

# Increasing older adult access to SNAP



**Only 29% of eligible people over the age of 60 participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).**<sup>1</sup> This is a cause for public concern: without SNAP, older adults with low incomes may be unable to meet their nutritional needs — resulting in poorer mental and physical health outcomes and increased health care costs for Medicare and the public health system.

Interviews with nearly 200 older adults with low incomes highlight their barriers to accessing and maintaining SNAP benefits. The findings — detailed in the full report *Older Adult SNAP Access*<sup>2</sup> — point out opportunities to make it easier for older adults to participate in SNAP.

## Barriers to Benefits: Major Challenges to Enrollment

### Knowing about SNAP

- Lack of information
- Perceived or real burdens: time, effort, digital literacy and sharing private info
- Perceptions about low benefit amounts
- Stigma
- Social isolation

### Applying and Enrolling in SNAP

- Transaction costs: long hold times or lack of transportation
- Internet access
- Cognitive limits
- Complex eligibility rules: may not report or under-report medical expenses affecting benefit levels
- Documentation burden

### Using Benefits and Recertifying Eligibility

- Affordability of fresh produce
- Lack of transportation or limited delivery options
- Complex requirements: reporting changes in household status or income
- Cognitive limits: understanding notifications

## How does SNAP help adults age 60 and over?

SNAP looks at household income and expenses, including recurring medical expenses for older adults, to determine eligibility. Participants receive monthly benefits to supplement their grocery budgets. In fiscal year 2019, the average SNAP benefit for households with older adults was \$120/month.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2022/boosting-snap-participation-among-older-adults.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp\\_foundation/pdf/2021/spr-older-adult-snap-access-report-full-report.pdf](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/pdf/2021/spr-older-adult-snap-access-report-full-report.pdf)

# Breaking Down Barriers: State Policy Solutions

Some states have implemented demonstration projects and policies to increase SNAP participation among older adults:

## Combined Application Project (CAP)

Allows SSI participants to file a shortened SNAP application form without having a face-to-face interview at the SNAP office

## Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)

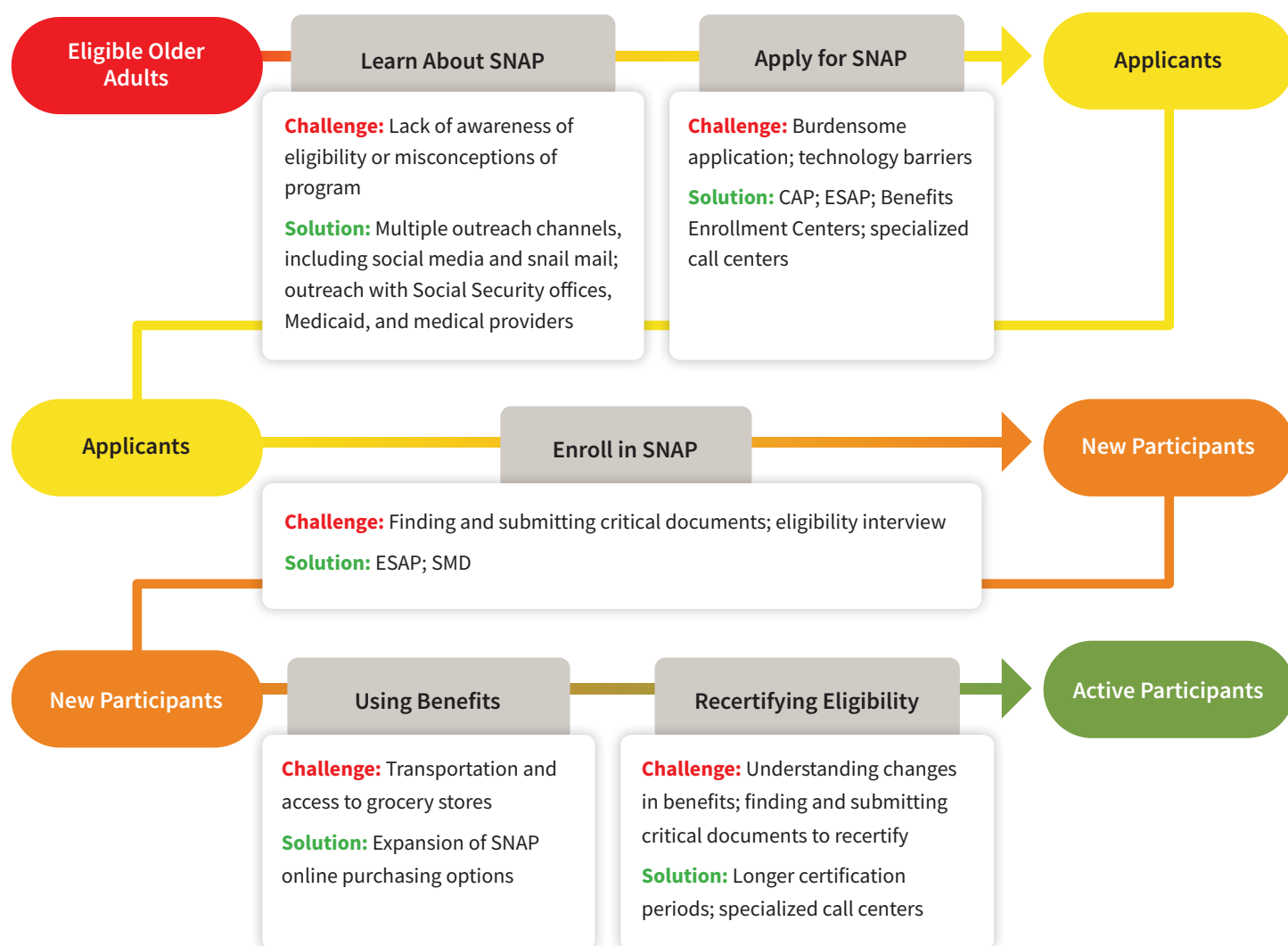
Allows states to choose from program options like waiving the recertification interview and extending the certification period so older adults with no earned income can apply for and remain on SNAP more easily

## Standard Medical Deduction (SMD)

Eases process of claiming unreimbursed medical expenses that may increase SNAP benefit amounts

## Improving the SNAP Experience Every Step of the Way

This example of an older adult's experience enrolling in SNAP represents some of the key challenges and potential solutions to making the process easier and more accessible. For further detail on challenges and solutions, [see the full report](#).<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup>[https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp\\_foundation/pdf/2021/spr-older-adult-snap-access-report-full-report.pdf](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/pdf/2021/spr-older-adult-snap-access-report-full-report.pdf)