



Farm Bill Implementation Outreach Ideas

The nutrition title provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill went into effect on October 1, 2008. This provides an excellent opportunity to launch or re-energize outreach efforts and raise the visibility of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP – the new national name for the improved Food Stamp Program.

The national renaming of the program and some positive benefit and eligibility changes in the program provide many opportunities for educating the public and those eligible for SNAP/Food Stamp benefits. Whether your state decides to use the “SNAP” name or a different name, it’s crucial that low-income eligible populations become familiar with the program and how they can receive nutritional assistance.

Consider holding a press conference or press “round table” event to encourage the media to write about the positive nutrition assistance program provisions of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill’s nutrition title not only renames the Food Stamp Program as SNAP but raises monthly allotments for many people in need, improves asset rules for the program, and provides more funding for emergency feeding. Two of the vulnerable populations most helped are low-income older Americans and low-income working families with high dependent care costs.

Write an op-ed about the improvements to the program or meet with your newspaper’s editorial board members. Closely read newspapers and online blogs in the months around the Farm Bill’s initial implementation and quickly submit letters to the editor or online comments if articles focus solely on the negatives of the farm support programs and neglecting to mention the nutrition program benefits.

Put together a report or brief on hunger, about food stamp usage in your community, or other nutrition-related topics. Release the report at a forum where you can hold panel discussions and invite advocates, legislators and the media.

Use the Farm Bill implementation as an opportunity to reach out to your state and federal legislators. Make sure they understand how the changes to the nutrition programs in the Farm Bill could affect your community and how they can get involved in outreach around the name change and increasing participation. Encourage legislators to include information on their Web sites and in their newsletters. Also ask them to submit an opinion-editorial or perform a site visit.

By using the Farm Bill implementation period as an outreach “hook,” your organization can build momentum around the positive program changes and increase visibility, hopefully resulting in additional eligible people in need signing up for the program.

Highlights of the Farm Bill Nutrition Title:

The national name will change from the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The bill invests an additional \$10.361 billion over ten years in nutrition programs. Over the next ten years, it is expected that a total of \$460 billion will be spent on SNAP/Food Stamps.

The bill increases SNAP/ Food Stamp benefits for millions of people, improves asset rules, and fully implements Electronic Benefit Transfer-EBT (fully ends coupon use).

It increases funding for fruits and vegetables in schools and boosts funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).