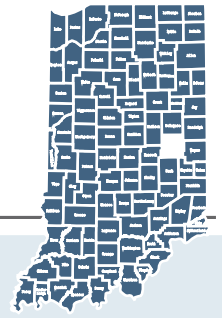


SNAP Merchant Sign-Up Day Enrolls More Farmers' Markets in Indiana

By: Laura Hormuth, MS, RDN



SUMMARY

Farmers' markets (FMs) and direct marketing farmers (DMFs) are a great source of fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods. In 2010, the Indiana State Department of Health's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) made it a priority to expand access to such foods at farmers' markets for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. However, for this to happen, Indiana needed more FMs and DMFs to become SNAP-authorized merchants.



CHALLENGE

EBT stands for "electronic benefits transfer" and refers to the way that public assistance benefits are distributed and redeemed. The 1996 Farm Bill required states to phase in an EBT debit card system for food stamps or SNAP. Indiana started using EBT for food stamp benefits in 2002.

However, in 2008, only one farmers' market, the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market, was authorized to accept SNAP benefits. DNPA wanted more FMs and DMFs to participate in SNAP, but there were many real and perceived barriers to getting authorized and getting EBT equipment and internet access.

An initial barrier was market manager buy-in.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Visit the USDA FNS webpage <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/snap-andfarmers-markets> to learn more about SNAP and farmers' markets.

Visit the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) website at <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org>. The Farmers Market Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers' markets across the United States.

This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

"Our market is in a food desert with little or no access to locally produced fruits and vegetables. Accepting SNAP benefits at our market increases access to fresh fruits and vegetables for those on a limited income."

- Adriene Knight, MS, RD, CLS, WIC Dietitian, Farmers' Market Master, Muncie, Indiana

Contact

Lindsey Bouza, MPH
Indiana State Department of Health
Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
2 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Phone: 317-234-3580
Email: LBouza@isdh.in.gov
<http://www.dnpa.isdh.in.gov>

SOLUTION

The DNPA partnered with the Purdue Extension, Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) and Indiana Cooperative Development Center (ICDC) to convene an annual Farmers' Market Forum and SNAP sign-up day to enroll more FMs and DMFs. The SNAP sign-up day provided a one-stop shop to help FM managers and DMFs get authorized and receive additional support.

The beauty of the SNAP sign-up day is that a market manager is authorized on the spot and won't have to wait several weeks for his online application to be approved.

RESULTS

Indiana's first SNAP sign-up day in 2016 was a big success. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service joined Indiana's state agencies and three point-of-sale (POS) equipment providers to sign up markets and answer questions from interested attendees. At year end, 27 new FMs and DMFs were authorized to accept SNAP benefits—in 2017, another 22 FMs and DMF were authorized.

Indiana has seen a steady increase in authorized FM and DMF since 2011. We currently have 117 FM and DMF authorized to accept SNAP benefits.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The ability to accept SNAP benefits helps farmers expand their customer bases and economically support their local communities. However, creating and sustaining a successful SNAP redemption program at farmers' markets requires more than the necessary POS equipment, tokens and signage. Commitment and staff capacity are two important components. Understanding and meeting the needs of your customer base, developing a sustainable funding strategy and creating community partnerships are just as important.

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The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



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