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STUDY: MYTHS AND MISGIVINGS ABOUT SNAP AMONG LATINOS

Misconceptions may contribute to under-enrollment in federal food assistance

Brooklyn Park, MN – A study sponsored by Second Harvest Heartland about Latinos' perceptions of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) uncovered misconceptions associated with the program that are likely keeping some families from receiving needed assistance.

Primary among the concerns reported were fears that applying for SNAP might affect respondents' residency or citizenship status. Some also believed that their children might be penalized for the family's SNAP enrollment, either because it would become part of a permanent record or because they may need to pay back funds received through SNAP.

When asked what would be most helpful to address these barriers, respondents named SNAP information in Spanish, clear program eligibility information, and communication on the risks versus benefits of SNAP applications for immigrants.

"Latinos are experiencing food insecurity at a rate three times higher than white Minnesotans in 2021," said Second Harvest Heartland Director of Neighbor Services Sarah Peterson. "Although the need is acute, our SNAP outreach team has found that some qualified families are reluctant to apply for assistance."

"This study gave us more clarity on the information people need and the myths we need to help dispel," Peterson said.

Completed in December, the study included interviews, focus groups and a survey with members of the Latino community throughout Minnesota. Survey results included the following:

- 73% of respondents reported that they would benefit from SNAP, while only 40% reported knowing how to apply.
- 39% of respondents who had not applied for SNAP said they believed it would affect their application for residency or citizenship; 35% reported that they did not know how to apply; 26% said they believed they were ineligible due to their income.

- 72% of respondents named outreach at community events as their preferred method of receiving information about SNAP, followed by 29% reporting social media as their preferred method of receiving information about SNAP.

In 2022, Second Harvest Heartland helped more than 13,100 households with SNAP enrollment and re-certification.

Second Harvest Heartland is a leading hunger-relief organization. In partnership, we provide 94% of the food distributed by more than 1,000 food shelves and partner programs in Minnesota and western Wisconsin. We also help families enroll in food assistance and provide prepared meals for people who need more than groceries. Second Harvest Heartland is a leader, convener and voice in hunger-related policy discussions. Learn more at 2harvest.org.

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