

The Urban Institute conducted the first in-depth study of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) since 1982. Attached is the full report. The study looks at how CSFP operates, who participates in it, and how it fits into the overall food assistance landscape. Key points of the study include:

- Currently, CSFP provides about half a million low-income pregnant and postpartum women, children younger than 6, and seniors 60 and older with food packages designed to provide nutritionally balanced supplements to their monthly food consumption.
- Thirty-two states, the District of Columbia, and two tribal organizations currently participate in CSFP. Five additional states have approved state plans but do not participate due to insufficient program resources.
- The study estimates that nationally, 2.9 million mothers, infants, and children, not eligible for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) would meet eligibility requirements for CSFP.
- The study estimates, 7.5 million seniors nationally, and 5.4 million in CSFP states, are eligible for CSFP because their income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Seniors are the dominant population in CSFP, accounting for 93.1 percent of participants in FY 2007. Individuals eligible for both CSFP and WIC must choose between them. Simultaneous participation in CSFP and the Food Stamp Program (FSP) is allowed, but food stamp participation among eligible seniors is very low, as many believe they would be eligible only for the \$10 minimum food stamp benefit.
- In the past three fiscal year budget requests, the Bush administration proposed to eliminate CSFP, suggesting that mothers, infants, and children be absorbed into WIC and that seniors be provided a permanent transition to food stamps. However, about 2.0 million CSFP-eligible seniors would only receive monthly benefits of \$10 or less per person.
- According to a recent National CSFP Association survey, the estimated retail value of the CSFP package, including canned meats, vegetables, fruits, grains and dairy products, is about \$50.
- CSFP is not an entitlement program, for which funding automatically adjusts to the number of eligible people who want to participate. Appropriations in recent years have been insufficient to maintain enrollment at the peak levels reached in FY 2004.
- CSFP local providers include food banks and social service organizations. Participation in CSFP may be an important door to a wide variety of services that low-income seniors might not otherwise access.
- Eligibility and enrollment requirements are relatively simple to administer, particularly in contrast to FSP and WIC though warehousing, managing inventory, transporting, and distributing food can be labor intensive. Most programs rely heavily on volunteers.
- There is a dearth of alternatives for low-income seniors and CSFP may account for a substantial, guaranteed, and predictable portion of participants' monthly food consumption.
- The administrators and participants regard the quality of the food package as high, and participants are exposed to nutrition education.