



Media Release

Contact:

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Older Arkansans Can Improve Health with Grocery Program

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is partnering with senior centers across Arkansas to educate older Arkansans about SNAP, a program that helps recipients afford healthy foods.

Right now, about one-third of Arkansas seniors are living with food insecurity or are at risk of hunger. Several factors, including lack of transportation and financial hardship, contribute to Arkansas having among the highest senior food insecurity rates in the country.

“In Arkansas, many eligible seniors are not receiving SNAP benefits. Partnering with senior centers is a great way to talk to older adults about this nutrition support program,” said Joni Jones, director of the DHS Division of County Operations. Jones said this senior outreach will allow DHS to reach more people in rural areas who may not be aware they are eligible for benefits.

Krista Hughes, director of the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services, said “SNAP allows seniors to go to the grocery store and purchase foods that doctors recommend for a healthy diet. Research has shown that medications are more effective when older adults eat a healthy and adequate diet.”

On April 11, DHS staff and volunteers will be at the Springdale Senior Activity and Wellness Center, 203 Park Street, beginning at 11:30 a.m. to speak to seniors about SNAP, answer questions, and provide one-on-one application assistance. For more information on this local outreach event, call Lori Proud at (479) 751-1521

In 2011, more than 24,000 Arkansans age 65 or older received SNAP but many more are eligible for the nutrition program.

According to Lou Tobian with AARP Arkansas, only one in three eligible seniors gets the food assistance for which they're eligible. He says the goal is to make sure no older adult struggles to put food on the table.

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Tobian explains that Arkansas has special policy rules for people age 60 or above or anyone receiving disability payments. At each senior center, DHS eligibility specialists and volunteers will explain SNAP, check eligibility, and complete applications.

Arkansans of any age may apply for SNAP through the online application portal Access Arkansas (www.access.arkansas.gov). The site can also be used to apply for help paying for Medicare premiums and ARKids First.

To learn more about hosting SNAP outreach activities, contact Lindsey Barnett, program manager for SNAP Outreach at (501) 682-8288.