



# Children's Defense Fund–New York

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Summer Policy Series  
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## 2018 House Farm Bill Calls for Stricter Work Requirements to Maintain SNAP Eligibility: What does this mean for New York State's Children and Families?

The 2014 Farm Bill is set to expire on September 30, 2018. The House's proposed 2018 Farm Bill was rejected by Congress on May 18, 2018, but is up for reconsideration by June 22, 2018. Among various provisions, the House's Farm Bill calls for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to uphold monthly eligibility standards as part of its tightened work requirements. The stricter and more demanding requirements are predicted to have devastating results on SNAP – which serves as one of the nation's most effective and popular anti-hunger programs to date.

A vast number of individuals in New York State depend on SNAP for assistance accessing nutritious food. SNAP is issued through electronic benefit transfer cards (EBT) that are used similarly to debit cards. As demonstrated below, there are substantial numbers of hungry children in New York State, and high percentages of families with children in New York depend on SNAP benefits.

**New York State Children and Families Participating In the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

New York District	# of Food Insecure Children	# of Families who Receive SNAP	% of SNAP Family Recipients with Children
1	22,020	14,428	41%
2	19,990	16,996	52%
3	20,000	8,293	29%
4	20,860	13,252	44%
5	31,050	37,178	43%
6	28,110	26,228	31%
7	44,040	65,672	43%
8	37,220	76,163	34%
9	35,210	57,202	37%
10	31,030	34,700	42%

11	28,610	33,907	43%
12	13,270	21,983	18%
13	40,460	86,778	41%
14	28,920	39,149	44%
15	59,730	118,931	48%
16	30,060	36,594	42%
17	30,530	19,806	50%
18	28,910	19,825	40%
19	27,230	26,716	36%
20	25,340	33,962	44%
21	31,450	41,274	35%
22	32,650	42,698	41%
23	30,520	42,292	40%
24	31,650	39,582	45%
25	30,620	44,867	43%
26	35,040	58,411	39%
27	24,940	23,725	41%

Hungersolutionsny.org. (2018). SNAP District Data Sheets | Hunger Solutions New York. [Online].

## New York Congressional Districts:



(New York State Congressional Districts, 2018)

## What is New York State's Current SNAP Recertification Process?

SNAP participants are typically subject to an annual recertification.<sup>1</sup> Individuals are able to renew their benefits without having to travel to their local social services office, so long as they do not receive cash benefits in addition to SNAP. The recertification process can be broken down into three steps:

1. Participants must submit the recertification application.
2. Participants receive an interview (via telephone).
3. Participants may be asked to submit additional documents, if needed. This varies by individual circumstance.

SNAP's current recertification process in New York State is simple and convenient for most participants. As long as participants are meeting SNAP work requirements, SNAP individuals only have to recertify their benefits once a year.

## What are the Current SNAP Work Requirements?

SNAP's current work requirements call for able-bodied adults ages 18 through 49 without dependents (ABAWD) to work or participate in a work program for a minimum of 20 hours per week. A "dependent" refers to a child under the age of 18 years old. This requirement must be completed for individuals to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in a three year period.<sup>2</sup> Participants must accept a job if offered, and cannot voluntarily quit a job or reduce their hours.

## What Do the House's 2018 Farm Bill Work Requirements Say about SNAP Eligibility?

Individuals ages 18 through 59 who do not have a disability or a child under 6 years of age would be required to submit proof of their eligibility every month to continue receiving SNAP benefits. If individuals fail to meet the requirements for a given month, they would be subject to harsh penalties that could result in a loss of all benefits for up to three years.<sup>3</sup> This proposed policy would put participants who face employment hurdles at risk of not having a source of food assistance or income if they were to lose their benefits. Even though the penalty of losing benefits would be restricted to the individual that was unable to comply, that loss would be enough to bring about food insecurity in a household – further putting all the family members at risk of hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.

## What Are The Risks Associated With Monthly Eligibility?

The Center on Policy and Budget Priorities estimates that, "each month state agencies would need to track about 7 million people who potentially would be required to report their work status, work

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<sup>1</sup> Opwdd.ny.gov. (2018). SNAP - Recertification | OPWDD. [Online].

<sup>2</sup> Fns.usda.gov. (2018). Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) | Food and Nutrition Service. [Online].

<sup>3</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2018). House Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill Would Increase Food Insecurity and Hardship. [Online].

program participation, or exemption qualification.”<sup>4</sup> This means that all states would need to upgrade their reporting and paperwork systems in order to accommodate this intense and extensive method of tracking. Not only would this be an expensive undertaking, but would present a large learning curve for which both state agencies and participants would need to overcome in order to navigate. If participants do not properly complete or submit their paperwork, they would be at risk for losing their benefits. If state employees made an administrative mistake in handling participant forms, those participants would be at risk of losing their benefits. Many of these mistakes are out of the participating families’ control.

Regardless of whether an individual is meeting their minimum work requirement of 20 hours per week, they could still be at risk for losing their benefits if these hours were not appropriately recorded. Submitting paperwork every month is time consuming and a tedious process for individuals who are already struggling to meet SNAP’s work requirements. Numerous self-employed individuals may lack the particular documents for which the state requires to be submitted. Additionally, employees with multiple jobs may struggle to, on a monthly basis, obtain timesheets from each of their individual employers. Individuals and families should not have to fear losing their SNAP benefits, and further be subject to food insecurity, if they are already meeting the work requirements. Eligibility should not have to be proven on a monthly basis.

## Who Is At Risk?

As calculated from the chart above, on average, 40.2% of families who receive SNAP in New York State have children. If any of these families were to face a partial or complete loss of SNAP benefits, their children could be at risk for food insecurity. Malnutrition, which can result from hunger and poverty, impacts physical and developmental growth. Children need to feed their body and mind to learn, be healthy, and be functional members of society. Children who face food insecurity are subject to a heightened risk of serious physical and developmental illnesses.

## Call to Action

The House 2018 Farm Bill’s SNAP monthly eligibility requirement will cause more harm than good for our children and families who receive SNAP. Congress needs to come up with a more bipartisan solution that both values and rewards the hard work that SNAP recipients are already contributing in order to meet the work requirements. Bureaucratic errors on the state level are not a reflection of the participants’ of whom those errors affect. Further, participants should not be at risk of losing their SNAP benefits due to administrative complications, such as employment timesheets being misfiled. Although the House 2018 Farm Bill’s reconsideration is approaching, there is still time to voice concerns and protect SNAP recipients from the Bill’s harsh work requirements.

## Senate Farm Bill?

The Senate has their own version of the Farm Bill. This Bill was introduced by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS), and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) on June 13, 2018.

We support FRAC’s comments about the Bill, which applaud the Senate proposals for being “carefully

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

considered, positive, and bipartisan.”<sup>5</sup> The Bill clearly recognizes the harm that hunger and poverty pose, and, in turn, appreciates the strengths of SNAP. Among various provisions, the Senate aims to reduce paperwork for households with seniors and people with disabilities.<sup>6</sup> This goal is vastly different from the House’s call for stricter SNAP work requirements, and is much more feasible for SNAP participants. We appreciate the work that has been done thus far, and urge Congress to continue their efforts to protect all SNAP participants – including children.

#SNAPMatters #ProtectSNAP

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<sup>5</sup> Food Research & Action Center. (2018). Food Research & Action Center Applauds Proposed Farm Bill From Senators Roberts and Stabenow - Food Research & Action Center. [Online].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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