



## Media Release

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Contact:

Amy Webb, DHS Director of Communications  
(501) 682-8650

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Older Arkansans Can Improve Health with Grocery Program**

#### *SNAP staff will visit senior center in Mountain Home on May 7*

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 May 7<sup>th</sup>, DHS staff will be at the Van Matre Senior Activity and Wellness Center at Cooper Park, 1101 Spring St. in Mountain Home beginning at 9:30 AM to speak to seniors about SNAP, answer questions, and provide one-on-one application assistance. For more information on this local outreach event, call Joan Statler at (870) 424-3055.

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

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According to Lou Tobian with AARP Arkansas, only one in three eligible seniors get 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.

Tobian explains that Arkansas has special policy rules for people age 60 or older 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](http://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.