

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
SECOND SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 920**

Introduced by McKinney, 11.

Read first time January 04, 2024

Committee: Health and Human Services

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
2 Program; to amend section 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Supplement,  
3 2023; to require the Department of Health and Human Services to  
4 establish a Restaurant Meals Program; and to repeal the original  
5 section.

6 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2023, is  
2 amended to read:

3 68-1017.02 (1)(a) The Department of Health and Human Services shall  
4 apply for and utilize to the maximum extent possible, within limits  
5 established by the Legislature, any and all appropriate options available  
6 to the state under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
7 and regulations adopted under such program to maximize the number of  
8 Nebraska residents being served under such program within such limits.  
9 The department shall seek to maximize federal funding for such program  
10 and minimize the utilization of General Funds for such program and shall  
11 employ the personnel necessary to determine the options available to the  
12 state and issue the report to the Legislature required by subdivision (b)  
13 of this subsection.

14 (b) The department shall submit electronically an annual report to  
15 the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature by December 1  
16 on efforts by the department to carry out the provisions of this  
17 subsection. Such report shall provide the committee with all necessary  
18 and appropriate information to enable the committee to conduct a  
19 meaningful evaluation of such efforts. Such information shall include,  
20 but not be limited to, a clear description of various options available  
21 to the state under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,  
22 the department's evaluation of and any action taken by the department  
23 with respect to such options, the number of persons being served under  
24 such program, and any and all costs and expenditures associated with such  
25 program.

26 (c) The Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature,  
27 after receipt and evaluation of the report required in subdivision (b) of  
28 this subsection, shall issue recommendations to the department on any  
29 further action necessary by the department to meet the requirements of  
30 this section.

31 (2)(a) The department shall develop a state outreach plan to promote

1 access by eligible persons to benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition  
2 Assistance Program. The plan shall meet the criteria established by the  
3 Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture  
4 for approval of state outreach plans. The Department of Health and Human  
5 Services may apply for and accept gifts, grants, and donations to develop  
6 and implement the state outreach plan.

7 (b) For purposes of developing and implementing the state outreach  
8 plan, the department shall partner with one or more counties or nonprofit  
9 organizations. If the department enters into a contract with a nonprofit  
10 organization relating to the state outreach plan, the contract may  
11 specify that the nonprofit organization is responsible for seeking  
12 sufficient gifts, grants, or donations necessary for the development and  
13 implementation of the state outreach plan and may additionally specify  
14 that any costs to the department associated with the award and management  
15 of the contract or the implementation or administration of the state  
16 outreach plan shall be paid out of private or federal funds received for  
17 development and implementation of the state outreach plan.

18 (c) The department shall submit the state outreach plan to the Food  
19 and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture for  
20 approval on or before August 1, 2011, and shall request any federal  
21 matching funds that may be available upon approval of the state outreach  
22 plan. It is the intent of the Legislature that the State of Nebraska and  
23 the Department of Health and Human Services use any additional public or  
24 private funds to offset costs associated with increased caseload  
25 resulting from the implementation of the state outreach plan.

26 (d) The department shall be exempt from implementing or  
27 administering a state outreach plan under this subsection, but not from  
28 developing such a plan, if it does not receive private or federal funds  
29 sufficient to cover the department's costs associated with the  
30 implementation and administration of the plan, including any costs  
31 associated with increased caseload resulting from the implementation of

1 the plan.

2 (3)(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that:

3 (i) Hard work be rewarded and no disincentives to work exist for  
4 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants;

5 (ii) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants be  
6 enabled to advance in employment, through greater earnings or new,  
7 better-paying employment;

8 (iii) Participants in employment and training pilot programs be able  
9 to maintain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits while  
10 seeking employment with higher wages that allow them to reduce or  
11 terminate such program benefits; and

12 (iv) Nebraska better utilize options under the Supplemental  
13 Nutrition Assistance Program that other states have implemented to  
14 encourage work and employment.

15 (b)(i) The department shall create a TANF-funded program or policy  
16 that, in compliance with federal law, establishes categorical eligibility  
17 for federal food assistance benefits pursuant to the Supplemental  
18 Nutrition Assistance Program to maximize the number of Nebraska residents  
19 being served under such program in a manner that does not increase the  
20 current gross income eligibility limit except as otherwise provided in  
21 subdivision (3)(b)(ii) of this section.

22 (ii) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, such TANF-  
23 funded program or policy shall increase the gross income eligibility  
24 limit to one hundred sixty-five percent of the federal Office of  
25 Management and Budget income poverty guidelines as allowed under federal  
26 law and under 7 C.F.R. 273.2(j)(2), as such law and regulation existed on  
27 April 1, 2021, but shall not increase the net income eligibility limit.  
28 Beginning October 1, 2025, the gross income eligibility limit shall  
29 return to the amount used prior to the increase required by this  
30 subdivision. The department shall evaluate the TANF-funded program or  
31 policy created pursuant to this subsection and provide a report

1 electronically to the Health and Human Services Committee of the  
2 Legislature and the Legislative Fiscal Analyst on or before December 15  
3 of each year regarding the gross income eligibility limit and whether it  
4 maximizes the number of Nebraska residents being served under the program  
5 or policy. The evaluation shall include an identification and  
6 determination of additional administrative costs resulting from the  
7 increase to the gross income eligibility limit, a recommendation  
8 regarding the gross income eligibility limit, and a determination of the  
9 availability of federal funds for the program or policy.

10 (iii) To the extent federal funds are available to the Department of  
11 Labor for the SNAP Next Step Program, until September 30, 2023, any  
12 recipient of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits whose  
13 household income is between one hundred thirty-one and one hundred sixty-  
14 five percent of the federal Office of Management and Budget income  
15 poverty guidelines and who is not exempt from work participation  
16 requirements shall be encouraged to participate in the SNAP Next Step  
17 Program administered by the Department of Labor if the recipient is  
18 eligible to participate in the program and the program's services are  
19 available in the county in which such household is located. It is the  
20 intent of the Legislature that no General Funds be utilized by the  
21 Department of Labor for the processes outlined in this subdivision (iii).  
22 For purposes of this section, SNAP Next Step Program means a partnership  
23 program between the Department of Health and Human Services and the  
24 Department of Labor to assist under-employed and unemployed recipients of  
25 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in finding self-  
26 sufficient employment.

27 (iv) Such TANF-funded program or policy shall eliminate all asset  
28 limits for eligibility for federal food assistance benefits, except that  
29 the total of liquid assets which includes cash on hand and funds in  
30 personal checking and savings accounts, money market accounts, and share  
31 accounts shall not exceed twenty-five thousand dollars pursuant to the

1 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as allowed under federal law  
2 and under 7 C.F.R. 273.2(j)(2).

3 (v) This subsection becomes effective only if the department  
4 receives funds pursuant to federal participation that may be used to  
5 implement this subsection.

6 (c) For purposes of this subsection:

7 (i) Federal law means the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 7  
8 U.S.C. 2011 et seq., and regulations adopted under the act; and

9 (ii) TANF means the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
10 program established in 42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.

11 (4)(a) Subject to federal approval of any required state plan  
12 amendment, the department shall establish a Restaurant Meals Program as  
13 part of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Under the  
14 Restaurant Meals Program, households containing elderly or disabled  
15 members and their spouses, as defined in 7 U.S.C. 2012(j), or homeless  
16 individuals, as defined in 7 U.S.C. 2012(l), shall have the option in  
17 accordance with 7 U.S.C. 2012(k) to redeem their Supplemental Nutrition  
18 Assistance Program benefits at private establishments that contract with  
19 the department to offer meals to eligible individuals at concessional  
20 prices subject to 7 U.S.C. 2018(h). The Restaurant Meals Program shall be  
21 operational no later than July 1, 2025.

22 (b) The department may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to  
23 implement this subsection.

24 (5)(a) ~~(4)(a)~~ Within the limits specified in this subsection, the  
25 State of Nebraska opts out of the provision of the federal Personal  
26 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, as such  
27 act existed on January 1, 2009, that eliminates eligibility for the  
28 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for any person convicted of a  
29 felony involving the possession, use, or distribution of a controlled  
30 substance.

31 (b) A person shall be ineligible for Supplemental Nutrition

1 Assistance Program benefits under this subsection if he or she (i) has  
2 had three or more felony convictions for the possession or use of a  
3 controlled substance or (ii) has been convicted of a felony involving the  
4 sale or distribution of a controlled substance or the intent to sell or  
5 distribute a controlled substance. A person with one or two felony  
6 convictions for the possession or use of a controlled substance shall  
7 only be eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
8 benefits under this subsection if he or she is participating in or has  
9 completed a state-licensed or nationally accredited substance abuse  
10 treatment program since the date of conviction. The determination of such  
11 participation or completion shall be made by the treatment provider  
12 administering the program.

13       Sec. 2. Original section 68-1017.02, Revised Statutes Supplement,  
14 2023, is repealed.