

# SNAP-Ed Audiences

SNAP-Ed programming is required to focus on eligible audiences. According to USDA, SNAP-Ed focus audiences fall into four (4) categories. The four categories have defined sub-categories to facilitate documenting ways which your SNAP-Ed audiences qualify. Refer to the category descriptions below to determine qualifying focus audience(s).

Sometimes a potential audience for SNAP-Ed programming does not meet the pre-defined criteria outlined in the four eligibility categories. In these cases, SNAP-Ed programs can propose alternate SNAP-Ed audience qualifying methodologies for review and approval by MFF.

## Category 1 – Income-based

Individuals eligible based on income.

- **1a-** Persons eligible for SNAP are eligible for SNAP-Ed. Additionally, **persons eligible for other means-tested Federal assistance programs**, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are eligible for SNAP-Ed.
  - “Means-tested Federal assistance programs” are defined as Federal programs that require the income and/or assets of an individual or family to be at or below specified thresholds to qualify for benefits. For SNAP-Ed, the threshold for qualifying an individual based on income is at or below 200 percent of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#).
  - Members of Tribal Organizations participating in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are eligible to receive SNAP-Ed.
- **1b-** College students- While college students are not typically eligible for SNAP and SNAP-Ed, there may be circumstances where they may qualify. Contact your MFF program manager for qualifications and associated guidance.

**Note:** Other persons typically not eligible for SNAP, such as incarcerated persons, residents of nursing homes, or boarders, are also ineligible for SNAP-Ed.

## Category 2 – Qualifying locations for SNAP-Ed

Persons at qualifying locations that serve people with low income such as:

- **2a-** Food bank, food pantry, or soup kitchen.
- **2b-** Public housing.
- **2c-** SNAP/TANF job readiness program site.
- **2d-** Summer meal site.
- **2e-** Other such site (describe site).



## Category 3 – Locations serving low-income populations

Persons at other locations when it can be documented that the location generally serves people with low income **where at least 50% of persons have gross incomes at or below 200% of poverty guidelines/thresholds.**

- **3a-** Persons residing in or locations identified in **qualified census tracts**.
  - For a statewide view of eligible tracts, go to [map2healthyliving.org](http://map2healthyliving.org) and follow these steps: 1. In the “What to Look For” section, scroll to the Geographic section and click the “Eligible Census Tract” layer; and 2. Click “Go”.
- **3b-** Persons residing in or locations identified in **qualified ZIP codes**.
  - ZIP code data is available from MFF upon request.
- **3c-** Persons residing in or locations identified in **qualified municipalities** (e.g., city, town, village).
  - Examine [census data](#) for the municipality. Beyond general household income census data for the municipality, if programming is planned for a specific age group, examine municipality income census data for that age group.
- **3d- Schools or childcare centers** where at least 50% of children are from families that qualify to receive free and reduced-priced meals per the [2024 – 2025 Federal Income Criteria](#). 
  - **3d.1-** Schools in Michigan that qualify for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) are eligible for SNAP-Ed. Eligible and participating schools can be found on Michigan Department of Education [How to Apply page](#) (See the current school year’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Grantees and Awards).
  - **3d.2-** Schools in Michigan that qualify for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) are eligible for SNAP-Ed. CEP provides an alternative to household applications for free and reduced-price meals in local educational agencies and schools in high-poverty areas. When considering CEP schools for SNAP-Ed funded activities, agencies must use the individual school-level ISP multiplied by 1.6 to arrive at an estimate of the total number of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, even when CEP is elected districtwide or group-wide. Participating schools can be found on Michigan Department of Education [CEP Data page](#).
    - **Monitor throughout the year:** A school building ISP can change within a school year. SNAP-Ed providers must monitor the release of updated CEP school data to ensure buildings remain eligible for SNAP-Ed programming.
- **3e-** Location is a **garden** in a qualified geography (census tract, ZIP code, or municipality) or school and: 
  - It is in an easily accessible area for SNAP-Ed eligible individuals, and
  - The garden directly serves SNAP-Ed eligible individuals at the site, or the produce grown is distributed at a partner site serving low-income individuals and families.
- **3f-** Location is a **worksite** and 50% of the employees at the worksite are at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. 



## Category 4 – Retail locations serving low-income populations

Persons shopping at:

- **4a- Food retailers** that accept SNAP and/or WIC benefits. Although many retailers accept these benefits, SNAP-Ed activities should occur in locations which demonstrate significant patronage by low-income individuals and families. Stores located in census tracts, ZIP codes, or municipalities where at least 50% of persons have gross incomes equal to or less than 200% of the poverty threshold may qualify as SNAP-Ed activity sites.
- **4b- Farmers markets** that accept food assistance benefits (at minimum, SNAP); are located in a SNAP-Ed qualified census tract, ZIP code, or municipality; and have a market manager that is supportive of the program and interested in engaging low-income shoppers.



### Alternate method

Sometimes a potential audience for SNAP-Ed programming does not meet the pre-defined criteria outlined in the four audience categories. In these cases, SNAP-Ed programs can propose alternate methodologies for SNAP-Ed audiences that are reviewed and approved by MFF. Contact your MFF program manager to help you get started.

If an alternate method is used to determine eligibility of SNAP-Ed audiences, the method(s) used must be documented in a memo and be reviewed and approved by MFF.

When considering and documenting the method to demonstrate eligibility:

- **Briefly describe the location**, including:
  - The type of setting, such as school, community center, library, community, etc.
  - The address or geographic boundaries.
- **List the intervention(s) and/or strategies** planned for the location.
- **Briefly describe the audience** on whom the program is focused, including:
  - Age.
  - Gender.
  - Race and ethnicity.
  - Other relevant characteristics.
- **Provide relevant data available about the population served** at the location and **describe how the data demonstrates that the location or geographic area serves generally low-income persons**. Be sure to include citations. Types of data to investigate and provide could include:
  - Income data as available.
  - The proportion of people served who qualify for other means-tested Federal assistance programs if available and relevant.
  - Other relevant information such as food access data.
- As applicable:
  - For locations **near a low-income area** (census tract, ZIP code, municipality, neighborhood, school, etc.), describe how you will conduct promotion/outreach to

families from the surrounding low-income areas to ensure you will be serving the SNAP eligible population.

- For **retail settings**:
  - If the audience is persons shopping at **food retailers** who redeem SNAP and/or WIC benefits that are not located in a qualifying census tract, ZIP code, or municipality, consider the following when building the justification:
    - Low-income individuals and families, as well as organizations that regularly serve low-income individuals and families, report the SNAP and/or WIC retailer is preferred by low-income members of the community,
    - The SNAP or WIC retailer is the only grocery outlet in the community for the entire population, including the low-income population, and/or
    - Other relevant information.
  - If the audience is at a **farmers market** that accepts SNAP and is not located in a qualifying census tract, ZIP code, or municipality, consider the following when building justification:
    - It is the only farmers market in the community for the entire population, including the low-income population.
    - It is within walking distance of nearby neighborhoods where people who are eligible for SNAP reside, and/or is located along a direct bus line making it accessible to people who use public transportation.
    - It accepts a comprehensive suite of food assistance in addition to SNAP.
    - It has other programs in place to support low-income shoppers.
    - Other relevant information.
- For a **community**, such as a neighborhood, city, town, or village, that does not have at least 50% of persons with gross incomes at or below 185% of poverty guidelines/thresholds based on census data, consider the following when building the justification, as relevant:
  - The proportion of sites in the community that qualify for SNAP-Ed and how that aligns with your planned audience. For example, if you plan PSE strategies focused on elementary age students in the community and all or most of the elementary schools in the community qualify for and have SNAP-Ed programming,
  - How you will focus activities to ensure you are serving the SNAP-eligible population. For example, if the plans are for PSE strategies, briefly describe how you will design action plans for PSE changes that will affect and be accessible to the SNAP-eligible population, and/or
  - Other relevant information.

## Additional data sources that may help to describe the justification for programming with an audience

- [Neighborhood Atlas](#) – The Neighborhood Atlas is an online mapping tool that shares Area Deprivation Index (ADI) scores, the Neighborhood Atlas displays the ADI rankings of neighborhoods by socioeconomic disadvantage in a region of interest (state or nation). “Neighborhood” is defined as a Census Block Group. To get started:
  - Filter the map to the region you want to explore.
  - Make sure the legend is filtered to “State-Only Deciles.” Use the provided legend to identify where your neighborhood of interest ranks from least d to most disadvantaged. The results could be used in combination with other facts to qualify a site.
- [Food Access Research Atlas](#) - The Food Access Research Atlas presents an overview of food access indicators for low-income and other census tracts using different measures of supermarket accessibility, provides food access data for populations within census tracts, and offers census tract level data on food access that can be downloaded for community planning or research purposes.
  - The Food Access Research Atlas allows you to:
    - Create maps showing food access indicators by census tract using different measures and indicators of supermarket accessibility.
    - Compare food access measures based on 2019 data with the previous 2015 measures.
    - View indicators of food access for selected subpopulations.
    - Download census tract level data on food access measures.
  - The following data may help with determining site eligibility or documenting food access or insecurity:
    - Food Security in the U.S.
    - Poverty & Income Volatility.
    - County-level Data Sets.
    - Socioeconomic indicators like poverty rates, population change, unemployment rates, and education levels.
- [Child Opportunity Index](#) (COI) – COI is a tool that combines data from 29 neighborhood indicators (access to healthy food, presence of parks/playgrounds, clean air, walkability, housing vacancy, employment rates, etc.) across three domains (education, health & environment, social & economic) into a single measure, and then ranks them from high to low. COI uses both census tract/neighborhood (72,000) and ZIP code level data.
  - Neighborhoods are mapped and compared to others in their area.
  - The interactive map allows you to explore neighborhood level data (either by census tract or ZIP code) to help determine if a site resides in a neighborhood with limited access to resources.
    - Data can be overlaid with race and ethnicity density maps.
    - Each location on the map provides an overall index level from very low to very high, as well as individual index item levels for each of the three domains.
    - Neighborhoods are color coded making it easy to identify locations with low access.