

A Second Chance for Food Security:

Better Health Outcomes

EVERYONE DESERVES ADEQUATE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as SNAP or food stamps) was designed to address the public health concerns caused by food insecurity and poor nutrition for families living in poverty. The program provides recipients a stipend to purchase grocery items, including fresh produce and seeds, at certain retailers.¹

More than 1 in 3 households in North Carolina are considered low income, and approximately 70% of those who are eligible access SNAP benefits.² The overwhelming majority of SNAP recipients are families with children, and women are twice as likely as men to receive SNAP at some point in their lives.

People re-entering communities after incarceration or living with a criminal record are twice as likely to face food insecurity than the general public.³ Yet, North Carolina is one of the few states that deny access to food stamps because of a felony drug conviction.

Under NC General Statute 108A-25.2, people with a Class H or Class I drug felony conviction are barred from accessing food benefits for six months and must meet special requirements, which include drug treatment. People convicted of a Class G or higher drug felony are banned from food benefits for life.



■ The Felony Drug SNAP Ban can have a negative impact on a person's physical health.

- People who are food insecure often turn to less expensive, energy-dense foods that have poor nutritional quality.⁴ This leads to consuming foods filled with refined grains, added sugars, and trans fats that deprives them of vital nutrients.⁵
- Food insecure adults are 21% more likely to have hypertension and approximately 50% more likely to have diabetes.⁶
- Food insecurity also correlates with being overweight and obese.⁷

■ The Felony Drug SNAP Ban can have a negative impact on a person's mental health.

- Food insecurity also has psychological effects that increase long-term stress.⁸ Long-term stress can increase blood glucose and suppress the immune system, digestive system, reproductive system, and growth processes.⁹ This stress can lead to heart disease, depression, and weight gain.¹⁰

■ Most States have fully opted out of the Felony Drug SNAP Ban.

- As of December 2023, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and twenty-nine states—including Mississippi, Georgia, and Louisiana—have fully ended their felony drug SNAP ban.
- Of the states that have fully ended the felony drug SNAP ban, the rates of substance use disorder and illicit drug use disorder was lower than states with the felony drug SNAP ban.

NORTH CAROLINA SHOULD ELIMINATE THE FELONY DRUG SNAP BAN.

To Learn More about the campaign to Eliminate the Felony Drug SNAP Ban, visit NCJustice.org/Felony-Snap-Ban or contact fairchanceproject@ncjustice.org

