



Commodity Supplemental Food Program

WHAT IS CSFP?

The [Commodity Supplemental Food Program](#) (CSFP) is a federal nutrition program that provides monthly food assistance to seniors with low incomes. The program is designed to help older adults access the food they need to maintain good health through monthly food packages filled with fruits and vegetables, meat and cheese, and other nutrition-packed foods to supplement their diets.

In 2021, approximately 1 in 14 U.S. seniors experienced food insecurity.ⁱ CSFP helps prevent many older adults from having to make impossible choices between food, medical care and other basic needs.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR CSFP?

CSFP eligibility requirements are based on income and age. CSFP serves individuals age 60 and older with incomes of less than 130% of the federal poverty level.ⁱⁱ In fiscal year 2022, CSFP provided food to about 631,000 seniors with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty level (approximately \$15,301 for a senior living alone).ⁱⁱⁱ

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CSFP?

CSFP SUPPORTS SENIORS EXPERIENCING POVERTY

Older adults have specific nutritional needs. They are also 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 seniors with low, often fixed, incomes who must get by on tight food budgets.

As the number of seniors in the U.S. has grown, so has the number of seniors experiencing poverty. In 2021, approximately 10.3% of individuals age 65 and older had incomes below the federal poverty level (\$12,880 for a household of one).^{iv} CSFP is means-tested, meaning that the program focuses specifically on seniors experiencing poverty.

CSFP PROVIDES TAILORED NUTRITION

While CSFP does not provide a complete diet, the food packages offered through the program are designed to include nutrients typically lacking in the diets of seniors experiencing food insecurity, such as protein, calcium and potassium. Protein is provided through foods like peanut butter, dry beans and tuna, while calcium is provided through milk and cheese. Canned low-sugar fruits, low-sodium vegetables, and juice deliver essential vitamins.

Sample CSFP Food Box

Food Category	Product(s)	Amount per Month
Fruits and Juice	Canned Fruit Juice Raisins	1 juice and 3 cans fruit; or 2 juices and 2 cans fruit; or 1 package raisins, 1 juice, and 2 cans fruit; or 1 package raisins, 2 juices and 1 can fruit
Vegetables	Canned Vegetables or Soup Dehydrated Potatoes	8 cans vegetables or soup; or 6 cans vegetables or soup, and 1 package dehydrated potatoes
Cheese	Cheese	1 package cheese
Milk	UHT (ultra-high temperature) Fluid Milk 1% Instant Nonfat Dry Milk	2 UHT milk; or 1 UHT milk and 1 nonfat dry milk
Meat, Poultry and Fish	Beef, Beef Stew or Chili Chicken Beef Chili with Beans Tuna Salmon	1 shelf-stable package meat and 1 shelf-stable package beef, poultry or fish; or 3 shelf-stable packages beef, poultry and/or fish of any combination
Plant-Based Protein	Canned Beans Dry Beans or Lentils Peanut Butter	3 units of any combination of canned beans, dry beans or lentils, and peanut butter; or 1 unit dry beans or lentils, and 1 unit of canned beans, peanut butter, or dry beans or lentils
Cereals	Cereal, Dry Ready-to-Eat Farina Rolled Oats Grits	2 units of any combination of cereal, farina, rolled oats and grits; or 1 unit rolled oats; or 1 unit grits (every other month)
Pasta and Rice	Pasta Rice	2 units of any combination of pasta and rice; or 1 unit rice

CSFP IMPROVES HEALTH

Seniors experiencing food insecurity are significantly more likely to have lower intakes of key vitamins, difficulties with activities of daily living, and worse mental and physical health.^v They're more likely to report health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes and dementia. CSFP helps reduce food insecurity among seniors, which leads to improved health and well-being.

HOW DOES CSFP WORK?

CSFP is a discretionary program funded each year through the federal appropriations process. This means the program can only serve as many eligible participants as funding allows, regardless of how many people may qualify. Due to the cap on the number of people who can participate in CSFP, many seniors are on waitlists to access the program.

CSFP funding is split between the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and five Indian Tribal Organizations.^{vi} CSFP provides food and administrative funds to states, which in turn store and transport the food to local organizations, including some food banks, for distribution to community members.

Most program participants, or their authorized proxy, pick up their monthly CSFP food package at a food bank or other local organization. But some communities deliver the food packages directly to participants' homes—an important program feature for seniors with limited mobility.

HOW CAN CONGRESS KEEP CSFP STRONG?

Feeding America calls on Congress to:

- Provide adequate funding for CSFP in the fiscal year 2024 appropriations legislation to, at a minimum, maintain the current CSFP caseload of 760,547 participants. The funding will provide the necessary flexibility to maintain caseloads and facilitate responsible expansion of the program to serve more older adults who are experiencing food insecurity.
- Reauthorize CSFP in the 2023 Farm Bill. Congress should also exempt Medicare payments from the gross income calculation used to determine CSFP eligibility.



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ⁱ Ziliak, James P, and Craig Gunderson. "The State of Senior Hunger in 2021: An Annual Report." Feeding America. April 26, 2023. [State of Senior Hunger in 2021.pdf](#).

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Agriculture. "[Commodity Supplemental Food Program](#)." Accessed on October 28, 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Agriculture. "[Participation or Meals Served](#)." Accessed on April 24, 2023

^{iv} National Council on Aging. "[Latest Census Bureau Data Shows Americans 65+ Only Group to Experience Increase in Poverty](#)." September 13, 2022.

^v Ziliak, James P, and Craig Gunderson. "[The Health Consequences of Senior Hunger in the United States: Evidence from the 1999-2016 NHANES](#)." Feeding America. August 18, 2021.

^{vi} National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association. "[CSFP Expansion](#)." Accessed on October 28, 2022.