



# Commodity Supplemental Food Program

## What is CSFP?

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is the only USDA nutrition program that provides monthly food assistance specially targeted to low-income seniors. The program is designed to meet the unique nutritional needs of participants, supplementing diets with a monthly package of healthy, nutritious USDA commodities. With approximately one in 12 households nationwide containing a senior at risk of hunger, and nearly 10 percent of seniors who live alone facing food insecurity, CSFP prevents vulnerable seniors from having to choose between food and other basic needs.

## WHO QUALIFIES FOR CSFP?

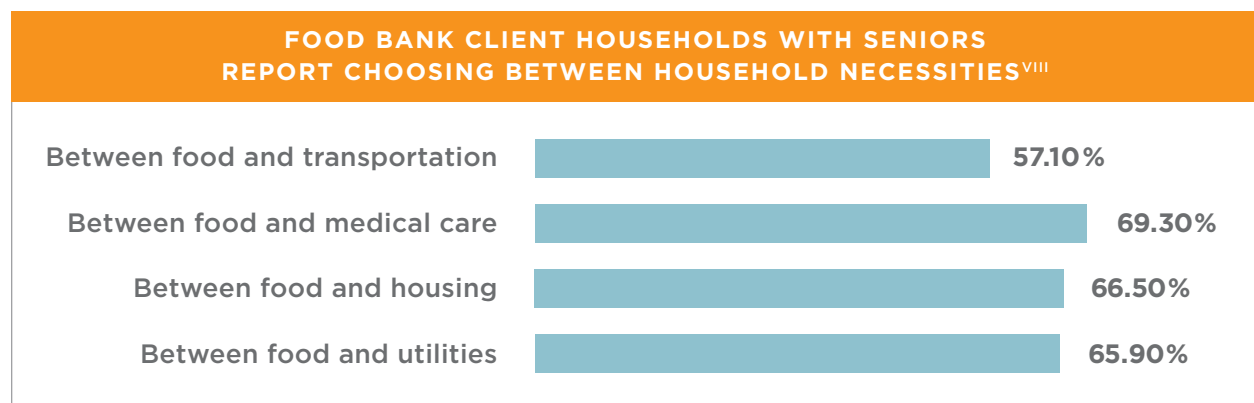
CSFP has eligibility requirements for both income and age. CSFP serves individuals age 60 and over with incomes of less than 130% of poverty (\$15,782 for a senior living alone in 2018).

## CSFP EFFICIENTLY LEVERAGES GOVERNMENT BUYING POWER

CSFP leverages government buying power to maximize the impact of the monthly food package. The USDA commodity foods included in the package are all U.S. grown and produced products. While the cost to USDA to provide the food package is about \$20 per month, the average retail value is \$50, making it a highly efficient use of federal dollars.

## CSFP SUPPORTS VULNERABLE SENIORS

Seniors - regardless of income - have different nutritional needs and are more likely to have difficulty preparing or consuming food due to limited mobility, cognitive impairments, and other age-related conditions. These challenges are amplified for low-income seniors trying to get by on a limited food budget. According to Feeding America's study Hunger in America 2014, food bank client households with seniors are often forced to make difficult choices between food and other basic needs.



Nearly half of seniors between the age of 60 and 90 will encounter at least one year of poverty or near poverty, putting them at greater risk of food insecurity. Unlike home-delivered meals and congregate feeding programs in senior centers, CSFP is means tested, meaning that it focuses specifically on the low-income senior population.

## CSFP PROVIDES TAILORED NUTRITION

While CSFP does not provide a complete diet, the senior food package is designed to provide nutrients typically lacking in the diet of that population, including protein, calcium, potassium, magnesium, several vitamins, and fiber. A 2014 USDA study rated CSFP's senior food package at 83.6 on the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), significantly higher than the HEI score of 59 for the average

American diet. The report further found that the CSFP senior food package provides 23% of seniors' total energy needs and contained a third or more of the recommended daily reference intake (DRI) for protein, calcium, vitamins A and C, and several B vitamins. Protein is provided through foods like peanut butter, dry beans, and tuna, while milk and cheese provide calcium. Canned low-sugar fruits, low-sodium vegetables, and juice deliver essential vitamins.

## CSFP IMPROVES HEALTH

CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in food insecure seniors. According to National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data, food insecure seniors over the age of 60 are significantly more likely to have lower intakes of major vitamins, to be in poor or fair health, and to have limitations in activities of daily living.

### Without proper nutrients, seniors are at risk for:

- Increased disability
- Decreased resistance to infections
- Deteriorating mental health
- Lengthening of hospital stays
- Diabetes

Sample CSFP Senior Food Package		
Product	Amount	Size
Cereal Dry	2 packages	12-18 oz
Juice	3 containers	64 oz
Tuna fish	2 cans	12 oz
Fluid Milk, 1%	4 packages	32 oz
Powdered Milk, Non-fat	1 box*	25.6 oz
Peanut Butter	1 jar	18 oz
Macaroni	2 packages	16 oz
American Cheese	1 package	32 oz
Fruits	2 cans	15-16 oz
Vegetables	4 cans	15-16 oz

*\*provided every other month*

## HOW CSFP WORKS

CSFP is a discretionary program funded each year through the federal appropriations process, so the program may only serve as many eligible participants as funding allows. CSFP provides food and administrative funds to states, which in turn store and transport the food to local agencies for distribution to low-income clients.

While most participants, or their authorized designee, either pick up their monthly CSFP food package at a food bank or other local sponsor, some communities deliver the food package directly to the participant's home - an important program feature for seniors with limited mobility.

## PROGRAM ACCESS & PARTICIPATION

Because the program can only serve as many communities and seniors as funding allows, CSFP currently operates in 49 states, plus the District of Columbia and two Indian reservations. Even in states operating CSFP, the program is only available in limited geographic areas. As a result, program operators have waiting lists of low-income seniors who would like to participate but cannot because of insufficient funds and caseload availability.

We strongly urge Congress to adequately fund CSFP at a minimum of \$250 million through appropriations, which will maintain the current monthly caseload of 730,000, and to provide an opportunity for the remaining state to start the program subject to USDA approved plans.

### WE NEED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO PUSH FOR A STRONG FARM BILL

Congress should reauthorize CSFP in the 2018 Farm Bill to continue providing basic nutrition assistance to seniors in need. Congress should extend the certification period to 36-months, with a mandatory annual check-in, to better accommodate mobility challenges of seniors and reflect that seniors' income is fixed.

