

HJR 8: Childhood Hunger Unused SNAP Benefits

Prepared for the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee
November 2011

Background

In September 2011, the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee asked for information about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that go unused in Montana.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services provided the following information about benefits that were removed, or "expunged," from SNAP accounts in the past year because they had been in the accounts for more than 1 year.

Issued and Expunged Benefits

The table below shows the amount of SNAP benefits issued and expunged in fiscal year 2011. The benefits removed from accounts in this time period were actually issued a year earlier. Unused benefits are returned to the federal government.

Month	Benefits Issued	Benefits Expunged
October 2010	\$15,435,933	\$54,389
November 2010	\$15,585,682	\$46,672
December 2010	\$15,879,723	\$49,724
January 2011	\$16,023,408	\$53,225
February 2011	\$16,208,391	\$57,097
March 2011	\$16,430,996	\$59,318
April 2011	\$16,351,611	\$64,490
May 2011	\$16,473,438	\$53,285
June 2011	\$16,476,742	\$51,902
July 2011	\$16,426,662	\$52,732
August 2011	\$16,456,915	\$57,160
September 2011	\$16,270,339	\$64,627
Total	\$194,019,840	\$664,621

Source: Department of Public Health and Human Services

Expungement Policy

People who haven't made a SNAP purchase within 365 days lose benefits that have accrued to their accounts. The 365-day clock starts running again every time a person uses benefits.

In addition, only benefits that have been in the account for more than 365 days are removed. For example, a person who received SNAP benefits in June 2011 and used some of those benefits in June continues to receive benefits in subsequent months. However, if the person did not use the Electronic Benefit Transfer card again after June 20, 2011, the remaining June 2011 benefits would be removed from the account after June 20, 2012. At the end of July 2012, the July 2011 benefits would be removed.

Agency staff receive monthly notices about people who haven't used their benefits during the past 30 days. Staff members notify beneficiaries about the unused benefits and how to access them.

The department stops issuing benefits if a person does not provide a six-month report related to income changes or does not complete the annual renewal process.