



Standing with Families

PTA Guidance During the SNAP Crisis



TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- What Is The Snap Program?
- Is It The Same As CalFresh?
- Why Is This Important to PTA?
- How can your PTA help?
- Background: October 31, 2025 National PTA Letter to Congress

As of November 1, 2025, millions of California families risk losing critical food assistance due to the federal government shutdown. National PTA, along with California PTA and PTAs across the nation, has issued a formal letter to Congress and administration officials urging immediate release of SNAP contingency reserve funds. This guidance document provides information about what PTA units can and should do in response to this crisis.

November 3, 2025

What is the SNAP program?

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP), formerly known as "food stamps," is a federal nutrition program that provides food assistance to low-income individuals and families. SNAP is the actual benefit program—the money provided to help families buy groceries. Benefits are loaded monthly onto an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which works like a debit card and is how families access and spend their SNAP benefits at grocery stores and authorized retailers.

KEY FACTS

- **SNAP benefits more than 40 million people across the country**
- **Children account for nearly 40% of all SNAP participants**
- **In California, 5.5 million Californians receive SNAP benefits**
- **Without emergency funding, California families will lose access to \$1.1 billion in food assistance**

Understanding the current crisis:

The EBT cards themselves continue to work, but new SNAP benefits are not being loaded onto them starting November 1 due to the federal government shutdown. This means families have lost access to their monthly grocery assistance.

How Does SNAP Relate To California School Meals?

California requires all public schools, charter schools, and county offices of education to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of family income. This means California students will continue to receive school meals during the SNAP funding crisis.

Families receiving SNAP benefits (known as CalFresh in California) are automatically eligible for free school meals without submitting a separate application. Schools use data matching to directly certify these students. While this connection helps with eligibility determination, California's universal program means all students already receive free meals.



Why SNAP Loss Matters

Even though California students continue to receive free school breakfast and lunch, the SNAP funding crisis creates a critical gap:

- School meals only cover two meals on school days: SNAP provides food for dinner, weekends, holidays, and summer break
- Families still need to feed their children: Without SNAP, families must find ways to provide at least one meal per day during school, plus all meals on non-school days
- Districts are responding: Some California districts, like LAUSD, are expanding programs to offer dinner to students to help offset the SNAP crisis

The bottom line: School meals are essential, but don't meet all nutritional needs. Families losing SNAP benefits will struggle to provide dinner and weekend meals, directly impacting student health, well-being, and academic success.

This is PTA's Work

Advocating for children's nutrition is not political, it is central to PTA's mission. Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive, and that starts with having enough to eat. When we advocate for SNAP funding, we are advocating for our students' ability to learn, grow, and succeed.

What Can Your Local PTA Do?

Contact your Congressional representatives

Send emails, postcards, or have conversations with them. Share stories about how this crisis is impacting your local community. While it may feel small, this kind of advocacy can have a significant impact on families who need these services. Find your elected representatives on the [Take Action page on capta.org](#) (right side of the page, titled: "Your Election Center").

Sign up for CA PTA advocacy alerts

Visit the [Take Action page on capta.org](#) and sign up for advocacy alerts (on the right side of the page) to stay informed and add your voice to our advocacy efforts around this and other issues that impact children, youth, and families.

Use mindful communication

Show support for affected families, but remember that PTA endorsements should not be made, and members should not feel pressured to contribute to specific organizations or entities. [See the toolkit for more information on endorsements.](#)

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What Can your Local PTA Do ... Continued

Community Resource Coordination

Partner with established food banks: Work with your principal and/or school district to share information about community resources that can help families in need.

For PTAs not currently involved in food distribution, guide families who wish to donate to local food banks, your school's wellness center, school district food programs, or other organizations that specialize in this type of work. If your PTA is doing a holiday food drive, check with your local food bank to see what the needs are—even if you've worked with them before, as the loss of SNAP benefits and increased usage may have changed their needs—so you can help guide your community to give what will be most helpful.



Stay informed: Find current updates on the SNAP crisis our blog

Share our flyer with your community:
Food Assistance Resources for
California Children and Families



WHAT CAN YOUR LOCAL PTA NOT DO?

While the impulse to help is natural and commendable, it's important that PTA units operate within their proper role and maintain their nonprofit status. Please avoid these activities:

- **Do not collect gift cards for food banks:** the PTA should not serve as a pass-through for donations to another cause. Encourage anyone who wishes to donate to give directly to the food bank.
 - **Instead, have individuals donate directly:** While nonprofits can give to other nonprofits when the cause is related to their mission, directing individuals to donate directly is the better approach for PTA. This avoids PTA being classified as a grantor or foundation, which would trigger additional IRS reporting requirements. Encourage families who wish to donate to give directly to food banks or other established food assistance organizations.
- **Rather than operating your own, partner with established food banks:** PTA is not an expert in food assistance, but many community organizations are. The SNAP funding crisis will significantly increase demand for food assistance beyond current levels, creating a workload expansion that requires extensive food bank infrastructure, training, and resources. Food banks operated by community schools (i.e., school districts) are appropriate and should be supported.



BACKGROUND: NATIONAL PTA LETTER

On October 31, 2025, National PTA, along with California PTA and PTAs across the nation, sent a formal letter to Congressional leadership and administration officials, including:

- Secretary Rollins (USDA)
- Director Vought (OMB)
- Speaker Johnson (House)
- House Minority Leader Jeffries
- Senate Majority Leader Thune
- Senate Democratic Leader Schumer

National PTA shared this letter directly with state and local PTAs across the country, inviting them to join as co-signers. Within just 24 hours, hundreds of PTAs had signed on—including state PTAs and local, regional, and county PTAs from across the nation. This rapid response demonstrates the urgency PTA members across the nation feel about protecting children's access to nutrition.

The letter urges immediate action to:

- Release the nearly \$6 billion in contingency reserve funds appropriated by Congress for SNAP emergencies
- Utilize existing flexibilities within funding mechanisms
- Ensure continued disbursement of SNAP benefits without impacting other critical nutrition programs

Multiple governors from both Republican and Democratic states have declared states of emergency in response to this crisis, recognizing that food for our nation's children should not be caught in the crosshairs of budget negotiations.



**Read the full November 1, 2025
California State PTA statement on the
loss of SNAP benefits and their impact
on children and families.**

