



## Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is the only USDA nutrition program that provides monthly food assistance specially targeted at low-income seniors.<sup>i</sup> The program is designed to meet the unique nutritional needs of participants, supplementing diets with a monthly package of healthy, nutritious USDA commodities. With one in 12 households with seniors at risk of hunger nationwide,<sup>ii</sup> CSFP prevents vulnerable seniors from having to choose between food and other basic needs.

### WHO QUALIFIES

CSFP has eligibility requirements for both income and age. CSFP serves individuals age 60 and over with incomes of less than 130% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (\$15, 444 for a senior living alone in 2016).<sup>iii</sup>

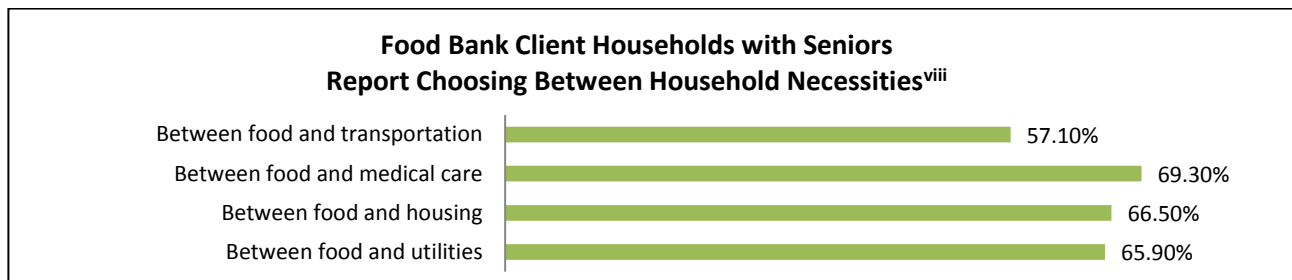


### EFFICIENTLY LEVERAGES GOVERNMENT BUYING POWER

CSFP leverages government buying power to maximize the impact of the monthly food package. The USDA commodity foods included in the package are all U.S. grown and produced products. While the cost to USDA to provide the food package is about \$20 per month, the average retail value is \$50, making it a highly efficient use of federal dollars.<sup>iv</sup>

### TARGETS VULNERABLE SENIORS

Seniors – regardless of income – have different nutritional needs and are more likely to have difficulty preparing or consuming food due to limited mobility, cognitive impairments, and other age-related conditions.<sup>v</sup> These challenges are amplified for low-income seniors trying to get by on a limited food budget. According to Feeding America’s study *Hunger in America 2014*, food bank client households with seniors are often forced to make difficult choices between food and other basic needs.<sup>vi</sup>



Nearly half of seniors between the age of 60 and 90 will encounter at least one year of poverty or near poverty, putting them at greater risk of food insecurity.<sup>vii</sup> Unlike home-delivered meals and congregate feeding programs in senior centers, CSFP is means tested, meaning that it focuses specifically on the low-income senior population.

### PROVIDES TAILORED NUTRITION

While CSFP does not provide a complete diet, the senior food package is designed to provide nutrients typically lacking in the diet of that population, including protein, calcium, potassium, magnesium, several vitamins, and fiber.<sup>viii</sup> A 2014 USDA study rated CSFP’s senior food package at 83.6 on the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), significantly higher than the HEI score of 63 for the average American diet.<sup>ix</sup> The report further found that the CSFP senior food package provides 23% of seniors’ total energy needs and contained a third or more of the recommended daily reference intake (DRI)<sup>x</sup> for protein, calcium, vitamins A and C, and several B vitamins.<sup>xi</sup> Protein is provided through foods like peanut butter, dry beans, and tuna, and milk and cheese provide calcium. Canned low-sugar fruits, low-sodium vegetables, and juice deliver essential vitamins. USDA made several nutritional improvements to the CSFP food package in 2011 to reduce sugar, salt, and fat content and increase whole grains.<sup>xii</sup>

## IMPROVES HEALTH

CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in food insecure seniors. According to National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data, food insecure seniors over the age of 60 are significantly more likely to have lower intakes of major vitamins, to be in poor or fair health, and to have limitations in activities of daily living.

Without proper nutrients, seniors are at risk for:

- Increased disability
- Decreased resistance to infections
- Deteriorating mental health
- Lengthening of hospital stays
- Diabetes

**Sample CSFP Senior Food Package**

Product	Units	Size
Cereal Dry	2 units	12-18 oz
Juice	2 ctns	64 oz
Tuna Fish	2 cans	12 oz
UHT Fluid Milk 1%	2 pkg	32 oz
Instant Non Fat Dry	1 box*	25.6 oz
Peanut Butter	1 can	18 oz
Macaroni	2 pkg	1 lb
Processed American	2 pkg	1 lb
Fruits	2 cans	15-16 oz
Fruit juice	2 cans	46 oz
Vegetables	4 cans	15-16 oz

\* provided every other month

Figure 1



## HOW CSFP WORKS

CSFP is a discretionary program funded each year through the federal appropriations process so the program may only serve as many eligible participants as funding allows. CSFP provides food and administrative funds to States, which in turn store and transport the food to local agencies for distribution to low-income clients.

While most participants either pick up their monthly CSFP food package at a food bank or other local sponsor or have a designee who is authorized to pick up their food package pick it up for them, some communities deliver the food package directly to the participant's home, an important program feature for seniors with limited mobility.

## PROGRAM ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Because the program can only serve as many communities and seniors as funding allows, CSFP currently operates in 48 states, plus the District of Columbia and two Indian reservations. We strongly urge the House to provide \$250 million which will maintain at least the current monthly caseload of 697,865 and to provide an opportunity for the two remaining states to start programs subject to USDA approved plans.

Even in states where CSFP is available, the program is only available in limited geographic areas. As a result, program operators have waiting lists of low-income elderly individuals who would like to participate but cannot because of insufficient funds and caseload availability.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CSFP Website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/>

CSFP Fact Sheets: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/csfp\\_faqfacts.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/csfp_faqfacts.htm)

Jasmine Dickerson, Senior Legislative Representative: [jdickerson@feedingamerica.org](mailto:jdickerson@feedingamerica.org)

## REFERENCES

---

- <sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Tentative CSFP Caseload and Administrative Funding 2014*. January 2016.  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/csfp/CSFP\\_Final\\_Caseload\\_Assignments\\_%20Memorandum\\_2016.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/csfp/CSFP_Final_Caseload_Assignments_%20Memorandum_2016.pdf)
- <sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2011*. Table 2. September 2012. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/884525/err141.pdf>.
- <sup>iii</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014 Poverty Guidelines, *Federal Register Notice*, January 24, 2014. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/14poverty.cfm>. Note: The 2014 federal poverty guideline is \$11,670 for a one-person household living at 100% of the poverty guideline and \$15,171 for a one-person household living at 130% of the poverty guideline.
- <sup>iv</sup> Feeding America analysis of U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Information Report* (keydata), U.S Summary FY2011. Extracted January 2012. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/key\\_data/october-2011.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/key_data/october-2011.pdf).
- <sup>v</sup> Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *The Role of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) in Nutritional Assistance to Mothers, Infants, Children, and Seniors*, August 2008.  
<http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/32850/PDF>.
- <sup>vi</sup> Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report, August 2014. Table  
<http://help.feedingamerica.org/HungerInAmerica/hunger-in-america-2014-full-report.pdf>.
- <sup>vii</sup> Rank, Mark and James Williams. *A Life Course Approach to Understanding Poverty Among Older American Adults*. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 2010, v. 91, no. 4.  
<http://www.familiesinsociety.org/ShowdoiAbstract.asp?docid=4032>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Weimer J. *Factors Affecting Nutrient Intake of the Elderly*. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Economic Report No. 769; page iii.  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer769/aer769.pdf>.
- <sup>ix</sup> [http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/healthy\\_eating\\_index/HEI89-90report.pdf](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/healthy_eating_index/HEI89-90report.pdf)
- <sup>x</sup> The DRI is a group of standards developed by the Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board to assess the adequacy and quality of nutrient intakes. The DRI is the most recent set of dietary recommendations and they replace previous Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA). RDA is now one of several standards included in the DRI group of standards.
- <sup>xi</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Nutrient and MyPyramid Analysis of USDA Foods in Five of Its Food and Nutrition Programs*. January 2012.  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/NutrientMyPyramid.pdf>.
- <sup>xii</sup> National CSFP Association. [http://www.ncsfpa.org/\\_assets/2012/03/Improvements-to-USDA-Commodities-issued-by-the-CSFP-Program.pdf](http://www.ncsfpa.org/_assets/2012/03/Improvements-to-USDA-Commodities-issued-by-the-CSFP-Program.pdf).