

Food and Nutrition Services: Employment and Training Program

**Federal Title: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*

In today's job market, it's clear that workers who increase their education and sharpen their skills are more likely to be employed, more likely to have higher earnings and become more self-sufficient, said Under Secretary Kevin Concannon. These are effects that are passed on to future generations, breaking the cycle of poverty that encumbers too many households.

USDA – March 2016

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety.

FY2017-18:

1,365,394 average monthly NC FNS recipients (~13% of the state's population)

Center for Budget Policies:

Among SNAP households with at least one working age non-disabled adult, more than half work while receiving SNAP benefits. Of these individuals, educational attainment roughly falls into the following categories:

- 30% No High School Completion
- 54% High School Completion
- 16% Some Post-Secondary Education

Community College Student - Profile

- Two-thirds are 'food insecure', meaning they have limited or uncertain access to nutritionally adequate and safe food.
- Nearly half are 'housing insecure', meaning they are in a position where they must move often or cannot afford rent or utilities
- Nearly 14% are homeless

March 2017 – Wisconsin HOPE Lab Report

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAM

The purpose of the Food and Nutrition Services Employment & Training (FNS E&T) program in North Carolina is to provide employment and training assistance to FNS participants in identified FNS E&T counties. It is the ultimate goal that this employment and training assistance will lead to livable wage occupations, enabling participants to become self-sufficient.

The Food and Nutrition Services Employment & Training (FNS E&T) Program, is part of the national Food and Nutrition Services Program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In North Carolina, the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Social Services (DSS) oversees the FNS E&T Program and involvement is voluntary and determined at the local Department of Social Services (DSS) County office.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ROLE

As a partner in assisting the NC DHHS - DSS office in meeting that goal, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Workforce Continuing Education division has joined the SNAP to Skills NC Interagency Team. As a member of this collaboration, the NCCCS is working with identified community colleges to implement programs with local DSS county offices in offering successful Employment and Training programs.

Education Navigators

Education Navigators at the individual community colleges collaborate with the local DSS county office to provide educational assessments, aide in determining appropriate educational pathways, determine educational/employability plans of action, assist participants in accessing community college resources, coordinate with DSS Staff for participant supportive services, and provide outcome measures tracking.

Education Navigators are the first and primary connection for the FNS E&T recipient and the college. At an initial assessment, Education Navigators work with individuals to determine where they are and what steps are necessary to achieve their goal of sustainable careers. Students come to program needing to engage at different levels with the college. While we have seen short-term training programs as the predominant need for participants, Education Navigators have assisted participants along the spectrum of academic levels to include College and Career Readiness, Continuing Education and, Curriculum programs.

In addition to supporting students in accessing and progressing through their pathway, Education Navigators also utilize college Human Resource Development (HRD) tools to ensure that individuals are prepared with the job seeking skills to enter the workforce as well as the employability skills to retain their roles with future employers.

College Participation

Colleges identified for FNS E&T Education Navigator funding are determined by participation of the local DSS county office in the Employment and Training program.

Funding amount is based on a Federal fiscal year grant allocation and focuses on colleges where the DSS county office has submitted an FNS E&T plan to DHHS – DSS which includes a community college Education Navigator.

The Coordinator of Special Projects at the System Office actively collaborates with DHHS staff to identify new counties and colleges prepared to enter the program for each coming Federal fiscal year. The Coordinator of Special Projects also works with each college Education Navigator to ensure they are positioned to meet the requirements of the program and support student success.

2018 – 2019 Colleges and Counties

- Asheville-Buncombe Tech
 - Buncombe and Madison County
- Cape Fear CC
 - New Hanover County
- Central Carolina CC
 - Chatham County
- Central Piedmont CC
 - Mecklenburg County
- Durham Technical CC
 - Durham and Orange County
- Gaston College
 - Lincoln County
- Mitchell CC
 - Iredell County
- Pitt CC
 - Pitt County
- Sandhills CC
 - Moore County
- Wilson CC
 - Wilson County
- Wake Tech CC
 - Wake County

Funding

The North Carolina Community College System contracts with the NC Department of Health and Human Services to administer the funds to support the FNS E&T programs at the community colleges. These federal USDA funds fall into two categories:

100% Funds – Exclusively for Administrative costs
Annual fixed amount allocated to each state

50/50 Funds – Administrative costs and Participant reimbursements
No cap

In the growth stages of this program the college Education Navigator positions have been funded with 100% funds up to \$55,000. As the program expands to additional colleges it will be necessary to utilize a formula structure of 100% and 50/50 funds to support the Education Navigator roles.

This projected formula could establish a base amount for each full-time* Education Navigator from 100% funds. The balance of the salary of the EN would be reported back to the program and the college would be reimbursed for 50% of their costs.

Colleges may also report other expenses related to supporting participants for 50/50 reimbursements. This includes travel for the purpose of supporting the program, support staff on time and effort reports, and educational supports like scholarships. Costs are allowable for 50/50 reimbursements as long as the original funds are not generating from a federal source.

*Funding for Education Navigators as full time or part time will be assessed based on a formula considering the local county FNS E&T population.

OUTCOMES

Over the last two years the program has grown from the two pilot colleges, A – B Tech and Durham Tech, to eleven institutions serving 13 counties in the 2018 – 19 Federal Fiscal Year

- Asheville Buncombe Tech CC
- Cape Fear CC
- Central Carolina CC
- Central Piedmont CC
- Durham Technical CC
- Gaston College
- Mitchell CC
- Pitt CC
- Sandhills CC
- Wake Technical CC
- Wilson C

In the past two years colleges have supported more than 700 students enter training programs in College and Career Readiness, Short-Term Training and Curriculum programs. These are students who may not have otherwise had access to the resources to successfully navigate their path towards success with the community colleges. The program also supports eligible existing community college students with support services enabling them to persist through their programs.

Student quotes:

How did the E&T program help you get a better job?

1. I had been involved with Social Services for a long time. I spent years in the Work First Program but never moved forward. I was simply going from crisis to crisis and going from job to job just to try to meet whatever need presented itself at the moment. When I was introduced to the FNS E&T program and the philosophy of looking past the current crisis to a future I caught a glimpse of a future that would be stable and financially sustainable. It was hard but with the help of the FNS E&T Social

workers I kept my eye on the hope of a better future. The amazing thing to me was it wasn't going to take years but just a few months of focused training for a career that was in high demand. In just a few months I completed the Dialysis Tech Training at DTCC and am now working full Time as a Dialysis Tech for Divita with benefits and making more money than I ever thought possible. Gone are the days of part time minimum wage jobs. I have a career!

2. This program has helped me with my life and everything circulating around it tremendously! I cannot begin to express how grateful I am to have had the opportunity's that you have given me and my son to help me better our lives. I started in the GED program with Durham Technical Community College in October of 2017 and got my GED by December of 2017; which was a huge accomplishment for me by its self. Since I have gotten my GED, I have completed my CMAA (Certified Administrative Medical Assistant) class and I am currently about to take the exam for it on September 1, 2018. Furthermore, I am also enrolled in the Central Sterilization class now that will start on September 23, 2018!

Starting off on this program I was making minimum wage at Bojangles, and now I'm making a livable wage for me and my son, and it's all thanks to the hardworking staff at Durham Tech! I can now live comfortably and not struggle and scrap for anything anymore, my life has changed drastically in this past year because of so many caring people willing to do whatever it takes to make someone else's story successful. If there was one thing I could say about DTC, it's that it doesn't matter what place you are in life, what you look like, or what you bring to your table, it's about your heart and what you really want out of life, and they make that happen with your perseveres!

3. Monica joined the STEP program after being unemployed for over six years. As a single mother she knew she needed to hold a stable position that would be enough to provide for her and her 2 children. Monica enrolled in HRD courses and received assistance from STEP staff in creating a targeted job search. After weeks of effort and interviews Maria was able to secure employment as an office assistant in the WIC office earning 17.93/hr. Monica has never been prouder and credits STEP as a participant in her success. "Within STEP, I found support, guidance and connection" said Monica on how the program impacted her.

4. What challenges were facing you when you started to participate in the Employment & Training Program?

I am a thirty-four-year-old single mother of three who had lost her job. I was living in SC and was about to become homeless. I had tried for months trying to find a job and had no luck. I moved back home to live with my mother to keep from ending up on the streets. I didn't know how I was going to make ends meet.

How do you feel now that you have received help from the Employment & Training Program? How has your life changed?

I feel proud. I have a new found purpose. I am more determined than ever to make a better life for my kids and myself. Jennifer has helped me find some Continuing Education classes that would be beneficial to me and has helped me get up with the people at NC Works. Jennifer has also helped to make sure that I'm on the right path to return to campus this spring for Medical Billing and Coding. I am now working as a Medical Office Assistant in Gastonia. I'm currently taking Basic Computers with the wonderful and talented instructors Mr. Steve Curtis and Mrs. Nichelle McCaskill. I have previously taken the Working Smart, Jump Start your Career and Computers for Medical Office.