play a critical role in creating an environment that is respectful, nonjudgmental, and protective of residents’ confidentiality. By approaching concerns with sensitivity, acknowledging fears without dismissing them, and connecting residents to trusted partners, staff can reduce barriers and foster a sense of safety. Prioritizing privacy in how information is shared and services are delivered helps ensure that nutrition efforts are accessible, dignified, and truly supportive of resident well-being.

**Housing staff should be prepared to respond to concerns such as:**

### Immigration and Safety

- Acknowledge fears without dismissing them
- Avoid providing legal advice unless qualified
- Refer to trusted legal or benefits partners when needed

### Stigma

- Normalize participation
- Emphasize that many people use SNAP
- Frame as a support for health and stability

### Privacy

- Encourage use of trusted partners
- Avoid collecting sensitive information in public settings
- Offer private referral options

# STEP 3: DEVELOP YOUR PLAN OF ACTION

Develop a plan of action based on what is important and achievable in your housing community. Many resident service coordinators have shared databases or calendars they can use to note key dates, staff roles, partners, and the kinds of activities and events (in person vs. virtual), materials, and social media campaigns make the most sense. Below is a sample action plan template.

ACTIONS	TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL STAFF, PARTNERS AND RESOURCES	STEPS & STATUS
<p>What are necessary Steps to Action to increase SNAP Enrollment?</p> <p>Actions to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment meetings</li> <li>• SNAP and WIC information sessions</li> <li>• Health Fairs</li> <li>• Social Media Promotions</li> <li>• Mapping Food Access Sites</li> </ul>	<p>How long or by when does each action need to be completed?</p>	<p>Who will lead efforts for this action?</p>	<p>Who else will you engage for help or to provide resources, materials, info, etc.?</p>	<p>What are the immediate next steps?</p>
<p>i.e. Hold information session for residents with expiring SNAP enrollment</p>	<p>By December 1, 2026</p>	<p>Lola R.</p>	<p>Keisha C. Community Food Bank</p>	<p>Coordinate 60 minute in-person event with Keisha</p> <p>Pending updated calendar</p>

# STEP 4: EXPLORE RESOURCES AND PARTNERS

## EXPLORE RESOURCES

Exploring available resources helps housing communities strengthen nutrition efforts without overburdening staff. Existing tools, partnerships, marketing materials, and community programs can support health events, outreach campaigns, SNAP enrollment, and nutrition education. Utilizing ready-made materials helps increase resident engagement, reduce barriers to participation, and create more accessible nutrition efforts within housing communities.



## PLAN YOUR EVENTS

Events are one powerful and accessible way to promote nutrition in housing communities by meeting residents where they are and creating engaging, low-barrier opportunities to connect. When thoughtfully designed, events can serve as both immediate support and an entry point to longer-term resources helping residents navigate benefits, learn practical skills, and connect with partners.

Resident Service Coordinators and housing community staff can choose to host live or virtual health fairs to convey the nutrition in housing content in an engaging and community-appropriate way.

The following planning considerations highlight the range of approaches that Resident Service Coordinators can adapt to fit the unique needs, interests, and rhythms of their communities.

### Health Fairs

- Event timeline guide
- Supply and materials checklists including SNAP and food access fliers
- Welcome kit checklist
- Family engagement ideas
- Passport activity templates
- Cultural tailoring guidance
- Indoor/outdoor setup guides
- Parking logistics guide
- QR code for materials

### Virtual Health Fairs

- When to decide it should be virtual (Policy/Gov't confusion, safety, immigration climate concerns)
- SNAP and food access fliers
- Benefits of SNAP
- Technology
- Schedules
- Equity considerations (reduce stigma, fear, privacy)

### Marketing

- Use your social media channels to share meeting and event information while protecting resident identity
- Recreate or share additional resources
- Use videos to highlight stories of real people and partnerships



**RSC Pro-Tip:** Convenience and proximity matter. Programs that are on-site, easy to access, and integrated into residents' daily routines are significantly more successful. Transportation challenges and competing priorities often limit participation in off-site resources.

## AS YOU THINK ABOUT MESSAGING

There are plenty of online resources that provide information about SNAP enrollment as well as nutrition and food access. Search trusted sites associated with the Food and Drug Administration, your state and local health departments and local community based food partners. There are many myths and misunderstandings about what SNAP is, who qualifies and who does not, and how it works. In the appendix is a one-pager on addressing some common myths and misconceptions.

**RSC Pro-Tip:** To reinforce the value of SNAP use supportive, empowering messages...

- “This is a resource that exists to support you.”
- “You deserve access to healthy food.”
- “We can help connect you to someone who will walk you through it.”



## ENGAGE PARTNERS

Strong partnerships with community-based organizations (CBO) are essential to advancing nutrition in housing because no single entity can meet the full range of resident needs alone. Community partners, such as food banks, healthcare providers, and local nonprofits, bring specialized expertise, resources, and trusted relationships that expand what housing communities can offer. These partnerships help bridge gaps in access, increase benefit enrollment, and deliver culturally relevant, high-quality services directly to residents. Equally important, they reduce the burden on Resident Service Coordinators by sharing responsibility and creating more coordinated, efficient systems of support. When built intentionally and sustained over time, these collaborations strengthen the overall ecosystem around residents, making nutrition efforts more accessible, responsive, and impactful.

*“Meeting a parent who used our services as a single mother who is now stable with a happy, healthy adult son.” – St. John’s Program for Real Change*

☆ *Additional Partnerships Strategy, tips and examples in the Appendix below.*

**Key Takeaway:** Partnership with CBO’s are important when finding support for SNAP enrollment for your residents. RSC’s can ask for support from CBO’s when they focus on connection and navigation of resources.

### Community Based Organizations Can:

- Provide basic information about SNAP
- Screen for potential interest or need
- Connect individuals to SNAP Outreach Partners
- Help schedule appointments or referrals
- Follow up to ensure connection was successful
- Create Low-Barrier Pathways to Enrollment

# AS YOU THINK ABOUT RESIDENT AND PARTNER ROLES

Clear roles protect staff capacity and ensure residents receive the right support.

Here is a sample guide:

AREA	RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATOR ROLE	PARTNER ROLE (Community food banks, SNAP enrollment support, Non-profits and CBO's)
Engagement	Builds relationships and trust, understands needs, promotes resources and participation	Supports outreach and culturally relevant engagement Reinforce importance of resident-centered approach
Benefits (SNAP)	Identifies need, makes referrals & supports awareness	Leads application assistance and follow-up, eligibility guidance, & follow-up support
Events	Promotes events, gathers feedback, supports on-site coordination	Plans and executes events (staffing, materials, content)
Data	Tracks light-touch metrics (attendance, general feedback)	Manages detailed data and compliance
Communication	Shares information in trusted, resident-friendly ways; encourages participation	Provides accurate information and content and ensures consistency
Sensitive Issues	Listens, builds trust, makes referrals	Provides expert support and ensures protections

**RSC Pro-Tip:** RSC's are already balancing complex and competing responsibilities. While they are deeply committed to supporting residents, additional programming such as nutrition events or benefit enrollment can feel overwhelming with out clear integration into existing workflows, tools, or external support.

## STEP 5: TAKE ACTION

Taking action means bringing your plan to life in ways that are visible, accessible, and meaningful to residents. Keep the focus on creating consistent, low-barrier opportunities for engagement that meet residents where they are and fit with your specific housing community.

Remember to document progress in your action plan and track things like event attendance, what worked well, who partnered in each activity, and what you would do differently next time.

**RSC PRO-TIP:** Residents can face invisible barriers. Barriers to accessing food and enrolling in benefits can include stigma, lack of awareness, language barriers, digital access challenges, and complex enrollment processes and possible unsafe environments for some. Actions centered on trust, ease, and dignity helps to ensure all residents can access the support available to them.



# STEP 6: SUSTAIN EFFORTS & CELEBRATE SUCCESS

The practices below ensure that nutrition efforts are not temporary interventions, but lasting supports that contribute to healthier, more stable communities.

## Incorporate Nutrition into Policies and Practices

- Embed nutrition and food access goals into property-wide plans or resident service plans
- Allocate dedicated budget lines for food access programming (e.g., benefits enrollment, food distributions, partnerships)
- Integrate nutrition into existing workflows (e.g., intake, recertification, wellness checks)
- Formalize partnerships with food banks, healthcare providers, and community organizations through MOUs or ongoing agreements
- Include nutrition-related responsibilities and expectations in Resident Service Coordinator roles and training

## Build Ongoing Learning and Knowledge

- Track simple, meaningful metrics (e.g., SNAP enrollments, event participation, resident feedback)
- Regularly gather resident input through surveys, focus groups, or informal conversations
- Create feedback loops with partners and staff to assess what is working and where gaps exist
- Share lessons learned across properties or teams to build collective knowledge
- Adjust programs over time based on data and resident voice—not just initial plans

## Celebrate Success and Build Momentum

- Share success stories of residents (with permission) to highlight impact and reduce stigma
- Recognize staff efforts and innovations in supporting food access
- Highlight milestones (e.g., number of residents enrolled in benefits, partnerships formed)
- Communicate wins with leadership to reinforce continued investment
- Create visible moments of celebration within the community (events, newsletters, bulletin boards) to build pride and engagement.

**RSC Pro-Tip:** Don't forget to take photos at events when appropriate and to share with Residents and in community outreach later. Have photo release forms on hand.

# Evaluate What's Working and What Needs to Change

## Evaluate What's Working and What Needs to Change

Evaluation in nutrition in housing efforts is most effective when it is grounded in residents' experiences. This step focuses on listening, observing, and learning in real time to understand what is working, what is not, and where there are opportunities to improve. By combining resident feedback and simple participation tracking, housing communities can make informed adjustments that keep efforts relevant, accessible, and impactful.

### Gather Resident Feedback

- Gather input through informal conversations, quick surveys, or post-event check-ins
- Ask simple, open-ended questions (e.g., What was helpful? What could be better?)
- Create safe, low-pressure opportunities for residents to share honest feedback
- Ensure feedback reflects diverse voices within the community

### Track Participation

- Track basic metrics such as event attendance, repeat participation, and referrals to partners
- Note patterns in engagement (what types of events or outreach methods are most effective)
- Monitor participation over time to identify trends and gaps
- Keep tracking simple and manageable for staff



# APPENDIX

## RESOURCE LIST

### Communication Tools to keep residents informed and engaged

1. Handout 1 (included below): Scripts and talking points for explaining benefits
2. Handout 2 (included below): Myth-busting sheets: Include common myths or misinformation regarding SNAP Benefits

### Flyers

1. [Sample Health Fair Flyer Health Fair 4x6 Post Card.pdf](#)
2. [Editable CalFresh Flyer.pdf](#)
3. [Why CalFresh Flyer.png](#)
5. [CalFresh Flyer 2024-2025 English+Spanish.pdf](#)
6. [SNAP Marketing.pptx](#)

### Social Media Guidance

7. [CalFresh Campaign Digital Content Marketing Plan.xlsx](#)

### Events

#### Health Fairs

8. [Health Fair Tool Kit.pdf](#)
9. [Passport Card \(Land Park Woods\) Page 2.png](#)

#### Online Health Fairs

10. [How to join a Teams meeting with a meeting ID and passcode.pdf](#)

### PARTNER TIPS (Tips on how to engage trusted partners that are doing the work)

12. Partnership Strategy- create an asset map for each property
13. Create a regular cadence calendar (bi-monthly check-ins)
14. Meeting kickoff agenda
15. Email engagement templates
16. Create an Memorandum of Understanding
17. Create Referral pathway
18. Create Partner onboarding checklist
19. Feedback, Surveys and Metrics

### Helpful websites:

20. [SNAP State Directory of Resources | Food and Nutrition Service](#)
21. [No Kid Hungry](#)
22. [Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition](#)



### Example Social Media Posts

#### 11. [All CalFresh Videos](#)

- a) [Latoya – English - :15](#)
- b) [Latoya – English - :30](#)
- c) [Latoya – Spanish - :15](#)
- d) [Latoya – Spanish - :30](#)
- e) [Guadalupe – English - :15](#)
- f) [Guadalupe – Spanish - :15](#)
- g) [Ciarra – English - :15](#)
- h) [Ciarra – English - :30](#)



# NUTRITION IN HOUSING: SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

Partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) is a key element in Nutrition in Housing. Most communities have dedicated SNAP Outreach Partners - CBO's, nonprofits and government agencies - that are trained in the application process, can answer complex eligibility questions and also understand various nuances regarding the application process. SNAP Outreach Partners play a critical role in helping individuals and families access the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As trusted messengers, Partner and CBO staff are often the first point of contact for residents navigating complex systems and making decisions about whether to apply for benefits. The points below provide clear, practical talking points that can be used in one-on-one conversations, group settings, and outreach efforts to increase SNAP participation while building trust and reducing barriers.

**1. Start with trust and relevance** Before discussing SNAP, it is important to connect the conversation to what matters most to the individual or family.

Suggested opening approaches:

- "Many people in this community are eligible for food benefits and don't realize it."
- "There are programs that can help stretch your grocery budget each month."
- "Would it be helpful if I shared information about a program that helps with food costs?"

*Key point: Do not lead with eligibility rules. Lead with support, relevance, and respect.*

**2. Talk about what SNAP is and why it matters** - CBOs should be able to explain SNAP simply and clearly.

Plain language explanation:

- SNAP is a federal program that helps people buy food each month
- Benefits are provided on a debit-style card (EBT) that can be used at grocery stores and many markets
- The goal is to make sure individuals and families can afford nutritious food
- SNAP is not charity - it is a public benefit designed to support health and stability
- Many working individuals, seniors, and families qualify

**3. Who Is Eligible:** Eligibility is one of the most misunderstood aspects of SNAP. CBOs should focus on broad inclusion messaging, while referring detailed eligibility determinations to trained partners.

Plain language explanation:

- Eligibility is subject to change based primarily on income, household size, and work requirements (see USDA eligibility standards here)
- Many people who work still qualify
- Seniors and people with disabilities often qualify, even with fixed incomes
- Families with children are often eligible, even if they receive other support.
- In mixed-status households, ineligible immigrants (such as undocumented individuals) cannot receive SNAP, but U.S. citizen or eligible immigrant household members can
- You do not need to have zero income
- Use a prescreening tool such as [mRelief](#). A prescreening tool can tell you in minutes if you likely qualify for SNAP benefits.

# MYTH BUSTING: SIX COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SNAP

SNAP MYTHS	SNAP REALITY	SUGGESTED RESPONSES
1. ❌ Myth: "I probably don't qualify."	<p>✅ Fact: Many eligible individuals assume they are not eligible. Income thresholds are higher than most people expect, especially for larger households or those with expenses such as rent or medical costs.</p>	"Many people are surprised to learn they qualify. It's worth checking, and we can connect you with someone who can help."
2. ❌ Myth: "I work, so I can't get SNAP."	<p>✅ Fact: A large portion of SNAP participants are employed. SNAP is designed to support working households whose wages are not enough to cover basic needs</p>	"SNAP is meant to support people who are working but still need help covering food costs."
3. ❌ Myth: "The application process is too complicated."	<p>✅ Fact: While the process can feel complex, trained assistance organizations can guide applicants step-by-step.</p>	"You don't have to do this alone. There are organizations that can walk you through the process and help with paperwork."
4. ❌ Myth: SNAP is not worth applying for because it only offers \$23 a month in benefits.	<p>✅ Fact: The average SNAP benefit for an older adult living alone is \$188 per month.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-FY23-Characteristics-Report.pdf">https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-FY23-Characteristics-Report.pdf</a></p>	"The \$23 monthly SNAP benefit figure that's often discussed only represents the minimum monthly benefit you can receive. SNAP benefits don't need to be used the same month they're obtained. You can let your benefits accrue for a certain period and add up to a higher amount over time."
5. ❌ Myth: "The benefit isn't worth the effort."	<p>✅ Fact: Even modest benefits can significantly reduce food costs and free up income for rent, utilities, and healthcare.</p>	"Even a smaller monthly benefit can make a meaningful difference over time."
6. ❌ Myth: Not many stores accept SNAP.	<p>✅ Fact: There are approximately 262,000 food retailers nationwide that participate in SNAP.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.fns.usda.gov/data-research/data-visualization/snap-retailer-management-dashboard">https://www.fns.usda.gov/data-research/data-visualization/snap-retailer-management-dashboard</a></p>	"Your SNAP EBT card can be used in most grocery stores and other retail stores that sell food, including convenience stores."