

Food Assistance and Disaster Response

PREPARED TO CARE



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is one of the most effective government responses to economic downturn. SNAP benefits can be applied for quickly and distributed efficiently to prevent a hunger gap when someone becomes unemployed or faces unexpected economic hardship. Despite an improving economy, the need remains high. In 2017, SNAP lifted out of poverty 3.4 million people, including 1.5 million children.

Through the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) can quickly offer short-term food-assistance benefits to households suffering in the wake of a disaster. The FNS issues D-SNAP benefits to eligible applicants within 72 hours, speeding assistance to disaster victims and reducing the administrative burden on state agencies operating in post disaster conditions. Households not normally eligible for SNAP may qualify for D-SNAP because of their disaster-related costs, such as loss of income, damage to property, relocation expenses and, in some cases, loss of food due to power outages.

The FNS must give states permission to operate D-SNAP in a disaster area. Following a natural disaster, a state governor may ask the U.S. president to declare a "major disaster." The Secretary of Agriculture may also authorize D-SNAP benefits for a region of the country at the state's request.

Faith community reflections

A disaster upends everyday life. It can disrupt transportation, commerce, Internet and cellular access, and electricity for cooking food and powering hospitals.

Houses of worship provide substantial support and services to our communities. Following a disaster, houses of worship often become centers for feeding, counseling, and distribution of emergency supplies. They might offer

Mindful of the health and wellbeing of creation in a time of disasters intensified by climate change, this ELCA Advocacy resource series invites reflection on being #PreparedToCare.

Do you have a personal experience or impression that connects?

What are strengths of your congregation in this area?

How might you make a difference in your community?



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FRAC
Food Research
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**A Program that Works:
Disaster SNAP**

Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) effectively and quickly delivers nutrition assistance to people recovering from natural disasters.

In fact, D-SNAP was singled out for its responsiveness and effectiveness in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

Disaster SNAP infographic from frac.org

“The idea of the earth as a boundless warehouse has proven both false and dangerous. Damage to the environment eventually will affect most people through increased conflict over scarce resources, decline in food security, and greater vulnerability to disease.... Meeting the needs of today’s generations for food, clothing, and shelter requires a sound environment.”

ELCA Social Statement: “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice,” 1993

financial, housing and other support services, often enlisting volunteers from the worship community.

After a fire, flood or hurricane, the affected population may witness a flurry of responses for hours or even days. However, for an entire community to recover from the trauma and displacement of a major disaster it can take months, even years. When the dust settles and the headlines change, Lutheran Disaster Response and individual congregations stay to provide ongoing assistance.

In the critical impact of disaster, our government is essential in restoring not only large infrastructure but also our most basic needs: food and shelter.

Vital support

Like many homes and businesses, houses of worship are affected by disaster, which can impede their efforts to support the community’s recovery. Knowing what outside resources are available after a disaster and advocating for well-funded government programs is part of the essence of being prepared to care.

- Your** ⇒ Develop a response plan before disaster strikes.
- congregation** ⇒ Develop relationships with its state and local SNAP offices and express its readiness to help.
- can:** ⇒ Invite local and state disaster officials to address the congregation on how to prepare for a disaster.

The primary responsibility for requesting, planning and distributing D-SNAP benefits rests with the state agency administering SNAP; however, critical disaster services might also be implemented by the FNS and its regional offices, FEMA, other federal agencies, and advocacy organizations. Emergency SNAP benefits are usually funded by annual appropriations from Congress. In the wake of most natural disasters, Congress will appropriate additional funding for disaster response.

- Your** ⇒ Encourage federal lawmakers to provide appropriate funding for critical food supports such as SNAP and WIC.
- congregation**
- can:** ⇒ Oppose congressional efforts to convert SNAP funding into state block grants, which cannot be expanded in the wake of economic downturn and disaster.
- ⇒ Ensure funds for Puerto Rico’s Nutrition Assistance Program (a block grant that receives supplemental funding to address the recovery needs of survivors of recent hurricanes).

Further reading

[“The FRAC Advocate’s Guide to the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(D-SNAP\)”](#)

PRAYER IN TIME OF CONFLICT, CRISIS, DISASTER

“O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 76