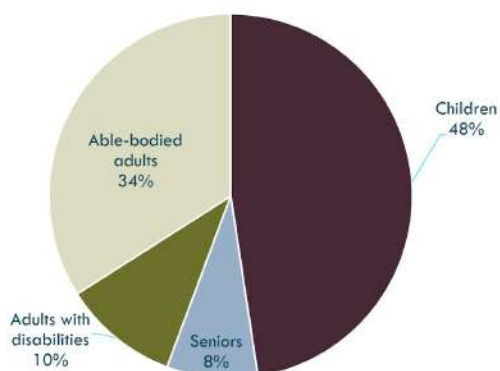


Budget cuts threaten Louisiana’s largest anti-hunger program

The Legislature’s stalemate over revenue-raising measures could force the state to opt out of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The budget passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. John Bel Edwards during the second special session includes a [24.2 percent, or \\$34.7 million](#), cut to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) - the state agency that administers SNAP. If that comes to pass, Louisiana would be the first state to opt out of the federal food assistance program.

That would be a disaster for the nearly 900,000 Louisiana citizens who need help each month to afford food. Louisiana has the [second-highest rate of food insecurity](#) in the country, and 1 in 5 Louisiana residents currently use SNAP benefits to put food on the table each month. Two-thirds of those receiving benefits in Louisiana are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Children, seniors, and adults with disabilities make up more than two-thirds of SNAP recipients in Louisiana



Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

The [\\$1.4 billion in SNAP benefits](#) that go to Louisiana families each year are funded entirely by federal dollars. But the cost to administer the program - including determining who’s eligible and monitoring fraud and abuse - are split evenly between the state and the federal government. The state’s share of those administrative costs in the upcoming year is expected to be [\\$67.5 million](#). A \$34.7 million reduction would mean DCFS could administer SNAP for only a portion of the year before running out of state funds.

DCFS [Secretary Marketa Walters explained](#) that she chose SNAP because she is unwilling to cut other major areas of her agency’s budget, including child welfare services. A \$34.7 million cut elsewhere in the social services budget would cripple the state’s ability to investigate child abuse and neglect, monitor children who are taken from their parents, and oversee the foster care program.

SNAP positively impacts families and economies in every part of the state, with the highest rates of participation in small towns and rural areas. The SNAP benefits are loaded onto electronic benefit cards (EBT) that families use at [one of the of 4,500](#) Louisiana supermarkets, grocery stores, and farmers markets that participate in SNAP. Families receive an average of \$276 per month, which can only be used to buy unprepared food items. Recipients are barred from purchasing toiletries, alcohol or tobacco products, or prepared foods.



Source: Food Research Action Center

Every Louisiana legislator has thousands, if not tens of thousands of constituents, who receive SNAP benefits and spend them in their local grocery stores. [Click here to see the impact](#) of SNAP in each legislator's district.

As legislators meet for their third special session, their task is simple and obvious: Raise all the revenue necessary to fully fund next year's budget, and avoid the unthinkable harm that would be caused by the loss of SNAP in Louisiana.