

Piloting a SNAP Incentive Program in Rural Communities and Small Grocers

The issues that rural communities face in alleviating hunger and increasing food access are unique and require interventions that keep this in mind. The Baylor Collaborative is happy to share lessons learned from working in rural communities with both large and small grocers.

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Introduction

Since 2019, the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty has worked alongside a variety of retail partners to implement a SNAP incentive program for customers, including those living in rural communities.

In rural communities, food insecurity rates are growing each year. One in seven rural residents faces food insecurity, making interventions aimed at alleviating the need for affordable, nutritious food especially urgent. New interventions require careful planning, community input, and a willingness to learn and adapt as the program evolves.

This poster will share more about the Add Milk! program design, implementation, outcomes, and effective strategies for implementing a successful SNAP nutrition program in rural communities.

Program Objective

The Add Milk! Healthy Fluid Milk Incentive program was designed to increase the purchase and consumption of fluid cow's milk. Fluid cow's milk offers several unique health benefits, such as providing 13 essential nutrients, promoting proper child brain and bone development, being an excellent source of protein, and helping to reduce the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.

Yet, nationally, 90% of Americans do not get the recommended daily amounts for dairy consumption. By creating a one-for-one dollar match on healthy fluid milk purchases, the Add Milk! program strived to make it easier for SNAP recipients to purchase and incorporate milk into their diets.

Program Overview

How it worked

In partnership with USDA and SNAP authorized retailers, The Baylor Collaborative developed and implemented a milk incentive program to help encourage SNAP recipients to incorporate healthy dairy products into their diets.

1) Using their SNAP EBT card, customers would purchase low-fat (1%) or fat-free fluid cow's milk, that was pasteurized, unsweetened, and unflavored that met FDA, state, and local standards for Vitamin A and D levels. Any size could be purchased, as well as lactose-free milk.

2) Upon making a qualifying purchase, the customer would receive a dollar-for-dollar coupon for a future dairy or SNAP eligible purchase. Depending on the retailer, the coupon was issued as either a barcode on a receipt, or as a printed coupon.

3) The customer used the coupon like cash on a future transaction. Depending on the retailer, coupons could be redeemed for additional milk, dairy items, or any SNAP eligible item.

During the program operations, stores were provided signage kits, with window signs, stanchion signs, shelf and door signs, and more. In addition to marketing materials, the Baylor team partnered with local organizations for community outreach in areas surrounding all store locations. The outreach efforts were tailored to community needs and demographics, but they all had the same goal- to ensure that eligible customers knew about the Add Milk! program, and about the benefits of adding low-fat and fat-free dairy to their diet.

Program Results

Over the course of the program, we tracked coupon redemption. As program recognition grew and improvements were made, redemption rates increased.

During the initial year a 2.2% incentive redemption rate was reported for the program that spanned five West Texas retail locations. Taking the lessons learned from the initial year, the program expanded to include an additional store in central Texas, as well as eight stores in central New Jersey. In the second iteration of the program, **the incentive redemption rate increased to 17% in the New Jersey locations, and 20% at the central Texas location.**

The increase of coupon issuance and redemption over the course of the program indicates that for those participating, consumption of low-fat milk, fat-free milk and other dairy products increased, and their grocery dollars went further as well!



What did we learn?



Program Design

- Ensure new interventions work using existing systems and structures when possible
- Design programs that will be easy for employees and customers to adopt



Program Flexibility

- Collect feedback early and often from diverse stakeholders, including those with lived experience
- Review program data to identify trends and gaps
- Utilize feedback and data to make changes to the program throughout operations



Participant Outreach

- Ensure program signage is eye-catching and located prominently throughout the stores
- Conduct in-store outreach events that provide customers with samples and recipes related to the program
- Partner with diverse community stakeholders to reach SNAP customers



Community Partnerships

- Develop partnerships with trusted community organizations
- Develop strategic partnerships to support outreach efforts in stores and in the community
- Collect feedback in real-time from partners who interact with SNAP customers on a daily basis

Conclusion

As organizations and stakeholders look for ways to help improve nutrition and food security in rural communities through retail-driven interventions, they must be creative, test new methods, and learn from the very communities they aim to serve. SNAP dollars are a significant and increasing portion of retail sales. Utilizing federal programs to improve food and nutrition security is a win-win for rural communities and retailers!

About the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

The Baylor Collaborative believes a world without hunger is possible. To achieve this, we aim to advance food security by becoming a leading contributor to the landscape of hunger research, promoting the adoption of proven and effective interventions, and advocating for evidence-based approaches and policy.

Program Partners

