

# **Food Security For Military & Veteran Families**

**Prepared for  
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# Food Insecurity a Problem for Many Veterans



**Food hardship: Nearly 1 in 5 people in US didn't have enough money to purchase food they need for themselves and their families in 2012** (FRAC

analysis of Gallup poll data at

[http://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/5118/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content\\_item\\_KEY=10884](http://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/5118/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=10884) )

**Veterans and military families are among those food insecure**

**40% of NYC vets rely on food pantries and soup kitchens, according to Food Bank for NYC** <http://www.foodbanknyc.org/news/40-of-new-york-city-s-veterans-rely-on-food-pantries-and-soup-kitchens-reveals-new-food-bank-for-new-york-city-report>

**75% of regular visitors at a small soup kitchen in Northampton, MA are vets** <http://www.gazettenet.com/news/townbytown/northampton/9259872-95/local-bikers-revved-up-to-help-manna-soup-kitchen-where-75-percent-of-regular>

# Factors in Veterans' Food Insecurity



**Unemployment, underemployment and disabilities can contribute to veterans' food insecurity**

**10% unemployment rate for vets on active duty at any point between Sept. 2001 and fall 2013** <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/penny-starr/10-unemployment-post-911-era-vets-246000-looking-work>

**In 2011, approximately 14% of all veterans and 26% of WWII veterans reported a service-connected disability** <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>

**Disability is an important risk factor for food insecurity** <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013-may/disability-is-an-important-risk-factor-for-food-insecurity.aspx#.Uqt-amRDu9w>

# SNAP Matters for Veterans



**900,000 military veterans live in HHs getting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits**

See CBPP analysis of Census data for period 2009-2011:  
<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4039>

**Yet SNAP is likely missing more needy vets**

**In FY 2011 fewer than 1% of SNAP HHs also got veterans benefits**

<http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/02/27/snap-remains-a-safety-net-for-veterans-and-families-in-need/>

**Pride, stigma, lack of information, difficulty in navigating application process are barriers to getting SNAP to more needy veterans**

**Also barrier: 3 mo (out 36 mo) time limit on SNAP receipt by able-bodied jobless adults (18-50) without dependents (waivers/exemptions may apply)**

# Active Military HHs May Be Food Insecure



**Lower pay for junior ranks, mobility, and spousal employment challenges may contribute to food insecurity in active military HHs**

**"We know that for military families, the top two stressors are, No. 1, the death of a family member, but No. 2 is financial"--Ben Geyerhahn of BeneStream**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/18/food-stamp-cuts-military-bases-commissary\\_n\\_1607249.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/18/food-stamp-cuts-military-bases-commissary_n_1607249.html)

**Operation Homefront saw the amount of food assistance it provided to military families double between 2008 and 2011** <http://www.stripes.com/news/food-stamp-use-at-military-commissaries-up-sharply-in-four-years-1.160858>

**Those in military reserves and National Guard among those seeking emergency food aid** <http://www.stripes.com/news/food-stamp-use-at-military-commissaries-up-sharply-in-four-years-1.160858>

# Active Military HHs & SNAP



**5,000 military HHs receive SNAP (junior ranks w/larger families)**

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/07/13/dod-5000-military-families-losing-food-stamps.html>

**Mobility and spousal employment challenges likely factors in need**

**In FY 2012 military commissaries redeemed \$98,791,158 in SNAP benefits**

<http://endhunger.usda.gov/snap/retailers/pdfs/2012-annual-report.pdf>

**Some SNAP redemptions at military commissaries also may have been by military recently separated from service HHs**

**A small number of active military HHs participate in separate Family**

**Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/fssa/> and <https://mail.frac.org/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAABN1DRRfilyS6CivNxmjdeY%2bBwB6eBS7z3pZTL%2fimN1ZPpXcAAAD1lujAAB6eBS7z3pZTL%2fimN1ZPpXcAN2%2bq9ZaAAAJ>**

# Federal Nutrition Safety Net Can Serve Needy Military & Veteran Families



**SNAP -- no age restrictions**

**WIC -- pregnant and post-partum mothers and infants and young toddlers**

**School Lunch and School Breakfast -- school age**

**Child and Adult Care Food Program -- pre school and afterschool programs**

**Summer Nutrition -- school age**

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program -no age restrictions; lifeline for emergency feeding agencies**

**Commodity Supplemental Food Program -- largely for elderly**

**Resources:**

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/federal-nutrition-programs-chart.aspx>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/>

<http://frac.org/>

# Connecting Military & Vet Families With SNAP in NYS



Hunger Solutions NY's SNAP outreach to military and veteran families earned FRAC's innovative project award in June 2013

Hunger Solutions NY has posters, op ed templates and other materials for Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) workers to assist vets and military

Message: You enlisted to serve our country. Enlist SNAP to serve you.

It provides NOEP SNAP outreach workers w/ map of and contacts for military installations around NYS

It connects with groups that interact w/ veterans and military HHs and seeks out "Trusted Messengers"

Approaches may differ based on particular HH circumstances, such as age, disability, employment status, among others

Since it launched its initiative 2 years ago, Hunger Solutions NY NOEPs have assisted more than 4,000 military and veteran families in NYS for a total of \$13 million of federal SNAP benefits accessed. <http://hungersolutionsny.org/what-we-do/our-programs>



# Connecting Military & Veteran Families With SNAP and Other Benefits in OH



The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks works through the Ohio Benefit Bank to connect needy people, including needy veterans and military families, with federal and state benefits to which they may be entitled

Benefits for which HHs are screened include SNAP, EITC and many others

“Many young service members and veterans are unaware of the programs available to them to further their education. As a result, many of these benefits and entitlements go unused. What The Ohio Benefit Bank does is help increase awareness and connect them with the right people.” —Colonel Julie A. Blike, Ohio National Guard <http://columbusfoundation.org/stories/2011-initiative-and-grants/connecting-ohios-veterans-to-benefits/>

# Restaurant Meal Plan (RMP) May Serve Vets Who Are Homeless, Older, or Have Disabilities



States have options to allow certain SNAP participants to use their EBT benefits to obtain hot prepared food at approved restaurants that offer a low cost meal option

3 categories that face particular challenges in purchasing and preparing food at home: Elderly; Persons with disabilities; and Homeless

Veterans may fall into one or more of these categories and find RMP especially helpful in accessing nutrition benefits

Information on RMP: <http://www.snaprmp.org/faqs.html>

<http://www.sachousingalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/RestaurantMealsProgramFinal.pdf>

# Connecting Military HHs Children with Child Nutrition Programs



**60% of children in military families are school age; average child in military family moves 6 to 9 times during his/her school career**

**<http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/about.cfm>**

**School meals, afterschool meals and summer nutrition can help military families: by reducing HH food costs and by supporting education and enrichment for children**

**Important to get nutrition program eligibility info to military HHs**

**Child's eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals applies for entire school year and is portable—make sure child's eligibility status is shared with new school district upon military family transfer**

# Contact



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