



FOOD SECURITY Policy Overview

The Biden Administration's Response to the Food Insecurity Crisis

Across the country, state and local governments, nonprofits, religious organizations, community groups and dedicated individuals are working to address growing food insecurity. President Biden has committed to addressing the mounting hunger crisis as part of his plan for recovery. The research below identifies what actions President Biden and his administration have taken to-date and what we might expect to see in the future.

Actions to Date

Since taking office on January 20th, 2021, President Biden has [issued thirty-one Executive Orders](#), as of February 19th, 2021, directing federal agency action. Of these orders and agency actions, the following specifically seek to address issues of food security:

- **Executive Order 14002 Economic Relief Related to the Covid-19 Pandemic:** On January 27th, [President Biden directed](#) all executive departments and federal agencies to act within existing authorities to address the current economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. Among other things, this order asked the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) to expand and extend federal nutrition assistance programs.
- **P-EBT Increases:** The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) was established under the [first Congressional relief bill](#) to provide temporary emergency nutrition benefits to eligible families with children. These [benefits](#) come in the form of food dollars equivalent to the value of the meals missed due to COVID-related school and childcare closures. In response to President Biden’s call to action, the [USDA increased the daily benefit amount](#) by roughly 15% to include reimbursement for an after-school snack. The daily rate for states in the contiguous United States is now \$6.82 per child.



Additional Plans at USDA

When implementing increases to P-EBT, [USDA announced](#) that it would also use its existing authority to undertake the following additional actions:

- **Extend Emergency Allotments to the Lowest-Income Families:** The [first Congressional relief bill](#) passed in March 2020 authorized states to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) recipients with supplemental emergency allotments to bring them up to the maximum benefit. Those benefits, however, were not available to the 37% of SNAP recipients who were already receiving the maximum benefit. At President Biden’s direction, the USDA announced that it would work with the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) to review their authority to allow states to increase allotments for the lowest-income households.
- **Revise the Thrifty Food Plan:** The [Thrifty Food Plan](#) is the USDA’s representation of a “healthful and minimal cost meal plan” that serves as the basis for the calculation of SNAP benefits. The Plan was last revised in 2006 and USDA itself admits that it is “out of date” with today’s economic realities, “thereby falling short of what a healthy, adequate diet costs for many households today.” As directed by section 402 of the [2018 Farm Bill](#), USDA intends to begin revising the Plan “to better reflect the cost of a healthy basic diet today,” which should ultimately result in increased SNAP benefits.

President Biden’s Call for Congressional Action

In addition to Executive Orders and immediate agency action, President Biden’s [American Rescue Plan Proposal](#) calls on Congress to do more to ensure that all Americans have access to healthy, affordable food. Specifically, President Biden has asked Congress to:

- **Extend the SNAP Benefit Increase:** The [latest Congressional relief bill](#) boosted monthly SNAP benefits by 15%. This increase is currently scheduled to terminate on [June 30, 2021](#). However, President Biden seeks to extend the 15% SNAP benefit increase until at least September 2021.
- **Invest \$3 billion More in WIC:** [The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants, and Children \(“WIC”\)](#) provides especially vulnerable populations with nutritious food to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. President Biden is calling on Congress to invest an additional \$3 billion in the program to increase outreach efforts and help the growing number of women, infants, and children struggling with food insecurity.
- **Cut State Matching Requirements for SNAP:** Though the federal government pays 100% of SNAP benefits, states typically cover 50% of the administrative costs for running SNAP in their jurisdictions. However, President Biden is asking Congress to temporarily cut the state matching requirements of SNAP by providing a one-time emergency infusion of administrative support to states. This would be a significant cost savings measure for states.
- **Enact the FEMA Empowering Essential Deliveries (FEED) Act:** First introduced in the House in May, this [Act](#) would authorize state and tribal governments to partner with small and mid-size restaurants and nonprofits to simultaneously get healthy, prepared food to families who need it and help laid-off restaurant workers get back on the job.
- **Provide an Additional \$1 Billion to U.S. Territories:** In lieu of SNAP, the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands receive federal

nutrition assistance in the form of [block grants](#), for which the territories themselves determine eligibility and benefits levels. President Biden is asking Congress to provide \$1 billion in additional nutrition assistance for residents of the territories.

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Support for the Network provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

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Updated: February 2021