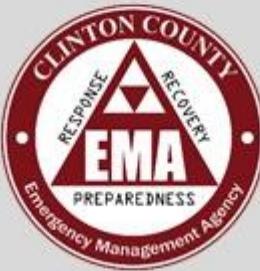


AGENCY STAFF
Thomas Breckel, Director
Susan Hertzmann, Admin Assistant

1850 Davids Drive, Suite 107
Wilmington, Ohio 45177
(937) 382-6673
cc-ema.org



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Mike Boyle, Chairman
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Prepared by: Clinton County EMA

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Bullet Background Paper – *Potential for SNAP Program Disruption – Public Information & Planning Overview (2026 Contingency)*

Published: 17 December 2025

Purpose

- This information brief provides timely, plain-language context for local officials, partner agencies, community organizations, and stakeholders in the event of a future federal government shutdown in 2026 that impacts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- The intent is to explain how a SNAP disruption would likely unfold, what impacts may be observed locally, and what actions communities can take to reduce confusion, misinformation, and unnecessary stress. This document is not a warning or prediction; it is a preparedness and awareness product based on prior shutdown experience and observed community impacts.

What is SNAP and Why It Matters

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded program that helps income-eligible households purchase food. Benefits are issued monthly on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card and are used like a debit card at approved grocery stores and retailers.
- For many households, SNAP benefits represent the primary or sole source of consistent food access. Interruptions to benefit issuance can quickly translate into food insecurity, increased reliance on local food pantries, and added stress on families and community support systems.

How a Federal Shutdown Could Affect SNAP

- During a federal government shutdown, SNAP funding depends on whether Congress has provided advance appropriations or contingency reserves. If reserves are depleted and no funding extension is passed, new SNAP benefits may not load as scheduled.
- In Ohio, SNAP benefits are issued on a staggered monthly schedule. Each household receives benefits on the same calendar day each month. Because of this:

- Impacts would not occur all at once.
- Households with earlier monthly benefit dates would feel effects first.
- Impacts would spread gradually across the month rather than on a single day.
- This staggered system helps prevent technical overloads but can create confusion, as some households continue receiving benefits while others experience interruptions.

Local SNAP Snapshot – Clinton County, Ohio

- To provide scale and context, the following baseline figures reflect typical SNAP activity in Clinton County based on recent full-year data and prior disruption analysis:
 - Active SNAP cases: approximately 4,800–4,900 cases per month.
 - Case composition: roughly 3,000 adult-only cases and 1,800 cases involving one or more children.
 - Geographic concentration:
 - Wilmington (45177): ~57% of all cases (\approx 2,700–2,800 cases)
 - Blanchester (45107): ~15%
 - Sabina (45169): ~15%
 - Remaining villages and townships combined: ~13%.
 - Estimated monthly SNAP-related spending in Clinton County: approximately \$700,000–\$800,000.
 - Estimated daily SNAP spending injected into the local economy: approximately \$23,000–\$24,000 per day.
- EBT / SNAP Retailer Distribution
 - Clinton County has approximately 41 authorized EBT/SNAP retailers distributed across jurisdictions. These locations represent the primary access points for SNAP-funded food purchases.
 - Wilmington: 23 retailers – Mix includes super stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, and limited farmers/market vendors.
 - Blanchester: 7 retailers – Includes one super store, multiple convenience stores, and small-format retailers.
 - Clarksville: 3 retailers – Primarily convenience-based food access.
 - New Vienna: 3 retailers – Limited redundancy; convenience stores dominate.
 - Midland: 2 retailers – Very limited retail options; disruption-sensitive.
 - Sabina: 2 retailers – Includes a grocery anchor and one small retailer.
 - Port William: 1 retailer – Single-point food access creates elevated vulnerability during disruptions.
- Geographic and Operational Considerations
 - Wilmington accounts for the majority of SNAP redemption locations and acts as the countywide food-access hub.
 - Smaller villages and unincorporated areas rely heavily on one or two retailers, increasing vulnerability to closures, reduced hours, or supply disruptions.
 - Many retailers—particularly convenience stores—operate with limited staffing during evening hours, which may increase operational strain during periods of heightened customer stress.
- These dollars are spent almost entirely at local grocery stores, small retailers, and regional distributors, making SNAP a significant stabilizer for both household food security and the local food economy.

What Communities Might See if a Disruption Occurs

- Based on prior shutdowns and local observations, communities could experience the following patterns if SNAP benefits are delayed or paused:

- Food Access Stress
 - Increased demand at food pantries, churches, and meal programs.
 - Strain on smaller rural pantries with limited storage and purchasing power.
 - Households stretching food supplies earlier than normal in the month.
- Retail Effects
 - Short-term spikes in grocery purchasing as households use remaining balances.
 - Shelf depletion in staple items (bread, milk, canned goods, protein).
 - Added pressure on smaller grocery and convenience stores with limited staffing.
- Community Behavior and Perception
 - Increased anxiety driven by rumors, social media posts, or national news footage.
 - Misunderstandings about whether benefits are "ended" versus "delayed."
 - Occasional disputes at checkout counters when EBT cards decline.
- Public Safety and Human Services
 - Higher call volumes related to welfare checks, domestic stress, or disputes.
 - Increased demand for social-service referrals and crisis assistance.
 - Potential spillover stress during evening hours at lightly staffed retail locations.
- Importantly, most communities do not experience widespread disorder. Perception, misinformation, and uncertainty are the primary drivers of disruption—not organized criminal activity.

Economic Ripple Effects

- SNAP dollars are spent locally and support grocery stores, distributors, and employees. Even short disruptions can result in:
 - Reduced local retail sales.
 - Secondary impacts to small businesses operating on thin margins.
 - Increased operating costs for nonprofits attempting to fill food gaps.
- These effects are temporary but can compound quickly if a shutdown extends beyond several weeks.

The Role of Information and Messaging

- Clear, consistent communication is one of the most effective tools for preventing unnecessary escalation during a SNAP disruption.
- Helpful messaging focuses on:
 - What is known and confirmed.
 - What is still uncertain.
 - Where reliable updates will be shared.
 - What assistance options are currently available.
- Unhelpful messaging includes speculation, alarmist language, or sharing unverified social-media claims.

What Local Governments and Partners Can Do

- Preparedness Actions
 - Information sharing early with Job & Family Services, food banks, and nonprofit partners.
 - Review public-information messaging templates in advance.
 - Identify points of contact for retail and community organizations.
- During a Disruption
 - Share factual updates through trusted local channels.
 - Direct residents to verified food-assistance resources.

- Reinforce calm, community support, and available help.
- Monitor misinformation trends and address them early.
- Community Support Tools
 - Local opt-in alert keywords (such as food-assistance updates) can help residents receive verified information without relying on rumors.
 - Partnerships with faith-based and nonprofit organizations remain critical for surge response.

Key Takeaways

- A SNAP disruption during a federal shutdown would likely unfold gradually, not all at once.
- Food insecurity impacts are real but manageable with early coordination.
- Misinformation and perception create more risk than the disruption itself.
- Clear communication and visible community support reduce stress and prevent escalation.

Closing

This information brief is intended to support preparedness and informed decision-making ahead of any future federal funding disruption. Clinton County EMA will continue coordinating with local, state, and nonprofit partners to monitor conditions and share verified updates should a shutdown occur.

For questions or coordination support, contact Clinton County EMA.