

Reduced in a SNAP

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 March 2023 03:13



Food assistance recipients lose a COVID bump this month

Low-income breadwinners are bracing for a shock this month, as one of the last remaining COVID benefits comes to an end.

Recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – commonly referred to as food stamps – will see their benefits shrink with the expiration of the COVID-related federal emergency allotment.

According to the state Human Services Department, 39.6% of McKinley County's population receive SNAP benefits. How much of a reduction each household will see depends on how many people are in it and income level.

While the extra allotment was in place, a family of three received a maximum benefit of \$740 each month in SNAP benefits. In March that family will go back to receiving the average amount of \$335 per month, a department spokesman said.

For individuals, someone who does not earn income was eligible to receive a maximum \$376 each month in SNAP benefits with the allotment; now that person will receive \$281 in monthly benefits.

Reduced in a SNAP

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 March 2023 03:13

To help cushion the blow, the state has approved additional benefits to 7,000 seniors and people with disabilities who are in the SNAP program. From March through June, SNAP benefits for them will be \$50 instead of \$25, the spokesman said.

That means the day there's too much month at the end of the money may come sooner for a lot of families, which is likely to put pressure on local social services and food banks.

"A lot of times these families are choosing between medical expenses or vehicle repairs, or they can't find work or do work," Brent Crowe, who took over as director of The Community Pantry in Gallup in October, said. "If they reach out to us here at the pantry we would love to help them get an application in to see what programs they qualify for."

Pantry staff will even help fill out the applications; all the applicant needs is legal ID and proof of residency and low income.

"If they qualify for SNAP they automatically qualify for our free produce and emergency commodity program," Crowe said. "We also have other programs in which they can purchase food from us at a discounted rate."

People who don't qualify for SNAP may still qualify for assistance from the pantry, Crowe noted.

The pantry provides food boxes for individuals and families that may be struggling with food insecurity.

Crowe said clients have been asking about dairy products and eggs specifically.

"We had a shipment about three weeks ago and they went out quick," he said.

Reduced in a SNAP

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 March 2023 03:13

The pantry has no control over what comes in food deliveries, but it usually includes at least some fresh produce as well as packaged foods.

The Gallup location's secret weapon is the Hope Garden, which offers raised planter bed rentals and education for amateur gardeners who want to grow their own food. While the weather right now may not cooperate with growing, by April the gardeners will be planting and tending vegetable plots.

The Community Pantry in Gallup serves McKinley County, and its sister pantry in Grants serves Cibola County.

For those who are more fortunate who want to help, the pantry accepts donations of money, shelf stable food, boxes and bags for packing groceries, even clothing and furniture in good condition can be routed to partner agencies to help those in need.

"If it can be weighed, we'll take it," Crowe said.

The Community Pantry is open 9 am to 3 pm Monday through Friday at 1130 Hassler Valley Rd. For information on applying for food programs, growing at the Hope Garden or to donate or volunteer, call (505) 726-8068.

By Holly J. Wagner
Sun Correspondent