



RESTAURANT MEALS Program

Bring the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program to Vermont!

The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) is a state option for the federal SNAP program, known in Vermont as 3SquaresVT. The program allows eligible 3SquaresVT recipients to use their benefits to purchase ready-made meals at participating restaurants.

3SquaresVT households who are eligible to spend their benefits through the Restaurant Meals Program are households where:

- Everyone is 60 years of age or older OR;
- Living with a qualifying disability OR;
- Experiencing homelessness.

Allowing individuals and restaurants to participate in the RMP is an important way to support food access for low-income Vermonters at very high risk of hunger—folks who might not always be able to prepare meals for themselves or who do not have adequate housing for storing and preparing food.

Restaurant Meals Program is an important way to support unhoused participants.

- Many unhoused individuals face unique challenges in accessing food. Without a permanent address or access to kitchen appliances, the traditional way of using SNAP benefits—purchasing groceries to cook meals—is simply not feasible.
- As a result, benefits often sit unused. When SNAP benefits remain unspent, not only do the individuals miss out on essential nutrition, but the federal dollars allocated to support them are also left unutilized.

Restaurant Meals Program mitigates hunger and loneliness among older adults and disabled participants

- The RMP provides easy access to hot and prepared meals without needing to always rely on the ability to cook. It's a practical solution for those who may have limited mobility or health issues that make grocery shopping or meal preparation difficult, ensuring they get the nourishment they need without the added stress.
- For older adults and individuals with disabilities, eating out at a local restaurant serves as an important opportunity for social engagement with others. Loneliness among older adults is a growing issue, and it's often linked to poorer health outcomes and a decreased quality of life. The ability to dine out, even occasionally, provides a sense of community and connection that is increasingly rare for many.

Implementing the Restaurant Meals Program would have significant positive impacts on both local restaurants and the broader state economy, making it a win-win for communities.

- RMP helps to keep federal dollars within the state. SNAP benefits are federally funded, and when those benefits are spent at local restaurants, the money stays within the state's economy.
- By allowing participants to use their benefits at participating restaurants, the program creates a broader customer base for local businesses, boosting their revenue. It also affords restaurants the opportunity to serve as food security partners—a highly successful model embraced by many communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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