



# Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports to Reduce Child Hunger



## North Carolina: Meeting Families Where They Are

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' (NCDHHS's) Division of Child and Family Well-Being (DCFV) is partnering with Meals4Families to increase cross-enrollment between the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also called NC Food and Nutrition Services; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Medicaid.

Using a three-pronged approach to meet families where they are, the organizations will 1) leverage school partnerships, 2) build referral pathways to benefits application support through the health system, and 3) improve community-supported digital application processes.

### 1 School Partnerships

The North Carolina CSNS team is partnering with several local school districts to implement No Kid Hungry's SNAP in Schools Model. This model aims to connect eligible students to SNAP through school-based outreach.

### 2 Health Systems Referral




North Carolina's CSNS project builds upon the state's Nutrition Insecurity Cross-Enrollment (NICE) pilot, an initiative that adds SNAP and WIC eligibility identifiers to a care management dataset used by health organizations that coordinate and provide care for North Carolinians enrolled in Medicaid.

In conjunction with the NICE pilot, North Carolina is launching a SNAP and WIC outreach initiative focused on five counties, in partnership with Carolina Complete Health and Duke Health. In this initiative, the CSNS project builds a referral pathway for Duke Health outreach specialists to identify Medicaid patients who are likely eligible for SNAP and/or WIC. These patients are then referred to More In My Basket (MIMB), a program developed at North Carolina State University that helps reduce food insecurity by connecting residents to SNAP food benefits.

### 3 Improvements to Digital Application Support

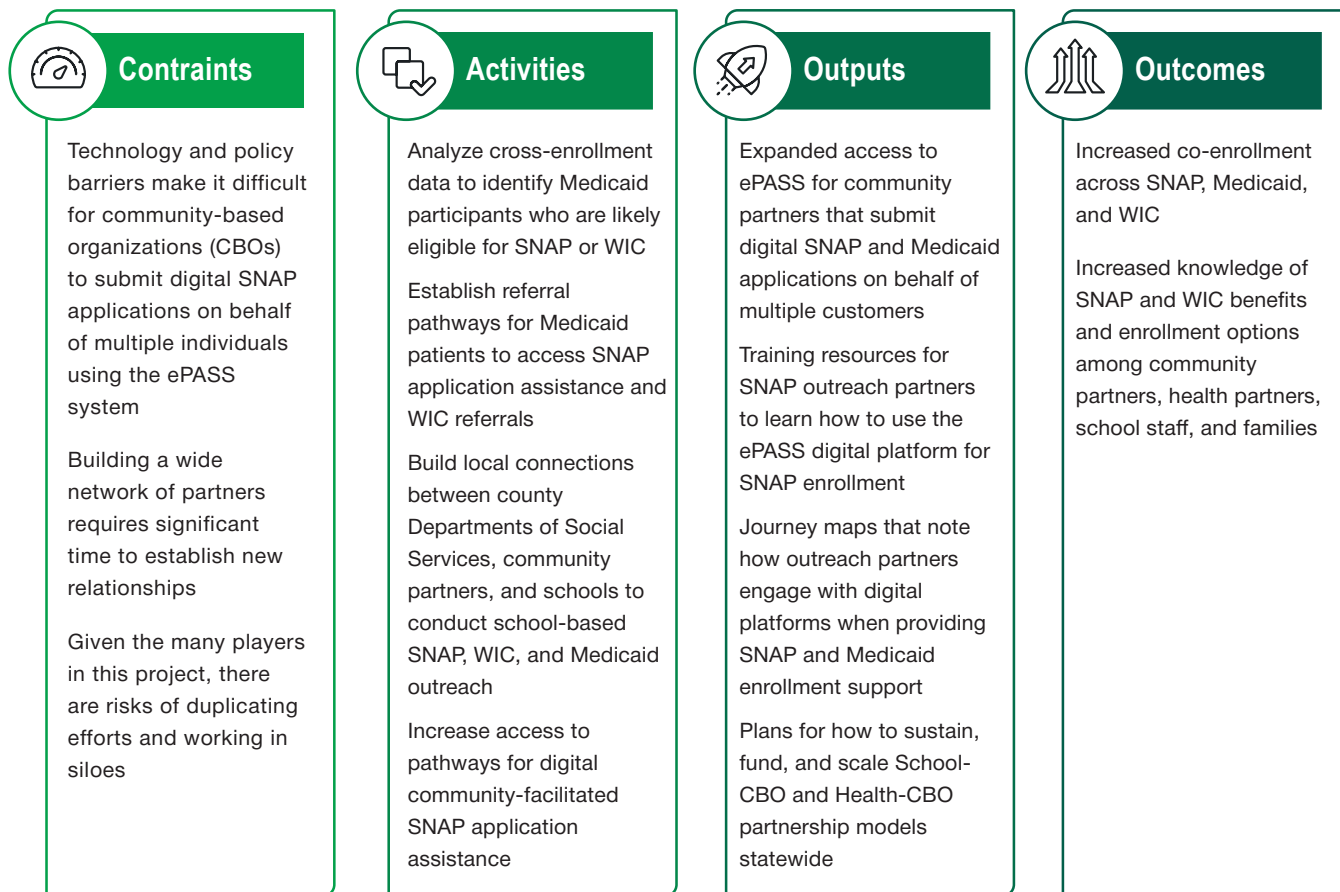
North Carolina's digital benefits application, ePASS, provides customers with a self-service platform to apply for Medicaid and SNAP on a single website. This project brings together NC Food and Nutrition Services, State SNAP Outreach Partners, and NC FAST—the tech team behind the ePASS system—to expand pathways for community partners to assist with digital applications for SNAP and Medicaid benefits using ePASS.

#### Objectives

-  Reduce co-enrollment gaps between SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid by meeting families where they are
-  Improve digital infrastructure for community partners to assist with public benefits application
-  Establish a network of partners to facilitate community-supported benefits access

#### Logic Model

Purpose: Meet families where they are and enhance pathways for community-supported benefits application to improve co-enrollment rates across public benefits.



## Background & Context

In January 2022, programs serving children and families in North Carolina were united within the DCFW. DCFW includes four sections: Food and Nutrition Services (SNAP), Community Nutrition Services (WIC, CACFP), Whole Child Health, and Early Intervention. Since forming, DCFW has prioritized making it easier for families to enroll in SNAP and WIC. In April 2022, DCFW established explicit goals to increase SNAP and WIC participation<sup>1</sup>:

- 75% of eligible families will be enrolled in WIC
- 90% of eligible families will be enrolled in SNAP

Meals4Families is an anti-poverty and anti-hunger organization working to remove barriers that prevent families from connecting with federal benefit programs, including food and nutrition programs. Meals4Families uses a “train the trainers” model with health partners, education partners, and community partners to build their capacity to provide benefit enrollment support.

North Carolina’s CSNS initiative builds upon existing collaborations between NCDHHS and Meals4Families. Meals4Families plays a crucial role by providing expertise in food and nutrition support to the North Carolina Integrated Care for Kids (NC InCK) program. NC InCK is a NCDHHS-supported initiative that serves Medicaid-insured children in five counties.

Meals4Families also collaborated with NCDHHS on statewide Child Tax Credit outreach, including a text messaging campaign to reach individuals enrolled in SNAP and WIC. This collaboration resulted in an estimated additional \$500,000 of the total \$7.7 million in federal tax credits returned to NC families with no or low income.

## Problem Identification & Target Population

Data sharing initiatives at the state level have identified significant co-enrollment gaps across SNAP, Medicaid, and WIC, highlighting a key opportunity to build effective outreach pathways that ensure families have access to all programs and supports they are eligible for.

North Carolina’s CSNS project aims to close these gaps by bringing together over 25 organizations to break down barriers including misinformation about public benefits, stigma, lack of language access, and unclear pathways for CBOs to provide digital SNAP application assistance. These collective efforts will broadly impact students and patients, with a targeted focus on reaching students experiencing homelessness, immigrants, mixed-status families, as well as Black and Latino communities.



<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, State Action Plan for Nutrition Security. (2023-2024). Retrieved March 15, 2024.

## Project Implementation Plan

North Carolina will collaborate across schools, health systems, and human services agencies to connect children and families to SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid.



### Plan

- Coordinate workflows for health and school partners who will facilitate outreach
- Train community partner staff to guide families through digital benefits application processes



### Collaborate

- Establish partnerships between schools, community partners, and county DSS offices
- Establish outreach protocols to support health partnership referrals for SNAP application support
- Convene state SNAP outreach partners and Medicaid enrollment support partners to identify barriers and solutions to providing digital application assistance through ePASS



### Implement

- Refer Medicaid patients to More In My Basket for SNAP application assistance
- Tailor the SNAP in Schools model to North Carolina's unique context
- Test workflow for community partners to provide SNAP application assistance using North Carolina's ePASS system



### Evaluate

- SNAP applications and WIC referrals submitted from health systems referral and outreach
- SNAP applications and WIC referrals submitted through school partnerships
- Attitudes and awareness of SNAP among staff, teachers, administrators, and families
- Value of benefits to students and families resulting from enrollment support provided by the Buncombe County Schools Family Resource Center

## Long-Term Goals

By increasing SNAP enrollment within school communities, North Carolina can increase the number of students who can be directly certified for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (NSLP/SBP), as well as increase the portion of students who are streamline certified for Summer EBT. Increased enrollment numbers in the NSLP/SBP for eligible families can also help school districts with disproportionate poverty rates meet the threshold for the Community Eligibility Provision, which would allow all students within the district to receive free and reduced-price school meals without an application.

In the long-term, North Carolina aims to build a state-wide network of public benefits advocates and supporters who can connect families to multiple benefit programs through technology, streamlined partner workflows, and a shared goal of expanding equitable access to benefits. They aim to meet families where they are, while reducing the co-enrollment gap across Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC.

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