

# ADDRESSING HUNGER AND NUTRITION

## A Tool Kit for Positive Results



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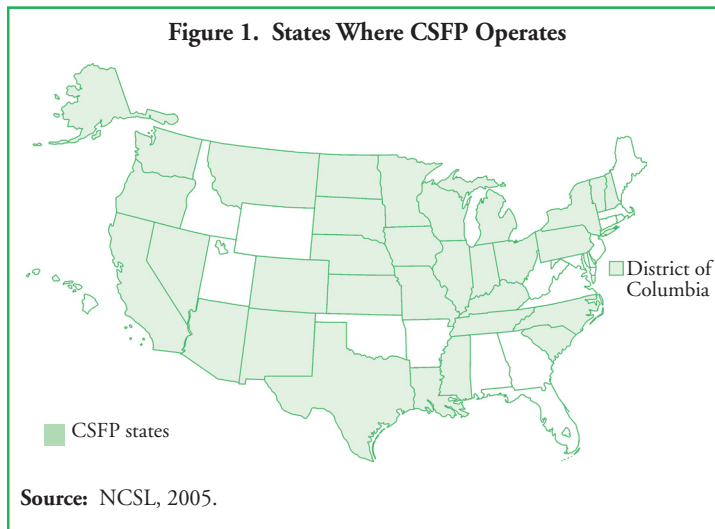
## Commodity Supplemental Food Program

By Katherine Gigliotti

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The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides commodity foods to state agencies to supplement the diets of low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, children up to age 6, and the elderly. Examples of foods made available through CSFP include infant formula and cereal, nonfat dry and evaporated milk, juice, farina, oats, ready-to-eat cereal, rice, pasta, egg mix, peanut butter, dry beans or peas, canned meat or poultry or tuna, and canned fruits and vegetables.

CSFP operates in only 33 states (see figure 1), and in most places it primarily serves low-income elderly. In places where it is used to serve low-income mothers and children, it is often used in place of WIC.



At the federal level, CSFP is administered by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). FNS makes the commodity foods and administrative funds available to state agencies, for example, the department of health, human services, education or agriculture. State agencies distribute the food to public and nonprofit local agencies that directly serve the public. Local agencies determine program eligibility based upon requirements established by both the federal and state governments.

### Eligibility and Benefits

To be eligible for CSFP, women, infants, children and the elderly must reside in a state that participates in the program.

In fiscal year 2004, CSFP:

- Operated in 33 states,
- Served 522,000 individuals, and
- Was funded at \$145 million.

Income eligibility for

the elderly is established by the federal government. Elderly people must have income at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Income eligibility for women, infants and children is determined by each state. Typically, states establish eligibility at 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

States also can establish local residency requirements based on designated service areas, but they cannot establish a minimum period of residency. Finally, states also can require that participants be at nutritional risk. Risk assessment can be based on a variety of measures, including height and weight measurements and blood tests. Examples of nutritional risk conditions include anemia and inappropriate weight for height.

### Program Issues and Challenges

#### CSFP Package Pick-Up And Transport

For many senior citizens, picking-up and transporting the CSFP food package to their residence is a challenge. Since CSFP provides a supplement to the individual's existing diet, it often is distributed as a package of food made available once a month. This package often can weigh up to 40 pounds. One challenge to seniors who obtain this food is that they may no longer be able to drive, making it difficult to reach the CSFP distribution site when the food package is available. Although some seniors use public transportation or senior transport services, transporting the CSFP package to and from the bus often is difficult for an elderly individual.

#### Program Availability

Under federal legislation, CSFP is not authorized to operate in every state. Furthermore, in some states, CSFP does not

operate in every county. The scattered availability of this program means that some low-income senior citizens, women and children are not able to receive this supplement to their diets.

## Program Models and Promising Practices

### *Transportation*

Hunger Task Force, a food bank and advocacy agency, is the CSFP provider in Milwaukee County, **Wisconsin**. A key component of the Stockbox program is a partnership with the Department of Corrections. CSFP boxes are packed by current inmates who are enrolled in a warehouse certification training program. Using trained labor to produce the CSFP packages helps the process move efficiently and quickly. CSFP packages then are delivered to participating seniors at both residential and public sites. One-half of Stockbox deliveries are made directly to senior residences at elderly housing complexes. The remaining deliveries are made to senior centers, community centers, and food pantries where seniors can pickup their food. Because many seniors rely on senior transit services for transportation, the Hunger Task Force has worked with the transportation provider to educate bus drivers about helping seniors transfer the box to and from the bus. More information on the Stockbox program can be found at [http://www.hungertaskforce.org/Bringing\\_Food/Stockbox.html](http://www.hungertaskforce.org/Bringing_Food/Stockbox.html).

### *CSFP and Nutrition Education*

In **Arizona**, CSFP is known as Food Plus. Participants, who enroll in Food Plus through the county health department, are

provided with a voucher to receive a commodity food package from a local food bank once a month for six months. The Arizona Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has established partnerships with several of the food banks in the state, including the Tucson Community Food Bank, to coordinate nutrition education with Food Plus distribution. EFNEP nutrition educators come to the food bank once a week to educate Food Plus recipients about nutritious meals that can be made using CSFP foods. The nutrition educators receive the monthly distribution schedule from the food bank, so they know what foods will be included in the distribution each week; thus, recipes and cooking demonstrations correspond with the types of food contained in the package on a given week. Since CSFP serves a large number of senior citizens, the nutrition educators provide several recipe variations—for example, modified for diabetes, a low-cholesterol diet, etc. Also, given Arizona's sizeable Hispanic population, efforts are made to highlight ways to prepare ethnic dishes with commodity foods, and many recipes have been translated into Spanish. This partnership between CSFP and EFNEP allows program participants to effectively use CSFP foods in their diet.

### Resources

- Federal Program Overview: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/>
- State Agency Contacts: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/sdacontacts.htm>

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Definitions of commonly used hunger and nutrition terms can be found in NCSL's Hunger and Nutrition Partnership *Glossary of Hunger and Nutrition Terms* at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/Glossary.htm>.