

MYTH: An incarcerated individual scheduled for release cannot apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

FACT: If a State SNAP agency requests a waiver of program rules, an incarcerated person nearing his or her release date can apply for assistance and receive an eligibility interview.

Under SNAP rules, incarcerated individuals are ineligible to receive benefits while they are residents of an institution. However, State agencies that administer SNAP may request the [Prisoner Pre-Release Application Filing](#) waiver, which allows them to take applications and conduct eligibility interviews from incarcerated applicants prior to their release. This allows the State agency to issue benefits immediately upon the individual's release if he or she is certified for assistance.

The goal of this waiver is to increase access to critical nutrition assistance benefits for members of a vulnerable population. By ensuring food security, the waiver can increase the likelihood of successful reentry.

Implementing the waiver requires collaboration between correctional facilities and State SNAP agencies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, which administers SNAP, will review waiver requests from any State interested in establishing such partnerships. Adopting the waiver can improve reentry resources for those leaving correctional facilities, reduce recidivism, and offer formerly incarcerated individuals a good start on a second chance.

For More Information:

Visit the SNAP website at

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap> for information on application and eligibility requirements.

What is a REENTRY MYTH BUSTER?

This Myth Buster is one in a series of fact sheets primarily intended to clarify federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Each year, more than 600,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons. Another 11.4 million cycle through local jails. When reentry fails, the social and economic costs are high – more crime, more victims, more family distress, and more pressure on already-strained state and municipal budgets.

Because reentry intersects with health and housing, education and employment, family, faith, and community well-being, many federal agencies are focusing on initiatives for the reentry population. Under the auspices of the Cabinet-level interagency Reentry Council, federal agencies are working together to enhance community safety and well-being, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

For more information about the Reentry Council, go to: <http://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/projects/firc/>