



SNAP in Schools: Levels of Engagement

SNAP in Schools is an approach to increasing SNAP access by leveraging schools as trusted sources where families are already engaging and receiving information. While schools do not determine eligibility or administer benefits, they can play an important role in outreach and connecting families to support. Recognizing that every school and district is different, these options are designed to meet schools and families where they are with multiple entry points depending on capacity and partnerships. Schools play a critical role as a trusted access point for families, while community partners provide specialized outreach and enrollment support.

These levels are not intended to be linear or mutually exclusive. Schools and community partners may engage across multiple levels at the same time, combining approaches based on capacity, partnerships, and family needs. While more integrated approaches such as on site enrollment support or data driven approaches may deepen impact, any level of engagement can help strengthen awareness, access, and connection to SNAP.

SNAP in Schools refers to strategies that leverage schools as trusted touchpoints to help connect eligible families with information and enrollment support through partnerships with community organizations, agencies, and other partners.

Learn more about how SNAP enrollment strengthens school meal access, Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) participation, Summer EBT connections, and overall school funding in another No Kid Hungry resource, [SNAP Benefits for Schools](#).

Level 1: Awareness and Information Sharing

Focus: Sharing information so families know about SNAP, eligibility, and where to learn more or get help.

School Role:

- Share information about SNAP through newsletters, emails, texts, social media, etc.
- Send flyers home and include information in family packets and at school events
- Add SNAP information or referral links to school or district websites
- Display posters or QR codes containing information about SNAP in high traffic areas

Community Partner Role:

- Provide ready to use, culturally relevant outreach materials
- Ensure clear, accessible ways for families to learn more or get assistance
- Serve as the referral point for families who need assistance

Level 2: Outreach Plus Warm Handoffs

Focus: Connecting families directly to trusted partners for individualized support and next steps. A warm handoff means directly connecting a family to a trusted partner (i.e. food bank or other community partner) who can provide application assistance.

School Role:

- Identify families who may benefit and make referrals to trusted partners
- Share partner contact information directly with families
- Integrate SNAP into conversations during family engagement touchpoints
- Coordinate with staff like counselors, nurses, and family liaisons

Community Partner Role:

- Receive and respond to referrals from schools
- Provide outreach and answer questions for families
- Build relationships and referral pathways with school staff to ensure smooth handoffs

Level 3: On Site Enrollment Support

Focus: Bringing SNAP application and enrollment assistance directly into schools.

School Role:

- Host enrollment events
- Provide space and help promote opportunities to families
- Support scheduling and coordination

Community Partner Role:

- Provide trained staff to complete SNAP applications with families and to help them navigate the process
- Offer language access and culturally responsive support
- Follow up with families to ensure applications are submitted and processed

Level 4: Integrated School Based Model

Focus: Embedding SNAP access and coordination into existing school systems, staff roles, and family engagement efforts.

School Role:

- Designate a staff lead to coordinate SNAP in Schools efforts

- Integrate SNAP outreach into existing roles and touchpoints
- Establish regular coordination with partners
- Support basic tracking of outreach and referrals

Community Partner Role:

- Maintain a consistent presence at schools or across a district
- Align outreach with school calendars and family engagement strategies
- Share insights on barriers and improve processes with schools
- Support training for school staff on how to talk about SNAP and make referrals

Level 5: Data Driven and Systems Level Approach

Focus: Using data, partnerships, and systems coordination to proactively identify and support eligible families.

School Role:

- Use available data to identify families who may be eligible
- Conduct targeted outreach through trusted school communication channels
- Align SNAP outreach with programs like school meals and Summer EBT
- Partner with district leadership to support systems level integration

Community Partner Role:

- Conduct targeted outreach and enrollment support for identified families
- Coordinate with county or state SNAP agencies to streamline application and verification processes
- Pilot innovative approaches like digital tools
- Support continuous improvement based on data and family feedback

Foundational Practice Across All Levels: Community and Lived Expertise Integration

This approach can strengthen implementation across all levels of engagement.

- Engage parents and caregivers in designing outreach strategies
- Gather feedback from families about barriers and improve approaches based on feedback
- Compensate individuals with lived expertise for their time