



# **Annual Report on the High-Performance Bonus for the Administration of SNAP**

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**As Required by**

**H.B. 1, 86th Legislature, Regular  
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Rider 89)**

**Texas Health and Human Services**

**Commission**

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# 1. Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) awards high-performance bonuses to states that meet performance standards in administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The 2020–21 General Appropriations Act, H.B. 1, 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019 (Article II, Health and Human Services Commission, Rider 89), requires the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to use a portion of awarded high-performance bonus funds for the development and operation of a nutrition education and outreach program, or for activities that otherwise improve low-income consumers' access to basic nutrition and healthy foods.

Rider 89 further requires HHSC to use a portion of awarded funds to provide bonuses to employees who:

- Contribute directly to meeting the performance standards set by USDA-FNS;
- Meet or exceed HHSC customer service performance measures; or
- Contribute directly to increasing the percentage of people eligible for SNAP benefits.

Lastly, Rider 89 requires HHSC to prepare an annual report by October 1 of each year of the biennium summarizing its progress in implementing the outreach program and to submit the report to the standing committees of the Texas Senate and Texas House of Representatives with primary jurisdiction over health and human services.

## 2. Background

SNAP is a federally funded program that provides temporary nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of families in need so that they can purchase healthy foods and move toward self-sufficiency. HHSC is the designated state agency in Texas responsible for administering and operating SNAP.

Each year, the USDA-FNS Secretary establishes performance standards for high or most-improved performance in the administration of SNAP. The high-performance bonuses are annual incentive payments made to the states that meet these performance standards.

## 3. SNAP Outreach

### Performance Bonus Expenditures

For federal fiscal year 2017, USDA-FNS awarded HHSC two high-performance bonuses for outstanding performance in the administration of SNAP. On June 28, 2018, USDA-FNS announced that HHSC would receive its first bonus of \$11,351,221 for achieving one of the nation's lowest SNAP payment error rates during federal fiscal year 2017. HHSC's payment error rate was 4.13 percent, while the national rate was 6.30 percent. On September 28, 2018, USDA-FNS announced that HHSC would receive its second bonus of \$4,768,681 for achieving top rank for most improved Program Access Index for calendar year 2017, improving from 67.26 percent in calendar year 2016 to 71.57 percent in 2017. In total, both bonuses provided HHSC \$16,119,902 in earned federal funds.

HHSC expended the awarded high-performance bonuses in state fiscal year 2019 and spent:

- approximately \$14,164,903 to provide bonuses to high-performing eligibility employees;
- approximately \$1,950,235 to support SNAP outreach and application assistance; and
- \$4,764 to provide program integrity technology and training.

### Program Implementation

The primary goals of SNAP outreach in Texas are to reduce access barriers and efficiently connect eligible individuals with benefits. HHSC met SNAP outreach goals through the implementation of four projects. HHSC's Community Partner Program (CPP) leads SNAP outreach in Texas. CPP provides statewide access to application assistance training and information through community sites. To maximize the success of SNAP outreach projects and to ensure that eligible individuals are connected with SNAP benefits, CPP implemented a newly redesigned CPP external website and a new data collection system to accurately capture, store and report program data.

SNAP outreach was accomplished through the following projects:

1. **Application Assistance and Education** — HHSC partnered with Feeding Texas and its 19 subcontractor food banks to provide education and application assistance across the entire state of Texas using HHSC's online benefits portal, YourTexasBenefits.com, with individuals potentially eligible for HHS benefits, including SNAP.
2. **Community Partner Interviewing** — In addition to providing general application assistance, five food banks in the state provided SNAP interview services as part of a waiver from USDA-FNS.
3. **Targeted Messaging** — Food banks distributed commodity boxes with printed information about SNAP and YourTexasBenefits.com to raise

awareness about the ability to apply for SNAP benefits only and the availability of application assistance services.

4. **Community Partner Application Assistance Support** — HHSC contracted with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide regional support services for community partners in collaboration with HHSC Regional Community Relations staff.

## 4. Conclusion

HHSC is proud to have earned two high-performance bonuses for administering SNAP for federal fiscal year 2017. HHSC used the awarded funds to:

- Provide bonuses to high-performing eligibility employees;
- Support SNAP outreach and application assistance, specifically through the implementation of the following four projects:
  - ▶ Application assistance and education, community partner interviewing, targeted messaging and community partner application assistance support; and
- Provide program integrity technology and training.

For federal fiscal year 2018 and each fiscal year thereafter, all state SNAP performance bonus payments will be eliminated as a result of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115–334), also referred to as the “2018 Farm Bill.” However, the evaluation of state performance indicators relating to actions taken to correct errors, reduce rates of error, and improve eligibility determinations will still be maintained.

## **List of Acronyms**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
CPP	Community Partner Program
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
USDA-FNS	United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service