

POLICY 6:

Food Security

NO DATA UPDATE IS AVAILABLE FOR POLICY 6
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Why Food Security Policy Matters. A state can achieve a stronger work force by ensuring that low-wage families have enough to eat. Research shows that providing low-wage families with critical work support such as food subsidies, child care and health care assistance significantly reduces the likelihood that they will return to public assistance.³¹ In 2002, nearly 35 million people in the United States were hungry or living on the edge of hunger,³² and research estimates that more than one-half of those who struggled to pay for food lived in households where at least one person was employed.³³ State policies regarding food security, such as the provision of food stamps, can play a major role in reducing the number of low-wage families who go hungry.³⁴

Key State Policy Measures. Key policy initiatives to promote the effectiveness of food security programs include the following:

- 6.1 Improved access to food stamps for working families.** States can improve access to food stamps for working families by adopting two of the federal *Farm Security Act* options: a) providing automatic transitional benefits for families leaving public assistance, and b) simplifying the application process for food stamps by using the same definitions for income and/or resources that are used for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid programs. This measure reduces the complexity of these applications, which often serve as a barrier for low-wage families to access food benefit assistance, and can reduce state administrative costs.
- 6.2 Food stamp replacement program for legal immigrants.** The 1996 public assistance reform act allows states to utilize state funds to aid legal immigrant families during the five-year period when they are not eligible for federal funds.³⁵ Research shows that without this assistance, immigrant families face an increased risk of hunger.³⁶

Food Security Policy Measures

Measure 6.1: Improved Access to Food Stamps for Working Families

Does the state promote access to food stamps through a) transitional benefits for families leaving cash assistance or b) the use of simplified definitions of income and/or resources for eligibility?

Both transitional benefits and simplified definitions	Ariz., Md., Mass., Neb., N.Y., N.C., Pa., Va., Wis.,
Transitional benefits only	Calif., Colo., Minn., N.M., Ore.
Simplified definitions only	Ala., Ark., Fla., Ga., Hawaii, Idaho, Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kan., Ky., La., Mich., Mo., N.H., N.D., Ohio, Okla., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Wyo.
Neither	Alaska, Conn., Del., D.C., Maine, Miss., Mont., Nev., N.J., R.I., Texas, Utah, Vt., Wash., W.Va.

Measure 6.2: Food Stamp Replacement Program for Legal Immigrants

Does the state operate a food stamp replacement program for legal immigrants?

Yes	Calif., Conn., Maine, Minn., Neb., Wash., Wis.
No	Ala., Alaska, Ariz., Ark., Colo., Del., D.C., Fla., Ga., Hawaii, Idaho, Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kan., Ky., La., Md., Mass., Mich., Miss., Mo., Mont., Nev., N.Y., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.C., N.D., Ohio, Okla., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Texas, Utah, Vt., Va., W.Va., Wyo.

Selected State Food Security Policies

STATE	6.1		6.2
	STATE IMPROVES ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS THROUGH:		FOOD STAMP REPLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS
	Simplified Definitions of Income and/or Resources in the Application Process	Transitional Benefits	
Alabama	Both	–	–
Alaska	–	–	–
Arizona	Both	Yes	–
Arkansas	Resources Only	–	–
California	–	Yes [a]	Yes
Colorado	–	Yes	–
Connecticut	–	–	Yes
Delaware	–	–	–
District of Columbia	–	–	–
Florida	Income Only	–	–
Georgia	Both	–	–
Hawaii	Income Only	–	–
Idaho	Income Only	–	–
Illinois	Both	–	–
Indiana	Both	–	–
Iowa	Both	–	–
Kansas	Income Only	–	–
Kentucky	Both	–	–
Louisiana	Resources Only	–	–
Maine	–	–	Yes
Maryland	Both	Yes [a]	–
Massachusetts	Both	Yes [a]	–
Michigan	Income Only	–	–
Minnesota	–	Yes [b]	Yes
Mississippi	–	–	–
Missouri	Both	–	–
Montana	–	–	–
Nebraska	Both	Yes	Yes
Nevada	–	–	–
New Hampshire	Both	–	–
New Jersey	–	–	–
New Mexico	–	Yes	–
New York	Both	Yes [a]	–
North Carolina	Both	Yes	–
North Dakota	Both	–	–
Ohio	Both	–	–
Oklahoma	Both	–	–
Oregon	–	Yes [a]	–
Pennsylvania	Both	Yes [a]	–
Rhode Island	–	–	–
South Carolina	Both	–	–
South Dakota	Both	–	–
Tennessee	Both	–	–
Texas	–	–	–
Utah	–	–	–
Vermont	–	–	–
Virginia	Both	Yes [a]	–
Washington	–	–	Yes
West Virginia	–	–	–
Wisconsin	Both	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	Both	–	–
Year Data Collected		2005	2004

Data Source:

- 6.1 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. *Food Stamp Program: State Options Report*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C., September 2004; Updated with unpublished data from the National Conference of State Legislatures, July 2005.
- 6.2 *Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: National Immigration Law Center, 2002; Excerpt published by the National Immigration Law Center. “State Funded Food Programs” *Guide Updates*. Updated January 2004. Retrieved July 2005. http://www.nilc.org/pubs/guideupdates/tbl8_state-tanf_0304_a.pdf.

Data Table Notes:

- a. States provide five-month transitional benefit to families leaving cash assistance but with stricter exclusions than the federal law.
- b. Minnesota combines both cash assistance and food stamps together in the TANF benefits provided to families on public assistance. This allows some TANF families to receive just the food benefit portion, which is similar to receiving transitional food stamp benefits.