



## STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SNAP & WORK

**Texas' unemployment rate in September 2020 was 8.3%**, surpassing the national unemployment rate of 7.9% and more than double the September 2019 rate of 3.4%

**~800,000 SNAP recipients were required to participate in SNAP** Employment & Training activities in FY18.

**71% of college students today are "nontraditional"** meaning they are financially independent, work while in school, are caretakers for dependents, and/or did not receive a traditional high-school diploma.

### BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has left 8.3% of Texans, some 2.4M people, out of work. Thousands of these unemployed workers and their families have turned to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in order to feed their families. Fortunately, SNAP has an Employment & Training program (SNAP E&T) to help participants gain the skills, training, or work experience they need to find regular employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

**In Texas' SNAP system, if an able-bodied adult is not working 30 hours per week, they are required to participate in SNAP E&T or they may lose their benefits.**

*"I'm going to school because I don't want to struggle any more. And there's a lot, not just me, but a lot of different families who are gonna struggle at one point."*

**MARISSA, TEXAS MOM + STUDENT**



## PROBLEM

**Unfortunately, due to the large number of SNAP recipients subject to work requirements and limited funding, Texas can only serve a “fraction of work registrants,” according to the Texas Workforce Commission’s FY18 State Plan.** In addition, the services provided by the current SNAP E&T program - typically job search or workfare - do not help participants gain the skills or training that would increase their earning potential. A more diverse array of training programs that have a demonstrated track record for preparing participants for industries with a high demand for skilled labor are needed to improve the program.

**In addition to helping Texas workers left jobless during the pandemic, SNAP should also be available to low-income Texans who enroll in college to increase their earning potential and career opportunities.** Hunger is on the rise at college campuses across Texas, as many low-income students struggle to pay tuition and afford food. Although most full-time college students do not qualify for SNAP under federal law, Texas has the flexibility to allow students at community colleges in vocational or technical programs to receive SNAP. Texas should take advantage of this option so low-income Texans aren’t forced to choose between going to college and feeding their families.

## SOLUTION

The following recommendations will strengthen the connection between SNAP and work, helping more Texans rejoin the workforce and increase their earning potential:

- **Texas should diversify and increase SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) opportunities through public-private partnerships.** Although entitlement funding for SNAP E&T is limited, federal matching funds are available to states that contract with third-party workforce training providers to bring private funds and diverse services to their SNAP E&T programs. Texas should maximize these unlimited 50/50 matching funds to improve the SNAP E&T program.
- **Texas should allow college students in vocational programs to access SNAP.** HHSC should identify the college degree programs that are vocational or technical in nature, so students enrolled in these programs can receive SNAP while pursuing their educational and career goals.



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